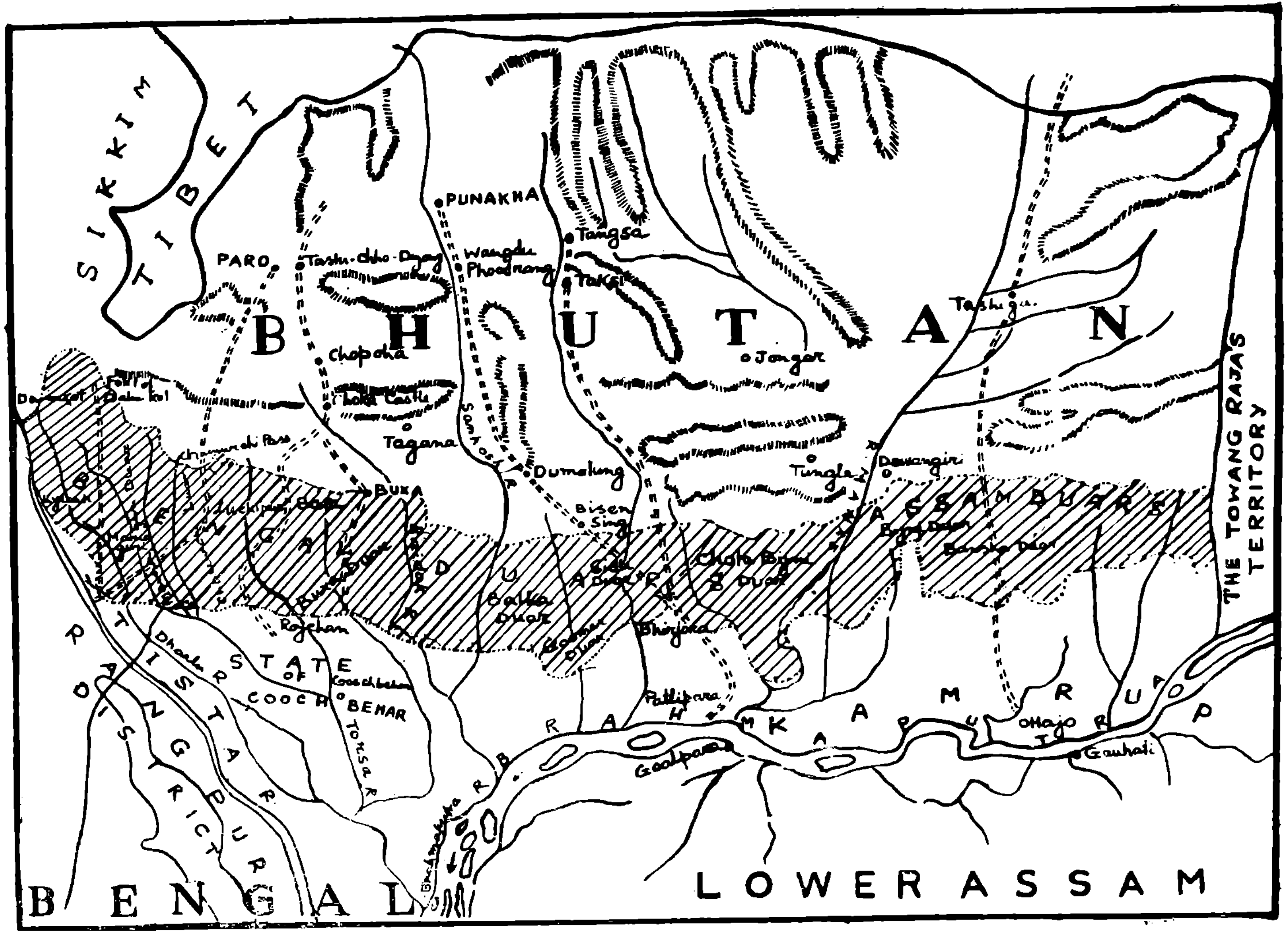
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BENGAL
LOWER ASSAM
THE TOWANG RAJAS TERRITORY
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BHUTAN AND INDIA
A Study in Frontier Political Relations (1772-1865)

ARABINDA DEB M.A. PH.D.

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FOREWORD

In 1860s, a few years after the transfer of Power in India from the East India Company to the Crown, the British Government in India made a commercial probe followed by a military adventure into Bhutan. The British discovered that a brave people lived inside the closed land; the resistance of Bhutan was as brave and as skilful as that of Nepal five decades earlier and of Afghanistan three decades earlier. The story of the encounter, its beginnings and its results, are described in this slim volume, and much more than the encounter can be found in these pages. From published sources like Surgeon Rennie's *Bhotan and the Story of the Doar War* (London 1866) and the unpublished records in Calcutta, Cooch Behar and New Delhi, the author portrays the events as if with the pen of a contemporary witness. He succeeds in this difficult assignment most creditably. I would attribute this to the author's on-the-spot knowledge of Bhutan, the land and its people and, what is relevant to the principal story here, the author's knowledge of muskets and rifles as a teacher-officer in the National Cadet Corps. A good deal of researches, based on purely bookish knowledge and without any acquaintance with the subject matter, come out in cold print under the patronage of University Grants Commission, Indian Council of Historical Research etc., but a fraction of it should have been ever published. I am happy to find that this publication will uphold the good old tradition of Calcutta University. I would not stand between the book and the reader any longer but for reasons I state at the end of this Foreword. I must highlight three very important points that I have found in this slim volume, for I have read the book not only with great pleasure but with much profit.

The author calls the Anglo-Bhutan or Doar War as Unequal War. "Unequal War" like "Unequal Treaty" is a popular expression with scholars and statesmen of countries which had good beatings from mercenary and mercantile bandits from the West throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Brave Bhutan proved, as the author shows, that morale was more important than Enfield Rifle and Bhutan knew how to organize

logistics in their own terrain. The Drukpa could maul and twist the Lion's tail because the Drukpa had a brave Government.

The British were not certain or sure as to where rested the Sovereignty of Bhutan—in the Austinian sense. Who could deliver the goods ? Dharma Raja, Deva Raja or the Penlop ? British intelligence thus anticipated anarchy, chaos and rout in the face of invasion. The authorities in Bhutan rose equal to the occasion and offered a systematic resistance which only a systematic political set-up could do. The evolution of a pluralistic system of Sovereignty which governed Bhutan till 1907 had its historical justification in the events of 1860s.

Nothing illustrates better that wise saying "A country possesses the government its people deserves" than the history of Bhutan. In Bhutan both the people and their rulers have been brave. In 1907 the people and their rulers opted for hereditary monarchy and monistic sovereignty. Sixty years later—that is, a hundred years after the Doar War was over—a brave king of Bhutan, His Late Majesty Jigme Dorji Wangchuk, renounced the prerogatives of absolute monarchy and ushered in a number of reforms which made Bhutan a constitutional monarchy in truest sense of the term and later made Bhutan a most welcome entrant into the United Nations. Bhutan today is as progressive a country as any Democratic Country.

Dynamism of Bhutan is rooted in its past. Bhutan, its people and rulers for three centuries strove for Wang (Power) as an instrument for Zhiba (Peace) ; and Dorji (Thunder) has been the symbol of that quest. The Doar War was a matter of life and death for Bhutan; for British Government it was a miscalculation not unusual for the heirs of a mercantile organization. So both parties settled down to terms of peace. The British profited even in the matter of administering the annexed Duars. As the author shows the British Government discovered a viable system of government left behind by the Drukpa in the Doars.

Why I anticipate the author's findings in writing a foreword ? Because I have grave misgivings about the merits of its layout, production and even printing. I got the machine-proofs, with print orders already issued, and could not inflict my advice. These are the days of Macro-history, Micro-history and History Made Easy. I do not know why the author should—knowingly

or unknowingly—cultivate the style of Frederick William Maitland or Charles Grant Robertson who would presume a knowledge of the secondary sources and also of the outline of events on the part of the readers. Maitland or Robertson wrote for the young intellectuals cloistered in the colleges of Oxford or Cambridge at the beginning of this century. I hope the author would not expect that towards the end of the century from any reader, whether specialist or not. I would therefore advise the reader not to fight shy of the book because of "unattractive" style or "bad" production.

I am thankful to the author, Arabinda Deb, for giving me an opportunity to bear testimony to his research abilities and original work.

NIRMAL C. SINHA

Senate House
Calcutta University,
Buddha Purnima, Saka 1898
13 May 1976.

TO THE BRAVE PEOPLE OF BHUTAN

PREFACE

In 1966 it was the sight of the remains of a stockade in the Duar War on the left bank of the river Torsa in the Duars that first aroused my interest in Bhutan and the people of Bhutan. This silent witness of a forgotten chapter in our Frontier History inspired me to devote myself to a field of study for which I would not claim to be well equipped. By a curious coincidence it was the centenary year of the British Proclamation annexing the Duars; and 1866 was the year of publication of Dr. David Field Rennie's book : *Bhotan and the Story of the Doar War.* To what extent I have succeeded in adding to this pioneering study it is for the readers to say. I have also ventured into reconstructing the political milieu of the Northern Buddhist state in the Himalayas if only to delineate how bravely Bhutan reacted to foreign aggression. Man can do no more than sacrifice his life for what he values and it is on record that the Bhutanese literally faced death before the Enfield Rifle.

This book will bear out that the mountain land of Bhutan was not a closed country. It was only anxiety about their own independence and the fate of the neighbouring states of Cooch Behar, Nepal, Sikkim and Assam that made the Bhutanese apprehensive of British intentions. Nor was Bhutan a mere hermitland. The Drukpa hierarchy had built up a tradition of secular achievements by the nineteenth century though much of the earlier story of this ancient tradition still remains a closed book. The nineteenth century English records regarding Bhutan and her tradition seems to be erratic in view of the tendentious writings of R. B. Pemberton (1838) and Ashley Eden (1864). But their labours have not been in vain, for without them, and without Krishnakanta Bose's account of Bhutan (1815), no specialist today can venture into attempting a secular history of Bhutan.

In the period covered by this book the secular chiefs of eastern and western Bhutan including the Depa or the Deb Raja were the de facto authority. The Drukpa hierarch, the Shabdung or the Dharma Raja looks like a distant observer on the periphery of political power. The documented story of the chronic

civil strife in Bhutan highlights the break-up of the traditional system under the Dharma and the Deb Rajas. These documents also bring into focus the rise of secular authority. Truly speaking it was a period of flux which took another half a century to run its full course. Then it was one of the secular chiefs, the Tongsa Penlop, who ushered in the monarchy (1907) and set Bhutan on the road to modernity. The documents and the reports which I have drawn upon would give an idea of the functioning of the Bhutanese state which arose out of a colony of Tibetans and also how the Bhutanese organised a viable system of revenue administration and official monopoly trade in Bengal and Assam Duars when they took over these areas in the second half of the eighteenth century from the Cooch Behar Raj and the Ahom Raj then weakened by internecine strife.

It is in the context of Bhutan's internal developments that the story of British relations with her can be seen in proper perspective. The book was not intended as an exercise in the history of diplomacy. We can afford to be oblivious of the bitterness and hard words of an Ashley Eden or the personal idiosyncracies displayed by other representatives of a growing imperial power in India.

The First Bhutan War, the Anglo-Bhutan Treaty (1774) and George Bogle's commercial diplomacy laid the foundation of a structure of relationship which was however not nurtured for three quarter of a century. The bitter harvest was the Duar War (1864-'65) after which the old threads were taken up. Earlier fears that a rupture with Bhutan might lead to "nothing less than a war with China" and threaten the consolidation of British position in Assam never disturbed the men who directed the Duar War. The Treaty of Sinchula (1865) visualised a "perpetual peace" and provided for free trade with and through Bhutan. The Treaty gave leverage in British hands in the form of subsidy to influence the de facto central authority in Bhutan. Later events showed that the ideas enshrined in the Treaty of Sinchula conformed to British aims and objects in Tibet and Central Asia.

This is an occasion for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. Susobhan Chandra Sarkar and the late Prof. Narendra Krishna Sinha (d. 1974) for whatever I learnt of

History from them. Mr. Nirmal C. Sinha, Centenary Professor of International Relations, Calcutta University, and Founder Director, Institute of Tibetology in Sikkim, encouraged me to undertake this work and his pithy remarks in course of numerous discussions saved me from many pitfalls in this field of study. I am deeply grateful to him also for contributing the "Foreword". Dr. Amales Tripathi, Asutosh Professor of Mediaval and Modern Indian History, Calcutta University, extended to me his invaluable guidance and I will respectfully remember it. Among others I am also indebted to Mr. Nirmal Chaudhuri of Jalpaiguri who helped me in tracing old references which were otherwise unavailable. I also express my gratefulness to Mr. N. S. Subbaya and Mr. R. Misra of YMCA, Kesab Sen Street, Calcutta, for their understanding and help throughout my period of research. Last but not least I thank the Indian Council of Historical Research for the financial assistance which only made this publication possible.

University of North Bengal
15 May 1976.

ARABINDA DEB

ERRATA

PAGE	LINE	FOR	READ
5	7	Reikats	Raikats
—	9	Beikunthopur	Baikunthopur
12	6	NEFA	Arunachal Pradesh
—	29/30	Mangdiphodrang-dzong	Wangdiphodrang-dzong
13	22	Tongas	Tongsa
14	3	The gardens	Tea gardens
—	4	1941	1841
18	3	Delimkot	Dalimkot
38	34	capacity	rapacity
39	9	dhemai	dhemsi
44	35	hospitable	inhospitable
51	5	place	palace
61	14	of other skins	of Mongol, Khasees and otter skins
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—	19	Katma	Katham
98	27	attached	attacked
102	17	confirmed	confined
104	1	arithmettic	arithmetic
108	7	return	nature
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130	3	shutting	abutting
135	17	Mulester	Mulcaster
—	18	Dunsword	Dunsford
—	32	*Eyes*	*Eyes*
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168	16	Ku-ma-pa	Karmapa
—	30	Lenchen	Lonchen

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INTRODUCTION

In 1865 Dr. Rennie wrote, "hidden as Bhutan has been from public notice, a great deal of official information has been on record about it." More than a century has elapsed and it cannot be claimed that these informations have been systematised, let alone subjected to a searching interpretative study. Indeed, the extant papers in Government archives and the well-known reports on Bhutan in the 19th century furnish a corpus of facts which, justify a study of the traditional structure and functioning of the Bhutanese state. The first Chapter of the present work ventures into this limited field and does not pretend to be a study of the "peculiar evolution of a primitive people". Drukpa Lamaism, the predominant Buddhist sect of Bhutan which determined the character of the early Bhutanese state as it became known only slowly in the 19th century, awaits its historian. The Bhutanese state was a species of theocracy where the Lamaist hierarchy played an important role in the running of the state. Tibetan ideas of government persisted naturally since the Bhutanese state originated in a colony of Tibetans. Perhaps the most significant example is the doctrine of reincarnation adopted by the Drukpa order in determining the line of succession to the first Shabdung (i.e. the first Dharma Raja). It is interesting that our first available report on Bhutan, namely, George Bogle's account, recorded the conflict between the Lamaist and lay hierarchy where the former under Lama Rinpochay dethroned the ruling Deb Raja, known as Desi Shidariva, whose adventures in Cooch Behar led to the defeat of the Bhutanese forces in the hands of the British. George Bogle also reported that in the internal affairs of the country the Deb Raja enjoyed complete authority. Later records testify that the lay hierarchy and the Deb Raja were really the de facto authority in Bhutan. Since none of the secular posts, including that of the Deb Raja, were hereditary there were ceaseless struggles for power and privilege. The ambition of provincial governors, particularly the Penlops of Tongsa and Paro, plunged the country in recurring civil strifes which have been mentioned everywhere in the records relating to Bhutan. The prize post in the hierarchy and the object of ambition

for the secular aristocracy was of course that of the Deb Raja. The existing tribal loyalties in Bhutan enabled the Penlops to indulge in lawlessness in order to grasp the prize or to make the Deb Raja a puppet. No wonder that British officials of the status of Ashley Eden described the Penlops as "two notorious robber chiefs." Many wondered whether there was any government in Bhutan worth the name. Krishnakanta Bose's account (1815) of Bhutan is perhaps the first to shed light on the nature of the rivalry for Deb Rajaship.

In the 19th century the Dharma Raja and the Lamaist hierarchy in Bhutan were steadily losing ground. When the struggle for advancement among the secular aristocracy laid in ruins many parts of the country the priests appeared as helpless spectators. It is fascinating to read in Pemberton's Report (1838) the story of the decline of the Drukpa hierarchy and the lamentations of the Dharma Raja. Yet the Dharma Raja as a reincarnation was always the superior authority in the eyes of the ordinary Bhutanese, endowed with a pervasive religious charisma. He had sufficient income and influence to unleash a civil strife. One series of records tell the story of a "sanguinary conflict" which devastated a large part of the Western Duars near Mainaguri in 1853 in which the protagonists were the nominees of the Dharma and the Deb Rajas. Income from some tracts in the Duars were reserved for the Dharma Raja and his establishment. Whether this corresponds to the western concept of "religious endowments" is difficult to say. The armed conflicts near Mainaguri show that the Dharma Raja did not hesitate to take the path of war to preserve his estates and privileges. These records have a unique importance of their own.

The officialdom in Bhutan was a mixture of lay and Lamaist elements. The Drukpa creed enjoined celibacy for officials which was ignored by the powerful lay aristocracy. The lay officials married and gradually occupied all political offices. The preeminence of the secular officialdom attracted notice of Krishna Kanta Bose. Pemberton's Report testifies this important aspect of the evolution of Bhutanese polity.

Till the outbreak of the Duar War in 1864 the Western Duars under Bhutanese control witnessed what has been described as a "perennial system of petty warfare". It is singular that no published work has probed into the important question

of how the endemic strifes in the Duars were related to struggles for power within Bhutan. There are a number of documents which expose this correlation. In the Bhutanese conditions the system of dual government under the Dharma and the Deb Rajas did not function harmoniously and the chronic strifes in Bhutan had their projections in the Duars. Secondly, the system of land-holding and revenue relations in the Duars give the clue not only to events that occurred but also reveal why a particular person behaved in a particular way. To cite examples, Hargavind Katham (a Bhutanese official) of Mainaguri would not have risen in revolt and driven out the Bhutanese had he not been deprived of rent-free mahals and extorted off and on by Bhutanese zinkaffs sent down by succeeding Deb Rajas. He offered fifty thousand rupees annually as a price for British protection. Durgadev Raikat of Baikanthopur fought a long war for his hereditary rights in a mahal called Kyranti which he said was worth one and half lakh rupees a year. His claims in the mahal were recognised by one and denied by another Deb Raja. What I have gleaned from papers belonging to the period of the Duar War and later settlement reports of the Western Duars has perhaps resulted in nothing more than a pen-picture of the system of landholding and revenue relations. This can at least claim the merit of breaking new ground. Contemporary British officials aver that the Bhutanese were very jealous in keeping their revenue secrets. I have devoted one section in the first chapter to a study of the impact of George Bogle's mission to Bhutan (1774-75). It is difficult to find Bogle's equal in imaginative understanding of the Bhutanese situation among later observers sent to that country. This is a quality which makes George Bogle a class by himself. His commercial reconnaisances in Tibet were devoid of permanent and profitable results for a variety of reasons over which he had no control. In Bhutan the story was different. He removed the apprehensions of the officers and the Deb Raja who were "in fact the merchants of Bhutan". His treaty with the Deb Raja not only ensured greater commercial contact with the plains of Bengal but also secured facilities for the transit trade of Tibet through Bhutan by means of native agency.

Chapter II.—In the 18th century Bhutanese expansion in the Duars was not merely territorial. It directly led, first, to the extension of her political influence and, secondly, to an attempt

at military conquest of the neighbouring kingdom of Cooch Behar. The nature of Bhutan's stake in Cooch Behar is a subject which has drawn scant attention so far. The traditional hold of Koch chieftains in the Duars was seriously menaced by a people who were alien in appearance, language and customs and whose country had been virtually a terra incognita to local inhabitants. The First Bhutan War (1772-74) developed out of aggressions of the Bhutanese ruler, Desi Shidariva, in Cooch Behar which threatened the British district of Rangpur. It is possible that Desi Shidariva, in the isolation of his mountain kingdom, was completely unaware of the significance of the political revolution in Bengal in 1757 and of the transference of the Dewani in 1765. This is to say that the Bhutanese ruler embarked on an adventure without the slightest premonition of its consequences. The Anglo-Cooch Behar treaty of 1772 sealed his fate. The link-up of the Bhutanese forces and the Sannyasis in the First Bhutan War against the English set the stage for what would now be called a guerilla warfare. This was, however, of no avail once the battle for Cooch Behar was won by Capt. Jones. The story of the combined resistance of the Sannyasis and the Bhutanese has been culled from Secret Proceedings papers.

The statesmanship of the redoubtable Warren Hastings lay in that he not only safeguarded the northern frontier of Bengal by transforming Cooch Behar into a viable buffer but dexterously struck a friendship with Bhutan for the furtherance of his Trans-Himalayan commercial projects. In political acumen Warren Hastings' Bhutan policy is unsurpassed in the annals of North-East India. Once British paramountcy was ensured over Cooch Behar, he went out of the way to placate Bhutan, sacrificing in the process legitimate interests of Cooch Behar.

Almost every page of the records in the Foreign Department and Cooch Behar state publications tell the story of the complete alienation between Cooch Behar and Bhutan in the 19th century. Surprisingly, this well-documented topic has been hardly noticed in studies of this part of the frontier. It is remarkable that the paramount British power in Cooch Behar failed to come up with a consistent policy towards Bhutan for decades until the shocks of the Duar War (1864-65) threw time-serving ideas into the melting pot. The enlightened policy of Warren Hastings truncated Cooch Behar but at the same time brought Bhutan

within the periphery of Indian interests. The treaty of Sinchula (1865) took up the threads where Warren Hastings had left them. Three quarters of a century were lost in the quagmire of indecision and mutual recriminations. Viewed in this light the present work may be regarded as a composite study of a forgotten page in the history of the North-East Frontier.

The section entitled "the Reikats and the Bhutanese" narrates the story of how a hereditary branch of the Koch royal house at Beikunthopur preserved its ancient estates in the Duars under Bhutanese control till the protective arms of British paramountcy extended in the areas in 1865. This reduced the Raikats to the status of zemindars.

Chapter III.—The British conquest of Assam in 1826 projected Bhutan as a major factor affecting peace on the North-East Frontier. For the first time the Bhutanese hierarchy in the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang, where the boundary was now conterminous, became apprehensive of British intentions. They reacted in a manner which British officials described as "delinquency". In fact it was nothing more or less than holding on to the privileges extorted from the declining Ahom Raj. Continuous records are available from this period to the "resumption" of the Assam Duars in 1841. They reveal British anxiety to reach the foothills of Bhutan. Still more interesting is the idea of moulding the "united influence" of the Dharma and Deb Rajas and the Bhutanese officials in favour of "reopening communications between British and Tibetan authorities" which had been so abruptly cut off since the Sino-Nepalese war of 1792. The Tongsa Penlop and the Bhutanese officials thought otherwise and did nothing to remove misunderstanding over payments of "arrear" tributes demanded for the Assam Duars. These arrears increased year after year and in desperation the British resorted to what has been called "temporary attachment" of Bariguma and Banska in 1828 and 1836. It was found that revenues from these Duars were "amply sufficient" to "maintain our acquisitions". These measures were enough to stir up the central Bhutanese government and open new channels of communication. Pemberton (1838) thought it "perfectly practicable" to open dialogue with Tibetan authorities "as long as the Duars continued attached". His report assured that retaliatory measures against an intransigent Bhutan government

would not excite "more than an increased degree of jealousy on the part of the Chinese and Tibetan authorities" who would hardly commit their governments to repel British arms. Pemberton however discouraged "general attachment or resumption" including the Duars of Bengal which was contemplated by Capt. Jenkins, the most powerful spokesman of an aggressive forward policy. The consequence was the "resumption" of the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang which most seriously affected the Tongsa Penlop. This piecemeal measure was intended to prevent the dispute being given a "national" character.

Thus disputes relating to "tributes" and "sovereignty" which developed in the northern Duars of Kamrup and Darrang in Assam were not isolated events. They were intimately related to problems of ensuring tranquillity on the frontier as well as to a greater design of approaching Tibet through Bhutan for commercial ventures in forbidden lands. The critical survey of facts relating to Assam Duars which this chapter presents would fully bear out this interpretation.

Chapter IV.—The chapter entitled the Bengal Duars is an integrated study of Bhutan's land revenue administration there and gives an analysis of the motives of British policy towards Bhutan from Dalhousie to the outbreak of the Duar War in 1864. Later settlement reports testify that Bhutan had a viable system of land revenue administration in the Western Duars before the Duar War. There are important gaps which are unlikely to be made good till, if at all, the story is given from the Bhutanese side. It is perhaps best to notice the most remarkable features of the Bhutanese system as they are given in existing reports.

On the structural side the top Bhutanese official in the Western Duars was of course the Paro Penlop. Below him there were the subahs or dzongpons who had a host of subordinate officials like the Zinkaffs, Kathams, Uzeers and Mandals. There were tributary princes and zemindars who received sanads or deeds of grants from the Deb and Dharma Rajas of Bhutan. The class of people who were directly connected with the collection of revenue were the "jotedars" and "chukanidars" with "vested" rights in the soil. The actual cultivators of the soil were the "ryots" and the "prajas". These classes often overlapped as in many instances the "jotedars" were themselves the cultivators. These people in the plains and lower elevation of the hills were

not Bhutanese but Rajbansis, Bengalees, Cacharees, Mechis, Garos, Parbatias, Totos and other tribes. The system of unpaid labour was prevalent in the Western Duars. On the administrative side the system was not so unprincipled as some reports, notably that of Ashley Eden, would suggest. The Bhutanese were like other people, not unmindful of their own interests. On record the Deb Raja from time to time made important concessions in order to ensure continuity of cultivation and residence. Ensign Brodie (1834), who gives the interesting information that Bhutanese officers received payments for allowing their subjects "the right to trade" in the different Duars, is most emphatic in saying that the ryots "in general have no dread whatever" of the Bhutanese. Last but not least, after the annexation of the Western Duars, British land revenue settlements incorporated the rights of the "jotedars" and the "chukanidars" wherever they found them and never entertained the idea of wholesale rejection of the principles of Bhutanese land revenue administration. This study of the Bhutanese system in the Western Duars, though a bare outline, probes into an unexplored field and the interpretation may be taken at what it is worth.

The chief characteristic of British policy towards Bhutan from Dalhousie to the declaration of war in November 1864 is that the idea of retaliation steadily gained ground. In 1856 Dalhousie threatened the permanent annexation of the Bengal Duars. Canning subscribed to the notion of a limited retaliation and his administration sought to divide the eastern and western Bhutan chiefs. He refused to fall in line with the insistence of the Bengal government for permanent annexation of the Western Duars and was determined to keep options open for the Government of India.

In the wake of the holocaust of the Great Revolt of 1857 Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh were "attached" in 1860. On this occasion Col. Jenkins was taken to task for threatening the Bhutan Government with further annexation of territory. Before his departure (1862) Canning endorsed the proposal of sending a mission to Bhutan to explain what the British demands were and what the Government would do if those were not conceded. The next Viceoy, Lord Elgin, permitted the mission under Ashley Eden to enter Bhutan before he died at Dharamsala. A critical survey of Eden's mission to Bhutan (1864) reveals that the Envoy com-

mitted "errors of judgment" at important points and did not adhere to official instructions which envisaged allaying Bhutanese suspicions. The failure of the mission demonstrated the hold of the Tongsā Penlop over Bhutanese affairs and the limits of his arrogance. Eden returned empty-handed and humiliated. The view that the "empire will suffer no loss" if it went to war against Bhutan for the military occupation of the Western Duars gathered momentum in the frustrating situation arising out of the fiasco. Eden and Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, were convinced that the Duārs would open up a vast field for European investments in tea, timber and cotton. The income from the rice fields alone and the sale of waste lands would show a profit. Eden also harped on the theory of European settlement on the Bhutan hills. The Bhutan Government as a whole, and not the frontier chiefs, must face the consequence and nothing less than the "permanent annexation of the Bengal Duars" would make the hillmen amenable.

Chapter V.—The chapter on the Duār War complements D. F. Rennie's study of the subject in 1866. The monthly proceedings of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal from November 1864 to April 1866 preserve the full official records of this episode. Rennie wrote in his preface to "Bhotan and the Story of Dooar War" that he left the front when the war was yet unfinished and prepared his drafts on board the 'Rinaldo' at Sea when he was sailing to England. Obviously the full official version of the war was not available to him. The unpublished correspondence of Sir John Lawrence with the Secretary of State on Bhutan affairs is the only authentic source for delineating the evolution of policy towards Bhutan as it unfolded during the crisis. I have examined microfilms of these correspondence at the National Archives of India, New Delhi. Contemporary reviews in the Anglo-Indian press and the parliamentary papers on Bhutan have also been consulted. It is perhaps appropriate to allude to some important points that emerge from a study of these different sources :—

(1) In December 1864 British forces entered Bhutan territory. The Bhutanese were completely taken unaware by the outbreak of the war. Contemporary reviews say that military-unpreparedness forced the Bhutanese to adopt what has been

labelled as "passive resistance". This could not save the Duārs and the hillposts which were taken almost without resistance.

(2) The "nonresistance hopes", held out by Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant governor of Bengal, were belied and at Dewangiri the British forces suffered their "deepest disgrace" It took a thorough reorganisation of the forces and a change in command to resist the Bhutanese offensive all along the line. Dewangiri was recaptured and then evacuated before the rains. Among the regiments that retook Dewangiri was the 29th Punjab Infantry, and Surgeon Rennie ascribes the "unnecessary slaughter" at Dewangiri to Sikh and Pathan soldiers.

(3) The unsuspected resistance revealed that earlier reports on Bhutan were misleading in many important respects and showed an "entire unacquaintance with foreign territory".

(4) By the summer of 1865 military objectives of the Duar War were firmly secured but the Bhutan government was not "humbled down". It was then that an economic blockade against Bhutan was enforced with its tentacles spreading from Tezpur to Darjeeling. Rennie, in tracing the developments after the abandonment of Dewangiri, makes no mention of the blockade. This was presumably because he could not have access to thinking on the subject at the highest level. Bhutan was entirely cut off from the plains. Necessities of life as well as articles of "constant use" were denied to the Bhutanese throughout the summer and rains of 1865. They were entirely deficient in rice, molasses, dried fish, oil, tobacco, betelnut and leaves (pan). The Deb Raja and the western Bhutan chiefs were most seriously affected by the blockade as they were the beneficiaries of trade with the plains. They made repeated overtures for peace from June onwards. Thus the blockade proved to be decisive and a military expedition into the interior of Bhutan was considered unnecessary. The idea of marching upto Punakha was abandoned, much to the chagrin of the Anglo-Indian press in Calcutta. The Viceroy in his correspondence explained that such an operation would require the building of a road across impassable mountains and apprehended that the "costly" war would be prolonged for another year. Once the Duars were secured a military expedition to Punakha would bring nothing "unless we had annexed the whole country". This was never intended, "if only because it

would be an expensive measure and perhaps entail an increase in the native army".

(5) The terms of peace were discussed at Sinchula with the representatives of the Deb and Dharma Rajas. Dr. Rennie's apprehension that, in Bhutanese conditions, it was better to negotiate with powerful chiefs never disturbed the Viceroy or the Secretary of State. On the contrary they were set upon ensuring a hold on the central government in Bhutan for the sake of peace and tranquillity on the frontier. The provisions of the treaty of Sinchula (November 1865) punished Bhutan "very severely" but at the same time sought to strengthen the hands of the de facto central authority which could control its powerful chiefs. The subsidy agreed to was to be paid to the accredited agents of the Deb Raja and was looked upon as an "inducement to maintain peaceful and orderly relations". The provision for free-trade was to benefit the Deb Raja, the Pāro Penlop and other chiefs who traditionally monopolised trade with the plains. The Bhutanese leaders were persuaded to see the "advantages of trading with a hundred million people". Col. Bruce, who negotiated the treaty of Sinchula wrote to the Tongsā Penlop : "It has always been the wish of the British Government to see regular and strong central government in Bhutan which shall be able to control all its subjects whether these subjects be ryots or great and powerful chieftains, and to this end the British government will go so far as to render every aid".

(6) The contemporary English press in Calcutta raised a "great howl" against the treaty of Sinchula which was said to have conceded "suicidal terms of peace". It was remarked that in Bhutan affairs the Bengal civilians had led Lord Canning "to the ruin of his reputation and the empire to the brink of destruction". Sir John Lawrence was told that the terms of the treaty were his "fourth blunder" in the Duār War. To drive their point home the press described nearly 3000 sq. miles of good earth acquired by the treaty as a "slice of marshy territory with a few hill posts". It was claimed that in England all the leading daily and weekly journals condemned the treaty except *The Daily News* and *The Times*. Annexation of Bhutan ought to have been proclaimed a year earlier. The chiefs including the Dharma and Deb Rajas could have been secured in their positions and income and the magnificent plateaux and valleys opened "for

agriculture, trade and civilisation". This was the only "just and wise policy" and *The Friend of India* wondered if the "next generation will not have to adopt it while they marvel at our folly". The Viceroy justified the treaty as "neither honour nor profit" were to be gained by continuing the war. He ascribed all this noise in the press to "planter interests" being angry "as they perhaps hoped to have much land available in a good climate if we annexed the country".

I have adhered to current usage in spellings except in quotations. Spellings of place names in Bhutan are in accordance with the usage in Kuensel, a weekly official bulletin of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The appendix gives the important treaties relating to Bhutan in the period covered by the present work. A glossary of unfamiliar words, and photoprint of a sketch map of Bhutan and the Duars are appended

CHAPTER I

BHUTAN

Section I—The Land and the People

The kingdom of Bhutan[1] as it figures in modern atlas lies between 26°41′ and 28°7′ north and 88°54, and 91°54 east. Known as the land of the thunderbolt Bhutan is picturesquely set within the folds of the eastern Himalayas. It is bounded on the north by the Tibet region of China, on the east by India's North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), on the south by Assam-Bengal plains of India, and on the west by Chumbi Valley in Tibet and the Indian State of Sikkim. At present the state comprises an "area of 18,000 sq. miles with a population of 700,000"[2].

For the most part Bhutan's northern frontier follows the crest of the great Himalayas. Between "the Chomo Lhari and Kulā Kangri peaks it follows approximately the line of the watershed"[3]. In describing his journey through Bhutan and southern Tibet, Bailey (1924) mentions a series of "subsidiary" ranges which run south from the main range. He further writes that in "each of the main valleys between these ranges is one of the large dzongs or castles from which the country is governed"[4].

1. The name Bhutan is derived from "Bhot" the Sanskrit word for Tibet. It was so called in the belief that it was "the end of Bhot" which is the literal meaning for the full Sanskritic form "Bhotanta". L. A. Waddell, 'Place and river-names in Darjeeling District and Sikkim', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,* Vol. LX, Part I, (1891), pp. 55-56.

2. K. K. Moorthy, 'Bhutan : Thoughts on Sovereignty', *Eastern Economic Review,* xxxi, Feb. 16, 1961, p. 295.

3. P. P. Karan, *Bhutan,* Lexington, 1967, p. 9.

4. F. M. Bailey, 'Through Bhutan and Southern Tibet', *Geographical Journal,* Vol. 64, 1924, p. 292. The major Bhutanese dzongs are : (i) Punakha dzong, (ii) Tashichhodzong, (iii) Parodzong, (iv) Mangdiphodrang-dzong, (v) Simtokadzong, (vi) Tongas dzong, (vii) Tashigang dzong, (viii) Ha dzong. These dzongs have lost their historic role as feudal strongholds since the consolidation of Bhutan under the monarchy in 1907. But still they function as combined administrative centres and monasteries. They are the focal points of the social, religious, economic and political life of the surrounding country.

The Merung La separates Bhutan from the Chumbi Valley of Tibet. From the Kula Kangri group of high peaks the "traditional border cuts across the Lhobrak drainage basin,[5]" and runs north to the high peak of Khar Chu. Numerous rivers and their tributaries flow through the mountainous territory of Bhutan. Eventually they emerge in the Duar plains and drain into the Brahmaputra. In western Bhutan the Amo Chu cuts across in a south-easterly direction and passes by the market town of Phuntsoling on the Indo-Bhutan border. In the plains it is familiar as the wayward Torsa. The waters of Ha, Paro and Thimbu Chu unite as the Wong Chu and reach India as the Raidak. The territory in between the Torsa and Raidak leads up to the Buxaduar and above it the fort of Sinchula. The Mo Chu or Sankos runs for more than two hundred miles within Bhutan and passes by historic Punakha and Wangdiphodrang. The swift flowing Manas and its tributaries drain eastern Bhutan. The valley of the Manas harbours a wild game sanctuary and is on the tourist map of eastern India. Important trade routes run along the valleys of principal streams. The Black Mountain, a very well-defined range midway between Punakha and Tongsa dzong extends from the great Himalaya to the foot-hills. It forms the watershed between the Tongas and the Sankos[6]. The route linking Punakha and Tongsa dzong crosses the Black Mountain range at Pele La.

Bhutan proper lies within the inner Himalayan zone. But at an early period of their history the Bhutanese had descended into the Duar plains and extended their sway over the ruling Koch chiefs. According to Dalton (1872) the conflict between the Koch and the Bhutanese had taken place "three hundred or four hundred years ago"[7]. The eastern Duars of Kamrup and Darang in Assam had gone under Bhutanese control during the decline of the Ahom Raj in the 18th century[8]. The present Western Duars in the districts of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar are a strip of submontane country which wears a "mantle of perennial green" and consists mostly of "flat arable plains". In

5. Lhobrag is the Tibetan district bordering on the north of Bhutan.
6. P. P. Karan, *Bhutan*, p. 27.
7. E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, 1872, p. 96.
8. E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta 1967, p. 3.

the north they rise to meet the "flat slopes" of the Himalayas which begin with a series of plateaus "varying in elevation from 500 to 2000 ft."[9]. The gardens now cover these plateaus and spread down into the plains below. In 1941 the eastern Duars from the Manas to the Deoshan rivers comprised an area "roughly measured at 990 sq. miles"[10] In 1865 the Western Duars were supposed to comprise "about 2,800 sq. miles"[11].

A recent study shows that the population of Bhutan comprises four major cultural groups They are the Tibetans, the Nepalese, the Indo Mongoloids and the Indians[12]. People of Tibetan origin are the most numerous and it is they who are politically dominant and have given Bhutan her peculiar cultural identity. The Bhutanese of Tibetan stock speak a language which has been described as a "corrupt dialect of the Tibetan language" and, as Csoma de Koros noted, the people of Kham, U, Tsang and Bhutan all understand each other though they differ in their way of pronouncing the language[13]. Classical Tibetan, however, remains paramount in several religious establishments and in a large part of literature. The variety of Tibetan Buddhism called the Drukpa sect spread into Bhutan in early 16th century and eventually led to the rule of monastic and lay hierarchy epitomised in a dual system of government under Dharma and Deb Rajas.

The people who settled in the "central portion of more extensive valleys" in the eastern portion of Bhutan have been separated from their western counterpart by a natural barrier "in the form of a high sharp crusted ridge in Bhutan". In 1933 Cooper Edgar remarked that the "people of the two areas are different in appearance and language". However, they "seem to link in their features and dress the people of the north (Tibet), with

9. J. A. Milligan, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Jalpaiguri District* 1906-1916, Bengal Secretariat, 1919, p. 11.

10. R. M. Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam,* Calcutta 1954, p. 216.

11. Bhutan Political Proceedings, Oct. 1865, p. 43, para 7, State Archives, Government of West Bengal.

12. P. P. Karan, *op. cit.* p. 65,

13. C. Wessel, *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia,* The Hague 1924, p. 145.

those farther south (Upper Assam and Burma)"[14]. Claude White says that the bulk of the population living beyond the Pele-la "is not of Tibetan origin, nor do they speak Tibetan". They are "allied to the people of the Assam Valley and to those living in the hills to the east beyond Bhutan"[15]. They are of a different type to those in the west, smaller in stature, the complexion is darker and features finer cut, and their dress is different. They also profess Bhuddhism but are not so observant of its customs. There are not so many monasteries and Lamas to be met with as in the other part of Bhutan. As distinct from the Tibeto-Mongoloid there is an Indo-Mongoloid zone in south eastern Bhutan[16] who represent earlier migrations of the Mongoloid people. In south-western Bhutan there is a broad belt representing Nepalese culture. Nepalese and Indo-Mongoloid culture occupy the "area between the narrow fringe of Indian culture along the southern border and the extensive Tibetan cultural zone of central and northern Bhutan."[17]

Bhutan's economy is based on the patterns of its agriculture and animal husbandry. In the high-altitude environment agriculture in some spots is more favoured by nature than others. Farming is concentrated in the low and well-watered valleys of central and western Bhutan and the humid Duars at the foot of the mountains. In the eastern part of the country excessive rainfall and dense vegetation limit the use of land for agricultural purposes. The Bhutanese farmer lays out his land in a series of terraces that are supported and separated by embankments. The precipitous nature of the country and the scarcity of arable land have made the practice of terracing almost universal throughout Bhutan. A good deal of ingenuity is displayed by the Bhutanese in the mode of conveying water for the irrigation of their fields. Pipes and troughs made from hollowed trunks of trees and bamboos supported on cross sticks are laid out. These extend in some places for miles together from the fields to the fountain head of a stream. Because of great variations

14. Cooper Edgar, 'The influence of their Neighbours on the Bhutanese', *Man*, Vol. XXXIII, 1933, pp. 87, 88.

15. J. Claude White, *Sikkim & Bhutan, Twenty-one Years on the North-East Frontier, 1887-1908*, 1909, Reprint, New Delhi, 1971, p. 13.

16. P. P. Karan, *op. cit.* p. 65,

17. *Ibid.*

of elevation and climate, most crops can be produced in Bhutan. Within the boundaries of a single village terraces are found at heights from 3,000 to 9,000 ft. Rice and buckwheat grow up to 4,000 ft. Barley alternates with rice to about 8,000 ft; wheat grows up to 9,000 feet. Potatoes, buckwheat and barley grow at altitudes up to 14,000 feet. It is interesting to note that Warren Hastings desired George Bogle (1774-75) to plant some potatoes at every halting place. Thus a valuable new product was introduced in Bhutan. The practice of the Bhutanese farmer has been described as "subsistence crop farming", a habit which has changed little during the past two centuries. His tools are antique and techniques primitive. Indeed the pattern of farming has changed so little that 19th century descriptions of agriculture have still a topical interest. In south-eastern Bhutan people depend largely upon the slash-and-burn type of farming. They clear the land by burning the vegetation, grow dry rice on it for three or four years and then abandon it when the soil is exhausted. Some groups have, however, settled permanently in large clearings in the forest. In south-western Bhutan settled by the Nepalese there is acute shortage of good arable land and the Nepalese are banned from living in the central inner Himalayan region. In the Inner Himalayan valleys communities of "drukmi" (meaning genuine Bhutanese of Tibetan descent) agriculturists consist of small hamlets and isolated homesteads. It is reported that in some places a settlement consists of a single household surrounded by primeval forests. Individual settlements are separated from one another by formidable geographic barriers and people living in one valley have little contact with those in another.

Though pastoral activities are common in most parts of Bhutan the chief pasture lands lies in the northern part of the country. Below the zone of alpine vegetation there are considerable grassy and which affords excellent pasture during the summer for herds of yak, cattle and sheep. The animals are driven down the mountains during the winter to inner Himalayan valleys, where they graze on leaves of trees and uncultivated land. Fodder crops are seldom grown in Bhutan. Cattle raising is particularly prevalent in the valleys of the Amo Chu and Wong Chu in western Bhutan. The main product of cattle raising is butter which is lavishly consumed both as food and for

rituals in temples. Large amounts of butter from the Amo and the Wong valleys find their way to the settlements at Paro, Tashichho Dzong and Punakha.

In the mainstream of Indian history Bhutan's earliest links were with the kingdom of Kamrupa in Assam. Gait cites the authority of the *Yogini Tantra*[18] in showing the extent of Kamrupa which included Bhutan and says that "in ancient times, Bhutan seems, occasionally at least, to have formed part of the Kingdom of Kamrupa"[19]. During Hiuen Tsang's visit Kamrupa comprised "the whole of the Brahmaputra valley as well as Cooch Behar and Bhutan"[20]

Any authentic history of Tibetan settlement of the Bhutan hills begins with the origin and spread of the Drukpa school of Lamaism founded at Ralung by Yeses Dorji in the 12th century of the Christian era. There were, however, earlier waves of Tibetan migration of which the chronology is uncertain. In the hey-day of the empire of the early kings of Tibet there are notices of Tibetan hold on Bhutan. During Ralpachen's reign (815-36) his brother Lang Darma secured the removal of a rival prince to Paro in Bhutan[21]. Pemberton speaks of the tradition in Bhutan that Tibetan officers were resident in it and all places and castles of the Dharma and Deb Rajas and the Penlops "were constructed by Chinese and Tibetan architects."[22]

The people whom the Tibetan settlers displaced in Bhutan hills were the "Koch"[23] whom the Bhutanese called "Tephoo"

18. The Yogini Tantra attempts to describe "Kamrupa Pitha" but the description is hazy. It requires a good commentary which has not yet been found. There are expressions which hint at the inclusion of Bhutan and part of Tibet in Kamrupa ; but "pitha" can hardly be identical with kingdom.

19. E. Gait, *op. cit.* pp. 11, 51,

20. S. N. Bhattacharya, *A History of Mughal North East Frontier Policy,* Calcutta 1929, p. 48.

21. Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet : A Political History,* 1967, p. 51.

22. R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bootan,* (1838) Indian Studies, 1961, p. 89.

23. Grierson's study of the fascinating field of Himalayan philology corroborates the suppression of earlier forms of speech by Tibeto-Burman languages which crossed the Himalayan watershed "at a comparatively late period" (*Linguistic Survey of India, Vol. I. Part*

and "they are generally believed to have been people of Cooch Behar."[24] In describing the 'Koch' Brian Hodgson writes : "In the northern part of Bengal, towards Delimkot, appears to have been long located the most numerous and powerful people of non-Aryan extraction on this side of the Ganges and the only one which after the complete ascendancy of the Aryans had been established was able to retain or recover political power or possession of the open plains. What may have been the condition of the Koch in the palmy days of Hinduism cannot now be ascertained but it is certain that after the Muslim had taken place of the Hindu suzerainty, this people became so important that Abul Fazl could state Bengal as being bounded on the north by the kingdom of the Koch which he adds 'includes Kamrup' "[25]. The advent of the Koches as a dominating political factor in Kamrupa ushered in a new epoch. The era of "myth and legend finally passes and that of sober history definitely begins"[26] The Koch kings are well-known personages in modern times and the greatest of them, Biswa Singha, made himself king about 1529-30. The coins of the second Koch monarch Naranarayan dated "Saka 1477 or 1555 A.D.", are the "sheet anchor of Koch chronology"[27]. It is important to notice that the rise of the Koch dynasty to political pre-eminence with their metropolis at Cooch Behar roughly coincided with the expulsion of the Koch tribe from Bhutan by Tibetans under the first Dharma Raja. The assertion of Koch chroniclers that prince Narasinha, the brother

I. Chapter VI. p. 55). According to him the name Koch, in fact, everywhere connotes a Hinduised Bodo". The latter once spread over the whole of Assam west of Manipur and "one branch of the family, popularly known as Koch extended their power to far wider limits and overran the whole of northern Bengal at least as far west as Purnea" (*Linguistic Survey, Vol. I. p.* 61-62). There is a sharp difference of opinion among scholars whether the "Koch" were of Mongoloid or Dravidian stock. The Koches are classed as members of the great Mongoloid people by Waddell, Hodgson and Latham. This is disputed by other scholars like Risley and Dalton.

24. *Eden's Report on the State of Bhutan, Part III,* (1865) Bengal Secretariat, p. 108.

25. Brian Haughton Hodgson, *Miscellaneous Essays,* 1880, pp. 106, 107.

26. S. N. Bhattacharya, *op. cit,* p, 73.

27. *Ibid.,* p. 77.

of Naranarayan went to Bhutan and made himself ruler there appears to have been staking claims for a lost ground. In any case modern scholars discount the view as "No definite evidence is available in support of this tradition"[28]. However, the historic fact of long struggle between the Koch and the Bhutanese for primacy over the plains of the Duars has a ring of continuity with the earlier confrontations of these two peoples in the hill territory of Bhutan.

The early British envoys, Bogle[29] and Turner were impressed with the Bhutanese people and their social manners and customs. "The more I see of the Bhutanese, the more I am pleased with them" wrote Bogle in 1774 and the "common people are good humoured, downright and, I think, thoroughly trusty"[30]. Their "simplicity of manners" and "strong sense of religion" were praiseworthy. They were "strangers to falsehood and ingratitude". The envoy poignantly wrote that in this Buddhist land the barbarous Hindu custom of burning the widow (sati) was absent and the institution of the caste and every other hereditary distinction was unknown. There were no bloody sacrifices though appliances of tantric (ritualistic) practice which included "beads of skulls of men" were unedifying. Bogle makes illuminating remarks about the domestic life of the Bhutanese and the position of women. "Every family is", he writes, "acquainted with most of the useful arts and contains within itself, almost all the necessaries of life. Even clothes which is a considerable article in so rude a climate are generally the produce of the husbandmen's industry". Thus as in other primitive communities where necessities are few the family was largely an independent economic unit. Since priests and officers of government led a life of celibacy the women were "degraded" and were married only to "landholders and husbandmen"[31]. They were employed in "most laborious" works, were "dirty" and addicted to "strong liquors". Celibacy of a large number of

28. A. C. Banerjee, *The Eastern Frontier of British India,* Calcutta, 1964, p. 2.

29. C. R. Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa,* Bibliotheca Himalayica Reprint, 1971.

30. *Ibid.* p. 51.

31. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.,* pp, 30, 31,

people was "productive of many irregularities" and coldness of climate "inclines" people "to an excessive use of spirituous liquor"[32]. Turner also speaks about celibacy in the same vein[33] Among later observers Pemberton and Eden were writing under a sense of failure and therefore viewed Bhutanese life in less favourable light. Ronaldshay says "comparing these various accounts carefully with one another one has little difficulty in perceiving that if the earlier writers displayed a tendency to lay stress upon the good points of the people and to gloss over certain of their less creditable characteristics, the later observers drawing their conclusions under less favourable circumstances viewed all they saw through glasses distorted by the lack of success of their respective missions. And one has little difficulty in drawing an intelligible mean between accounts which at first sight appear irreconcilable".[34]

Krishna Kanta Bose's account of Bhutan (1815) besides giving a wealth of information on polity, economy and social customs testifies to pervading sense of religion of the people and their dignified attitude towards all living creatures. The "chief maxim of religious faith among the Bhutias is that of sparing the life of all animals"[35] All classes of people "from boyhood to old age" repeat the mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. They mutter these mystic syllables while circumambulating monasteries and altars. Literally these words mean "Hail Jewel in the Lotus" ! and symbolises not only the Dharma but even the "formula" of creation[36]. The people put up flags inscribed with these words and a person passing the place ought to put up another.

32, *Ibid.*, p. 37.

33. Samuel Turner, *Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet*, London, 1800, p. 83.

34. Earl of Ronaldshay, *Lands of the Thunderbolt*, London, 1923, p. 214.

35. Krishna Kanta Bose, 'Some Account of the Country of Bhutan, *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XV, pp. 146-147.

36. "The ubiquitous presance of the Six Mystic Syllables—on rocks and boulders, stupas and temples, prayer wheels and altars—is, in the present writer's observation, a thanksgiving for the precious gift of human life, an opportunity for working towards Buddhahood" Nirmal C. Sinha, *Prolegomena to Lamaist Polity*, 1969, p. 38.

The Tibetan practice of polyandry throve in the peculiar socio-economic conditions of Bhutan. Samuel Turner (1783) thought that "superabundant population in an unfertile country" dictated the necessity of preventing a "too rapid increase of population"[37]. Krishna Kanta Bose (1815) ascribes the custom to poverty and kinship and says "A rich man may keep as many wives as he can maintain, and when poor, three or four brothers club together, and keep one wife amongst them"[38]. Pemberton (1838) recorded that polyandry prevailed "far more extensively in the northern and central portion of Bhutan than in the Southern"[39]. His conclusion that the "true cause may be found rather in the political ambition and spiritual pride"[40] seems to link the practice with extensive celibacy among officials, lay and clerical. Such a situation would, however, seem to encourage polygamy rather than polyandry. Modern researches have discounted "demographic reasons" for polyandry in lands where no census of population exists and the "number of men to women is anybody's guess". A recent study based on Rockhill's scientific and sound account of polyandry in Tibet ascribes it to a desire to prevent fragmentation of holdings where land is scarce and the need for "peace and concord under the same root"[41]. The present king of Bhutan has "abolished polyandry and restricted polygamy to a maximum of three wives per man"[42].

Section II—The Drukpas and the First Dharma Raja

The Lamaism prevalent in Bhutan has a long and chequered history. It is believed to have been founded by Guru Padmasambhava (the Lopon) in the 8th century of the Christian era. Bailey says "Near Bumtang is a holy temple called Kuje meaning in the honorific language of the country 'body print'. Here about twelve hundred years ago the Indian saint

37. Samuel Turner, *op. cit.* p. 351,
38. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit.* p. 148.
39. R. B. Pemberton, *Report,* p. 58, para 30.
40. *Ibid,* para 27.
41. Rifaquet Ali, 'Why People Practice Polyandry', *The Statesman,* Calcutta, June 13, 1971.
42. K. K. Moorthy, 'Bhutan—the Economic Scene' *Far Eastern Economic Review, XXXI,* February 23, 1961, p. 333.

Padma Sambhava, called Lopon Rinpochay in Tibet and Bhutan spent sometime when he was converting the country to Buddhism. He lived in a cave and for a long period would come out and sit up against the rock meditating ; the result was a deep imprint of his body against the rock"[43]. In the wake of Padma Sambhava's propagation of the Doctrine a number of Nyingmapa sects flowered in Bhutan and were competing for pre-eminence for several centuries. In the eleventh century the great Kagyudpa sect was founded in Tibet by Marpa who was a contemporary of Atisa. The Kagyudpa branched out later on into the Karmapa and Drukpa[44] schools of Lamaism. These various schools including those of the Nyingmapa are commonly labelled as the Red Hats. The Kagyudpa tradition, as embodied in the Drukpa, the prevalent form of Lamaism in Bhutan, has a continuity still unexplored. Any attempt to unfold the "mystery" of the early history of Bhutan must begin with a probe into this very important tradition. The spread of the Kagyud-Drukpa from Tibet represents a new dispensation as distinct from the older strand of Buddhism linked with the presence of Padma-Sambhava in Bhutan. In the new context it has been observed that "the first country in the eastern Himalayas to receive Buddhism from the Tibetans was Bhutan"[45].

The rise of the Gelugpa (yellow hats) in Tibet since the fifteenth century is a landmark in the history of northern Buddhism. There begun, what has been described as a "hundred years' struggle" between the Gelugpa and the Karmapa[46]. Early in the sixteenth century increasing Ge-lug-pa pressure forced the Drukpa sect of the Karmapa to find a new home in Bhutan. This occurred

43. F. M. Bailey, Geographical Journal, Vol. 64 (1924) 'Through Bhutan and Southern Tibet', p. 293.
Also, C. Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central* Asia, 1924, p. 140.

44. Though worship of the Thunderbolt is so peculiar to Lamaism in Bhutan, Waddell points out that the word for Thunderbolt is 'Dorje' and not 'Duk'. The Sanskrit translation of Lbrugpa is 'Meghaswara' or 'Cloud-voice'. L. A. Waddell, 'Place and river names in Darjeeling District and Sikkim', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Part I,* 1891, p. 56 fn.

45. D. Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya,* Oxford 1957, pp. 212, 213.

46. Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet : A Political History,* Yale Univerity Press, 1967, p. 86.

after the Drukpa resistance, though by no means the last, collapsed at Tashilhunpo which was "plundered and occupied by the Gelugpas"[47]. A Drukpa Lama known as Shabdung Ngawang Namgyal moved into Bhutan[48] from the Ralung monastery. With the help of Tibetan migrants he organised the peculiar polity of Bhutan after displacing the reigning 'Koch' prince[49]. In the seventeenth century the Gelugpas firmly established their temporal as well as spiritual sovereignty in Tibet with Mongol help. Flushed with victory in Tibet they made several attempts to crush the Kagyud in Bhutan[50]. These ventures into the "humid southern regions" failed and the Kagyud resistance saved Bhutan from going under the Ganden Phodrang[51].

The Shabdung of Bhutan is known as the Dharma Raja. The latter term is of Indian origin generally used by European scholars. The antiquity of the usage Dharma Raja is uncertain though it in all likelihood was in vogue among the people bordering Bhutan long before Ralph Fitch's visit to Cooch Behar in 1583. Fitch wrote : "there is a country four days' journey from Cooch or Quichu, before mentioned, which is called Bootanter and the city Bottea, the king is called Dermain"[52]. While Bootanter is admittedly Bhutan, Dermain can be no other than Cacella's Droma Raja (1626) or the Dharma Raja of Bhutan.[53]

Comparing the legends collected by Krishna Kanta Bose (1815) with the "traditional account furnished Eden by Cheboo Lama" (1864) Surgeon Rennie observes that these two accounts

47. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journals,* Vol. I (1854) p, 366, Note,

48. Aitchison's date for this event is 1557 A. D. *Collection of Treaties. Engagements and Sanads etc.* 1928, Vol. XIV p. 79.

49. Krishna Kanta Bose, 'Some Account of the Country of Bhutan', *Asiatic Researches,* Vol. XV, p. 129. According to this source the Koch prince with his family went underground while those who remained "above ground" were converted to the "faith and custom" (Sic.) of the first Shabdung.

50. Charles Bell, *Religion of Tibet,* p. 126. Also Shakabpa *op. cit.* pp. 112, 113, 118.

51. The system of government in Tibet under the Dalai Lama, the Gelugpa hierarch. The foundations of the statecraft of the Gelugpas have been discussed in a recent study. Nirmal C. Sinha, *Prolegomena to Lamaist Polity,* Calcutta 1969, pp. 28-42.

52. Hakluyt's *Voyages,* Vol. 2, London Anno. 1955, p. 257.

53. C. Wessels, *op. cit.* p, 140,

agree so far as to "specify the people of Cooch Behar as those who originally possessed Bhutan" and to "indicate Tibet as the place from which the first Dharma Raja came"[54]. The first Dharma Raja came to Bhutan "two to three hundred years ago" took possession of Punakha displacing the Cooch prince and devoted himself to the task of "introducing law in lawless Bhutan". He sent "armed men to roam over mountains and forests, rocks and caves" to hunt down "robbers" and "thieves"[55]. Instead of setting himself on the throne and exercising temporal authority "he sent to Lhasa for a Tibetan"[56]. He made him his prime minister, and, according to a later authority, "called him the Deb Raja"[57]. The usage Deb Raja seems to have originated from Tibetan Depa. Charles Bell, quoting a Tibetan official, says that Depa was the "manager" elected for the Ne-chung Oracle temple near Lhasa. His duty was to "manage all its secular affairs"[58]. The Ne-chung practice seems to have been familiar at Ralung from where the first Shabdung emerged. In the Bhutanese system of government the Deb Raja came to be vested with the secular administration while the Shabdung concerned himself entirely with the cares of religion. The first Deb Raja made Bhutan a "land of security so that even an old woman might carry a load of gold in safety"[59]. Eden's version based on disputed facts, however, ascribes the separation of religious function from the secular to the third of the line of Tibetan adventurers rather than to the first. The second Dharma Raja is said to have built the forts of Mangdi-Phodrang, Punakha and Paro, to have drawn up a code of laws for the protection of the cultivators and to have appointed officials styled Penlops and dzongpons to administer the country[60].

54. D. F. Rennie (Surgeon), *Bhotan and the Story of the Dooar War* (1866), p. 41. *Bibliotheca Himalayica*, Reprint, 1970.

55. Charles Bell, *People of Tibet* (1968) p. 145. Quoting from Bhutanese history Lho-hi-Chhojung.

56. *Ibid.*

57. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit.* p. 129,

58. Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present,* (1968) p. 250, Eastern Tibet had its chiefs styled Deba, Gyalpo & Co. Both are familiar usages in Bhutan. Also, W. W. Rockhill, *The Land of the Lamas,* p. 243.

59. Charles Bell, *People of Tibet,* University Press, Oxford, 1968, p. 145.

60. Ronaldshay (Earl of), *op. cit.* p. 204.

Besides founding the historic dual government in Bhutan Shabdung Nga-Wang Namgyal promoted the Drukpa sect throughout the country to the exclusion of all rival sects. After his death his spirit became incarnate in a child at Lhasa who was conveyed to Bhutan. While the Dharma Raja succeeded by incarnation the Deb Raja was elected by a council[61]. The usage in Bhutan and Tibet to describe an incarnation is "Tulku". Krishna Kanta Bose (1815) noted how incarnations of the Dharma Raja began in Bhutan instead of in Tibet : "the present Dharma Raja was not regenerated in Lhasa reason of which was as follows :—previously to the death of the late Dharma Raja, the Deb Raja and other counsellors of State entreated the Dharma saying 'you have hitherto been regenerated in Lhasa and in bringing you here a great expense is unnecessarily incurred'. Upon which the Dharma replied 'I will become regenerated in the Shasheb caste and in Tongsa' and accordingly be reappeared in Tongsa and is one of the Shasheb caste"[62]. Risley wrote that these incarnations "occur in the families of the chief officers of the State"[63]. Records show that in the 19th century the most powerful chief of Bhutan, the Tongsa Penlop, was often related to the Dharma Raja. In 1838 William Griffiths wrote that the Dharma Raja who was a boy of eight or ten years old was "good looking; particularly when the looks of his father, the Tongsa Penlop are taken into consideration". To him the fact that the Dharma Raja was the son of the Tongsa Penlop was a

61. In a recent monograph H. E. Richardson shows that the idea of a succession of reincarnating Lamas as head of a religious sect was familiar with the Karma-pa for some two centuries before the Gelugpas were building up their church in Tibet in the 15th century. The Gelugpas in adopting the practice of a reincarnating hierarch had taken a "leaf out of the book of the successful karma-pa". The Drukpas of Bhutan who were a sub-sect of the Karma-pa naturally introduced the idea of reincarnation to determine the line of succession to the first Shabdung. H. E. Richardson, 'The Dalai Lamas', *Shamphala*, Occasional Papers of the Institute of Tibetan Studies No. I, January 1971, Tring, Herts, England, pp. 20-22.

62. Krishna Kanta Bose, *Account of Bhutan*, Bengal Secretariat (1865), p. 189.

63. H. H. Risley, *History of Sikkim and its rulers*, 1894, p. xiv,

"curious coincidence"[64]. In 1866 a telegraphic despatch ran "the Lama Guru says—the Tongsa is the master of the Deb Raja, that the Dharma and most of the Rajas are his relations and that he is the greatest man in the country"[65]. In the above context Risley's observations win an amount of credibility. In the 17th and 18th centuries the Deb Raja extended his grip over the internal affairs of the country. In 1774 "his authority in the internal government of the country appears to be very complete"[66]. In subsequent records the Deb and Dharma Rajas appear in clearer light ; the former as the secular head of the government of Bhutan and the latter as vested with spiritual supremacy.

Section III—The System of Dyarchy in Bhutan—The Dharma and the Deb Rajas

Hamilton (1812) recorded that the Subahs on the passes "represent the Deb Raja in his judicial, military, financial, municipal and mercantile capacities" ; and the Deb Raja "occupies every branch of public economy unless it be spiritual, which he perhaps relinquishes to the supposed incarnation of the Deity"[67]. Krishna Kanta Bose's (1815) account of the perquisites of the Deb Raja's office makes an impressive reading. He used to receive "customary tributes" from the different governors of districts and "disburse the established charges" of the state. Secondly, when a person was appointed Penlop or Zimpe (Councillor) or to any office of the state he used to present something to the Deb Raja. Thirdly, when the Duars came under Bhutan he received the "whole revenue" of the lowland estates of Mainaguri and other tracts "about rupees thirty thousand per annum". Fourthly, he received a fine in all cases of murder and homicide. Fifthly, he traded with a capital of "about rupees forty thousand".

64. William Griffith, *Journal of the Mission which visited Bhutan in* 1837-38 *under Capt. R. B. Pemberton,* p. 25.

65. Telegram from H. Grey, Dewangiri, to the Private Secretary, June 17, 1866, *Bhutan Poliltical Proceedings,* April, 1866, p. 171, No. 276, State Archives, Govt. of West Bengal.

66. Markham, *op. cit.* p. 36,

67. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam,* Department of Hittorical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Reprint, Gauhati, 1963, p. 69.

Sixthly, he was entitled to property of servants of government on their demise unless "they may have been dependents of the Dharma Raja" who in that case succeeded to their property. Lastly, "he presented horses, silk, salt and hoes to petty land-holders and farmers and received much more than the value in return"[68]. Evidently, the Deb Raja had extraordinary powers of patronage, the keystone in widening the area of effective political support. The Deb Raja could not "deviate in the smallest degree from the observance of established customs". It was the custom that the office of the Deb Raja was tenable for three years. An ambitious person who could muster the support of powerful chiefs could ignore it.

George Bogle's remarks about the importance of the office of the Deb Raja determined British protocol in the 19th century. In their correspondence with central Bhutanese authority approaches were made almost invariably to the Deb Raja. One interesting fact is that British knowledge of Bhutanese polity was far from perfect as late as 1857. A despatch to the Court of Directors runs : "we did not know where the jurisdiction of the different subordinate rulers along our frontier begins or ends. Col. Jenkins stated that the contention for the supreme government which appeared to have existed for many years among the principal families of the country still continued, but that he was not certain how far the authority of the Dharma Raja and Deb Raja (who seemed to be colleagues with co-ordinate powers) extended. He was not sure that there were no two Deb Rajas"[69].

The effective hold which the Deb Raja secured over the secular administration of Bhutan did not, however, reduce the Shabdung (Dharma Raja) to the position of a mere titular head of the Bhutanese dyarchy. His concern in things spiritual as the head of the priestly order raised him in popular estimation. In fact "Bhutan's history during the past three hundred and odd years since Dugom Dorje (the first Dharma Raja) could be scarcely understood without unravelling the nature of the relationship between the Dharma Raja on the one hand and the

68. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit. Asiatic Researches, Vol. XV*, p. 134.

69. Despatch to the Court of Directors, No. 56, Sept. 8, 1857, para 187

Deb Raja on the other"[70]. The Dharma Raja was regarded as a high incarnation. Krishna Kanta Bose's account says that "he was the spiritual guide, incarnate Deity and sovereign prince"[71]. In Bhutanese eyes the Deb Raja always held a subordinate position. One Zinkaff (subordinate official) sent from Bhutan on deputation to the Governor General's Agent, North East Frontier, in 1833 gave informations which has a relevance of its own as emanating from an internal source. The Zinkaff stated that in Bhutan the Dharma Raja was called "Meha Lama, Noa Namdee and Thebo Rimpochay". That there were twelve hundred gylongs with the Dharma Raja at the monastery at Talo where "prayers are offered up day and night". That all "important matters of the country are reported to the Dharma Raja" whose "principal employment however is in religious rites". That "Tipa is the title given to the person in office at Hassa (Lhasa) whose duty it is to carry on the affairs of the country as the Deb Raja does under the Dharma Raja in Bhutan"[72].

The image of the Dharma Raja portrayed here is that of a learned recluse held in high veneration to which the Deb Raja could never aspire.

The eminence of the priestly order in Bhutan had a bearing in non-spiritual spheres recognised by the powerful secular aristocracy. George Bogle stated how the revolt against Desi Shidariva (Bogle's Deb Judhur) after the failure of his Cooch-Behar expedition (1774), was organised by the priests under Lama Rinpochay. Pemberton wrote that the cause of the Tongsa Penlop who revolted against the Deb Raja was espoused by the Dharma Raja and the priests[73]. Perhaps it is relevant to elucidate this "bearing" in some mundane terms. The titles and attributes of the Dharma Raja in his seal describe him as the "spiritual and temporal chief of the realm" and "above all the Lamas of the Drukpa (sic) creed"[74]. It is on record that zemindars in the

70. P. L. Mehra, 'Lacunae in the Study of the History of Bhutan and Sikkim', *Indian History Congress, Proceedings of the Twentythird Session, Aligarh*, 1960. Part II (1961) pp. 195, 196.

71. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit. Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XV, p. 131.

72. Foreign P. C. Dec. 12/33 No. 76, NAI,

73. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit*, p. 91,

74. J. D. Hooker, *Himalayan Journal*, Vol. I, 1854, p. 372.

Duars had their title deeds both from the Deb and Dharma Rajas though there were exceptions. The Dharma Raja "possesses lands in the low country south of the hills of the annual value of seven or eight thousand rupees and traded with a capital of twentyfive or thirty thousand rupees . . . The Deb Raja has no authority over the Dharma Raja's people"[75]. Presents from officers of state on appointment and receipts from religious and funeral ceremonies were two other sources of income. The expenses of the Dharma Raja were considerable. He had to maintain "supernumerary gylongs" and to defray the expenses of religious ceremonies and charitable donations "so that little remains of his annual receipts"[76]. The revenues of the Assam Duars were used to defray the expenses of the priestly order under the Dharma Raja. One representation to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal runs . . . "Sometime ago you seized our seven talooks in Assam, from which the provisions for the Dharma Raja's puja (worship) were brought and you paid some rupees in exchange which we consenting reserved them"[77].

It would seem that the Dharma Raja had the resources, power and patronage to unleash a civil strife and at times to play a decisive role. Perhaps such considerations led Col. Jenkins, the Governor General's Agent, to think that the Dharma and the Deb Rajas "seemed to be colleagues with co-ordinate powers".

The papers on British political relations with Bhutan in the period 1772-1865 are replete with references to chronic instability and civil strife in the Himalayan principality. These papers can be conveniently divided into two categories. First, are the reports of envoys sent to Tibet or Bhutan and, second, the official papers consisting of letters, memoranda, minutes, despatches, proceedings of government (India and Bengal) and also telegrams resorted to with great advantage in the days of the Duar War 1864-65).

The earliest British envoy George Bogle (1774-75) associated with Warren Hastings' Tibetan design has recorded the events

75. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit.* p. 132,

76. Krishna Kanta Bose, 'Account of Bhutan', *Political Missions to Bhutan,* Bengal Secretariat, 1865, p. 190.

77. Bhutan Political Proceedings, Nov. 1864, No. 5069, dated simply "Chand Ke Tarikh", State Archives, Government of West Bengal.

of the reign of "Deb Judhur"[78], the dethroned Bhutanese ruler and the "rooted enmity" and "opposition of interest" between him and a "junta of priests" led by Lama Rinpochay. The conflict resulted in a "revolution" which combined with the failure of Shidariva's Cooch Behar expedition led to the flight of the latter to the neighbourhood of Lhasa.[79] Messrs Mercer and Chauvet entrusted with the task of enquiry into the disturbances in Cooch Behar (1788) spoke of a "late revolution" and subsequent "transquillity" in Bhutan in a letter to Government.[80] In 1815 Krishna Kanta Bose was sent to Bhutan to settle boundary disputes and has "left us an intelligent account of the country".[81] In this acount he noted that the Deb Raja after a time is "liable to be thrust out, on some such pretence as that of his having infringed established custom; and unless he has the Tongsa or Paro Penlop on his side he must, if required to do so, resign his place or risk the result of civil war"[82]. R. B. Pemberton in his celebrated Report (1838) has narrated the story of one of the most protracted rebellions that convulsed Bhutan in which the dramatis personæ were Dorje Namdee (the Tongsa Penlop), Suje Gasse, Deb Tille and Daka Penlop. Suje Gasse retained the office of the Deb Raja "for nine years instead of three". Thc Tongsa Penlop revolted and in the emergency applied to Lhasa for assistance and got himself intalled as Deb Raja.[83] Ashley Eden before his departure for Bhutan (1863' collected information that the country was "thrown into a state of anarchy and general confusion by one of the frequent struggles for Deb Rajaship".[84] The Tongsa Penlop emerged triumphant in this struggle. When he,

78. Shakabpa in his political history of Tibet has given us the Tibetan name of this Bhutanese ruler as Desi Shidariva. His source is the Nyimai 'od-zer, an anonymous biography of the third Panchen Lama, W. D. Shakabpa, *op. cit.* p, 154,

79. C. R. Markham, *op. cit,* pp, 37-41.

80. Misc. Records, Revenue Deptt., Dated June 10, 1788, p. 18, State Archives, Government of West Bengal.

81. *Friend of India,* March 16, 1865.

82. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit.* p. 150,

83. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit,* pp, 91, 92,

84. Foreign Political A. No. 3 dated Nov. 10, 1863, Proceedings, January No. 82, 83, para 3, N.A.I.

smarting under the loss of the Assam Duars, (1841) humiliated the envoy in open Darbar (1864) the Deb Raja "was frightened and did not speak".[85]

One series of papers consisting of correspondence between British frontier officials and Government relate that the Bengal Duars of Bhutan knew no peace from the early 1830's right up to the outbreak of war with Bhutan in 1864. In the first instance rivalry between powerful landlords in the plains who were also Bhutan officials was responsible for ceaseless disturbances. The struggle between Hurgovind Katham, a Bhutanese official and Durgadev Raikat, the zeminder of Baikunthopur for ascendancy in the Duars has been described in another Chapter. A very remarkable fact is that the claims of the Raikat and the Katham were supported by officers of rival Deb Rajas and the long conflict in the Duars was a repercussion of the contention of two parties in Bhutan itself. Eden noted that "whilst the struggle was going on in the hills there were two parties fighting in the plains" and that Durgadev was "backed by the Angdu Phodrang Deb on one side and Hurgovind Katma (sic) backed by the other Deb (who was at Tashi Chho dzong with the Dharma Raja) on the other"[86]. Records reveal that very often the Bhutanese Subabs, who were high officials in charge of different Duars, were loyal to one authority against the other. In 1853 Chaia Penjor who claimed to be the Subah of Buxa Duar did "all he could to destroy the authority and injure the revenue of the Dharma Raja".[87] Kham Jhampe "a loyal servant of the Dharma Raja arrived by way of Madari", encountered the forces of Chaia Penju, "fought him for three days and at last turned the scale in his favour".[88] Khan Jhampe stated that the object of Chaia Penju's forays in British protected territory was to involve "his country and sovereign" in a quarrel with the English which would lead to the annexation of the Dharma Raja's land and open advancement of the Deb Raja and his followers.

85. No. 45 dated Darjeeling April 21, 1864, Eden to Durand, para 12, N.A.I.

86. A Eden, Report on the State of Bhutan, Darjeeling, July 20, 1864, pp. 20, 21.

87. Foreign Political Nov. 18/53, No. 153, N.A,I,

88. *op. cit.*

British officials also suspected that Chaia Penju's aim was "to get the Dharma Raja embroiled in a dispute with the British government"[89].

These events are a pointer that in the 19th century the institution of the Dharma Raja had sufficient impact and influence in mundane affairs to unsettle an accomplished fact. This is one reason why the secular aristocracy regarded the Dharma Raja's support as invaluable. They also show that very often the religious hierarchy crossed the path of aristocratic ambition. The system of dual government in Bhutan organised since the days of the first Dharma Raja did not ensure political harmony. The tension betwen the Deb and Dharma Rajas at times easily degenerated into armed conflicts among their followers causing misery in the hills Their disputes "furnish the chronicles of Bhutan—which bear accounts of bloody struggles for power among the nobility on almost every page—with an additional grim chapter"[90]. These disputes also turned the fertile plains of tho Bengal Duars into a cockpit for factional fights. The equilibrium arrived at betwen the two institutions, the Deb and Dharma Rajas, was evidently unstable. In Bhutanese eyes the Dharma Raja was always superior to the Deb Raja who was only a de facto sovereign. The status of the Dharma Raja has been clearly shown in a letter of the Tongsa Penlop in 1865. The Penlop had forced a humiliating retreat on the British forces from Dewangiri. He learnt that the latter were preparing to recapture the hill post and made the following enquiry :—

> "You want Dewangiri again, but from whom did you receive permission to take possession of it ? You will either have to fight us or write a letter to the Dharma Raja, if you are desirous to recover Dewangiri. If he gives it to you then we must yield". . . .[91].

The social and political milieu in Bhutan and its economic backwardness rendered the operation of prescriptive rules nuga-

89. Letter from W. Dempier, Supdt. of Police, Lower Provinces to Cecil Beadon, Secy. to the Government of Bengal, dated Patna the 17th January 1854. Foreign Political April 28/54 No. 115, dated January 17, 1854, N.A.I.

90. Rene Von Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Where the Gods are Mountains*, London 1956, p. 165.

91. Rennie Surgeon, *op. cit.* p. 290

tory. Tribal loyalty, aristocratic ambition, pre-eminence of priesthood, ethnic peculiarity and foreign intervention in favour of the de-facto sovereign are among the multiple forces that determined Bhutan's destiny in the 19th century. These are the forces that rendered the harmonious functioning of an uncrystallised dyarchy impossible. "Theoretically the government is well organised"[92] and as Pemberton very pungently observe "the form of government is in itself, if fairly administered, quite sufficient to produce far more favourable results to the people than are now perceptible".[93]

Section IV—The Bhutanese Hierarchy and the System of Administration :

Subordinate to the two authorities of government there were two councils. The council under the Dharma Raja consisted of twelve gylongs.[94] These priestly councillors were not solely concerned with religious or literary pursuits but at times exercised an "efficient control over less spiritual objects"[95]. Though they professed "abstinence" from secular affairs they had "no small share in exciting and fomenting the contests for the rank of the Deb." The council of which the Deb Raja was the head consisted of six zimpes and was called Lenchen. In addition the Tongsa and Paro Penlops, the two most powerful chiefs of the eastern and western division of Bhutan, were entitled to seats in the council whenever they were present in the capital. The composition of the council as given by Pemberton shows that it consisted of lay and Lamaist elements. The Lam and the Kalling Zimpes were devoted to the interests of the Dharma Raja while the Deb Zimpe was faithfully attached to the secular chief and has been described as the "private Dewan" of the Deb Raja looking after his trade and other concerns, while the Donnay (sic) Zimpe was his "public Dewan".[96] The members of the Council were eligible for the

92. E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, 1872, p. 96.

93. Pemberton, *op. cit.* p. 57, para 22.

94. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit. Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XV, p. 151. The gylongs or ordained priests were "often possessed of wealth, which they collected as charity, and as fees of office and by trade."

95. Pemberton, *op. cit.* p. 53.

96. Krishna Kanta Bose, 'Account of Bhutan', *Political Missions to Bhutan*, Bengal Secretariat, 1865, pp. 190-191.

office of the Deb Raja though by no means exclusively. Thus the Daka Penlop who apparently for the insignificant extent of his jurisdiction had no seat in the council; fought his way up and was the Deb Raja at the time of Pemberton's visit. It is difficult to be firm about any regional consideration in the composition of the council. The chiefs who sat there and participated in deliberations came from the Dzongs of intramontane Bhutan. The Subahs in charge of the southern passes and the Duar plains were left out. They are mentioned simply as officers under the Paro and Tongsa Penlops. That physical geography of the eastern Himalayas was a positive barrier to viable administration is clear from the report that the term 'Subah' was not known in Bhutan except to those who had occasion to visit the plains. The Bhutanese equivalent for the term was Dzongpon who were in charge of hill districts.

The two broad administrative divisions of eastern and western Bhutan became apparent only through greater contact. The country was "divided among six provincial Governors, that is, those of Paro, Daka, Tongsa, Tashichhodzong, Wangdu Phodrang and Punakha"[97]. The earlier missions of Bogle and Turner had travelled through the Buxa Duar and the jurisdiction of the western chief known as Paro Penlop. Turner says that the Paro Penlop's "jurisdiction is of first importance in Bhutan; it extends from the frontier of Tibet to the borders of Bengal"[98] at the foot of the Lucki Duar. The chief of the eastern division of Bhutan, the Tongsa Penlop, emerges as a historical figure in the records after the annexation of Assam in 1826. Territorial contiguity in the extensive Duar plains of Bengal and Assam helped to ascertain that the Tongsa Penlop ruled over an extensive dominion from the river Manas eastward. It is the opposition of the Tongsa Penlop since the "resumption" of the Assam Duars in 1841 which denied de jure recognition to cession of territory in Darang and Kamrup till the end of the Duar War in 1865. However, in view of the shifting sands of tribal loyalty and in the absence of Bhutanese records it is frustrating that this high drama must remain untold. A few telegrams in the last phase of the Duar War are perhaps our only source revealing that the Paro Penlop and the weastern chiefs of Bhutan along with the Deb

97. Pedro Carasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, Seattle, 1959, p. 201.
98. Samuel Turner, *op. cit.* p. 177,

Raja became an effective counterpoise to an uncompromising Tongsa Penlop and thereby hastened the Treaty of Sinchula (1865).[99]

The provincial governors were endowed with ample power. The policing of the country, the levying of taxes and the administration of justice were committed to them.[100] They kept the machinery of the Bhutan government in motion with the help of a host of subordinate officials like the Dzongpons, the Subahs, the Zinkaffs and, in the plains of the Bengal Duars, the Kathams. In the Assam Duars a class of officials known as the Doompas with the Dewarngiri Raja at their head ensured the hold of the Tongsa Penlop. In elucidating the laws of the Dharma Raja, Claude White mentions the names of some local officials[101] known as Kuchangs (sic) ; Karbaris or Mandals. The appellations Karbari and Mandal are distinctly usages prevalent in the plains of the Duars. Pemberton's list of six Dzongpons under the Tongsa Penlop and six under the Paro chief including the Subah of Buxa Duar gives an idea of different administrative jurisdictions in the hill portion of Bhutan territory. However, British frontier officials in those days do not seem to have been in a position to identify the dzongs from which the title of the Dzongpons was derived. In the region between the rivers Tista and Manas the same authority mentions six Subahs among whom the Subah of Chirang ruled over the most extensive territory and who commanded the best pass leading to the hills from the plains of Bengal.[102] In the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang there were Bhutanese "uzeers" and "kazis" among the Subordinate officers.[103] Like the appellation subah these words were usages in Perso-Turkish administrative system of the Mughals. They also

99. Telegram from Lieut. Governor to Col. Bruce at Buxa, dated Nov. 21, 1865, *Bhutan Political Proceedings* : April 1866, p. 143.—"Bear in mind that we should have to act as the ally of the Bhutan Government not as invaders and that the Tongsa Penlop stands alone". This is an example.

100. Markham, *op. cit.* p. 36, Also Claude White *op. cit*, p, 246,

101. Claude White, *Sikkim & Bhutan, Twentyone Years on the North-East Frontier,* 1887-1908, London, 1909, Reprint, New Delhi, 1971, p. 306.

102. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

became established usages in the Nepalese system of administration built up by Prithinarayan Shah in the 18th century.[104] The official title Katham did not exist east of the river Gadadhar.[105] The titles of subordinate officials as narrated above underline the interesting fact that some are distinctly of Tibetan origin while others, specially in the plains, indicate a continuity since the days of the Mughals. The point of uninterrupted tradition was not merely a matter of form. The functioning of the old system in the Duar plains appears to have been undisturbed. Certainly the Bhutanese found it most suitable as they did not have sufficient man-power and dreaded the lower heights and the humid jungles of the Duars. When the British took over after the Duar War they found it wise not to do away with age-old practices rashly and venture into the unknown. Surgeon Rennie attempted a balanced view of things. According to him Ashley Eden who was writing under a sense of "personal insult and political failure" suffered from a "tendency" to "overstate Bhutanese defects".[106] Commenting on the revenue system prevailing in the Duars Rennie writes : "It would seem doubtful whether the Bhutanese mode of collecting their revenue from the Duars was so unsystematic as Mr. Eden's notice of it implies ; because since our recent annexation of them it has been determined, in the first instance, to continue collecting it in the same manner as the inhabitants had been accustomed to under Bhutanese rule."[107]. Since the annexation of Assam British and Bhutanese territories became contiguous in the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang. Thereafter contact with Bhutanese frontier officials convinced the British that the central Bhutanese government had a very loose control over their subordinates in the Duars. Letters addressed to the Deb and Dharma Rajas often did not reach their destination and were suppressed by officials at Dewangiri or Tongsa. Pemberton's mission in 1838 threw a flood of light on the admi-

104. Bhuwan Lal Joshi and Leo Rose, *Democratic Innovations in Nepal*, 1966.

105. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

106. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 23 fn.

107. D. F. Rennie, *op. cit.*, p. 23 fn. In the matter of revenue administration of the Western Duars application of new principles began with the settlement of Mr. Sunder in 1893 after a number of topographical and cadastral surveys of the area.

nistrative system of Bhutan. In the following year Robertson, member of the Supreme Council, commenting on Pemberton's Report noted in a minute: "We are now for the first time put in possession of a positive account of the system of internal government in that province (Bhutan) . . . and furnished with informations to guide our conjectures as to the influences that regulate its foreign relations".[108] As a result of garnering of more informations by the time of the Great Revolt (1857) quite objective appraisals could be made regarding the effectiveness of the central Bhutanese government. In 1857 it was recorded that the central government of Bhutan at Tashichhodzong does "under ordinary circumstances exercise an effective control over the subordinate provincial governors or subahs, but that the degree of this control is liable to variation according to the state of the parties at the seat of the central government"[109]. It was seen that the Tongsa and the Paro Penlops though they exercised virtually independent authority invariably acted in the name of the Dharma and Deb Rajas and acknowledged the supremacy of these rulers. In 1861 it was recognised that "all attempts at placing our relations with the Bhutan Government on a satisfactory footing will be ineffectual unless we contrive to open an uninterrupted communication with the Deb Raja"[110]. In 1864 Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, stated that it was futile to negotiate with Bhutanese provincial governors for reparation and wrote : "The only intelligible policy which in my judgment the government can pursue is to regard the Bhutia nation as a whole and to look to its ostensible government and to that alone for reparation and security"[111]. It seems that the effectiveness of an ostensible government was not in doubt.

In Bhutan offices of power were the only source of preeminence. Hereditary distinction was unknown[112]. An aristo-

108. Foreign P. C. March 27, 1839, No. 81, dated January 31, 1839, N.A.I.

109. 507 Foreign Political, April 17, 1857, No. 62, para 5, From Secretary to the Government of Bengal to Secretary to the Government of India, dated Kurseong March 5, 1857.

110. *Annual Report on the Administration of the Bengal Presidency*, 1861-62, p. 74.

111. No. 42, Minute by Cecil Beadon, dated Darjeeling July 22, 1864, N.A.I.

112. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

cracy rooted in the ownership of big landed estates was absent. Rugged terrain and harsh environment not only restricted the size of farms but also determined the pattern of ownership of land. George Bogle observed in 1775 that the people of Bhutan "may properly be divided into three classes : the priests, the servants or officers of government and the landholder and the husbandman"[113]. The lumping together of landholder and husbandmen in one class is not without meaning. Landed aristocracy as a distinct class from the peasantry did not seem worthy of classification in the eyes of a foreign observer. The landholders referred to were small and medium farmers who held land on farming terms. Krishna Kanta Bose observed in 1815 that the Deb Raja . . . "presents horses, silk, salt and hoes to the petty landholders and farmers, and receives much more than the value in return"[114] Thus absence of big landed estates and hereditary privilege ensured greater mobility within the official classes. There are cases on record where persons of ability though they were of humble or "low" origin fought their way up. Krishna Kanta Bose mentions of a Zinkaff, the lowest official in the hierarchy, who rose to be the Deb Raja of Bhutan[115]. During Pemberton's visit to Bhutan (1838) the Daka Penlop, ineligible for the rank of the Deb Raja, had elevated himself through a successful rebellion to the high dignity.

Officials of old Bhutan, monk and lay, held offices for short terms. Only the Dharma Raja was a "functionary for life miraculously vested into supreme spiritual authority from infancy"[116]. The Deb Raja as it has been noticed, could hold office for three years. At the annual festival "removal and changes" of officials was a normal occurrence. The Deb Raja strove to fill the offices with men devoted to his interests. As the bulk of the revenue was received in kind there was no system of regular payment of salary from the treasury. Short tenure and no fixed emolument are the prime reasons which explain the sickening story of official capacity recorded by observers in the 19th century : "Whenever any ryot or landholder or servant has collected a little money the officers of government under whose authority they happen

113. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV, p. 34.
114. Krishna Kanta Bose, op. cit., *Asiatic Researches,* Vol. XV, p.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 150.
116. Foreign Political April 17/57, No. 62, para 7, N.A.I.

to be placed find some plea or other for taking the whole. On this account the ryots are afraid to put on good clothes, or to eat and drink according to their own inclination, lest they should excite the avarice of their rulers. Norwithstanding this the latter leave nothing to the ryot . . . whatever rice they grow is taken almost entirely for revenue by the government and they are also obliged to deliver the grass and the straw. Of wheat they retain a large portion and do not give to government any part of their dhemai. All the colts that are produced from mare and all the blankets they make are also taken by the officers of government at a low price"[117]. The descent of a party of Bhutanese Zinkaffs in the Duars was regarded as a calamity by local inhabitants and British Frontier Officials urged the necessity of putting an end to the extensive "predatory system". It is perhaps apposite to locate the sources of harassment and misery in the institutional arrangements in Bhutan itself rather than ascribe them to the wickedness of a number of border chiefs, as has been done almost invariably by British officials in the 19th century. Pemberton is forthright in saying that every official "endeavours to amass as much property as possible during his tenure of an office which he is aware is likely to be but of short duration and as the removal of the superior is generally attended by the dismissal of every subordinate under him at the same time, the incentive to speculative industry exists in every grade"[118]. The cultivator was the victims of the system which deprived him of the rewards of his labour. It is significant that every report on Bhutan highlights the officialdom and not an entrenched aristocracy as the source of oppression.

Perhaps the most important phenomenon which sheds light on the hold of officialdom was the fact that the hold of the bureaucracy was clinched by tying the peasantry to the soil. The rigours of cultivation in the hills and dearth of agricultural labourer led to ingenious devices to ensure the continuity of cultivation and a reasonable fixity of income for the state. It was reported that at Punakha grants of land were made to women which assured supply of farmhands. In northern and central Bhutan where

117. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit., Asiatic Researches,* Vol. XV, pp. 151-152.

118. R. B. Pemberton, Report, p. 57.

polyandry prevailed such agreements meant "three or four males would be enchained by the fetters which bound one female"[119]. A few thousand slaves picked up from the Duar plains of Assam and Bengal were "forced into connubial union with Bhutia women of inferior grades of society"[120]. The women were made responsible for their continuance in the country. It was almost impossible for the ryots to migrate from one region to another without the consent of Subahs and dzongpons. The permission to do so "could be obtained by the payment of a sum so large, as to render the raising of it at all, almost hopeless"[121].

In popular belief the Dharma Raja, through his rebirth, was endowed with the wisdom of ages. Governors of provinces, collectors and all their train of dependents, both lay and cleric, went through a process of training and education and seldom arrived at "places of trust and consequence till far advanced in life"[122]. They were "not quite recruited from the peasant population at large but only from some groups, and the higher positions could be reached only by members of dominant families"[123]. Among these "at least one group was clearly a descent group"[124]. Krishna Kanta Bose wrote that "in Bhutan there are fifteen tribes, the chief of which are the Sha and Waa. The Deb Raja and the officers of state used always to be of these castes". Though, as has been seen, it was not uncommon for a forceful person to make his mark in spite of kinship and status. Turner found that the governing class was educated in the monasteries. Having received a religious or semi- religious training they "elected afterwards to enter the secular posts"[125].

Like the priests the zinkaffs were received young from families in the country. They were brought up in the dzongs and palaces at public expense. They looked after the supply of provisions, firewood and other necessities from the country people. They could seldom reach any office of importance. These were the preserve of the priests. In fact the object of

119. R. B. Pemberton, *Ibid.*, p. 95.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
121. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
122. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
123. Pedro Carrasco, *op. cit.*, p. 197.
124. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
125. Claude White, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

"utmost ambition" to every parent was to have his son enrolled in the rank of the priests. This could be obtained by an application to the Dharma and Deb Rajas accompanied by a stipulated fee. A candidate remained in the palace or castle where he was provided with food and clothing for a time varying from two to six years[126]. If a priestly candidate was found to possess abilities adapted to public business he took leave of the monastic life and entered upon a career of greater activity. But there was no bar in his continuing to reside in the palace if he preferred that arrangement. These favoured elite of Punakha, Tashi-Chhodzong, Tongsa, Paro and other less distinguished places filled up the vacancies in monasteries and temples throughout Bhutan. Each of the main forts was connected with a monstic establishment where the state monks resided. It must not be supposed that the lay officials were divorced from the religious side of Bhutanese life. In at least two respects their life had a monastic quality. First, the Drukpa creed in order to fulfil its errand of peace and happiness and with the interest of the hierarchy in mind had enjoined celibacy though one of the earlier Dharma Rajas is known to have married and had children before asssuming office. All available reports show that celibacy was sought to be enforced in the case of lay officials too. Bogle recorded that when they rose to any post of honour and trust they were separated from their families. Thereafter they were not permitted contact or intimacy with the families. This was used to be done lest their attachment to their children should induce them to attempt rendering the government hereditary in their families"[127]. Powerful secular chiefs ignored the restriction without much ado. Pemberton speaks of the "late" Tongsa Penlop who had a family before he obtained that rank. For a time he complied with the injunction of the priests but soon violated it. The priests who formed a very large proportion of the establishment of his castle remonstrated, but he was too powerful to be removed summarily from office. The priests refused to allow him to share in their meals. He was also excluded from the castles of Punakha and Tashi-Chhodzong and also from the presence of the Dharma

126. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
127. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 57.

and Dab Rajas[128]. Secondly, Drukpa monks who renounced all connection with women and cultivation lived in close intimacy with lay officials in all the important dzongs where they were fed from state storehouses[129]. They shared their meals in common with lay officials.

A remarkable feature in the evolution of the traditional polity of Bhutan was that all through the 19th century the lay officials strengthened their position. They gradually occupied all political offices, married and kept all positions within their control"[130] George Bogle was not very clear in his definition of the position of the Lamas and the distinction which he intended to draw between the priests and the Lamas was, as Claude White conjectures, "probably that the lamas were those who, having received a religious or semi-religious training in the monasteries elected afterwards to enter the secular posts of government retaining at the same time a close connection with the religious side of national life, especially in the matter of celibacy. They were represented by the Deb Raja, his governors, ministers and councillors in contradistinction to the priesthood, who, with the Dharma Raja as its head, concerned itself, primarily, with the religious administration of the country[131]. This interpretation would suggest that the Lamas in secular posts strengthened the grip of the Deb Raja and the secular arm over the administration though the Deb Raja would take no measure of consequence "without their (the priests) advice and approbation" and, as Bogle found it, the priests were appointed to the government of provinces, employed as ministers or entrusted with offices of first consideration in the state[132].

The pre-eminence of secular officialdom attracted notice of Krishna Kanta Bose in 1815. He wrote that "in respect of the

128. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

129. That lay officials and monks resided in the dzongs together is clearly brought out in Philip Denwood's study of the architecture of the dzongs. He says that the Bhutanese dzong combined "military, governmental and religious functions in a single ensemble"—*Sambhala*, Occasional Papers of the Institute of Tibetan Studies, No. I, January, 1971, p. 14.

130. Pedro Carrasco, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

131. Claude White, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

132. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

internal administration of the country or its relations with foreign states, he (the Dharma Raja) has no authority whatever ; and with the exception of spiritual and religious matters, the administration of the government of the country is conducted by the Deb Raja, with the advice of Korjis and councillors, and in some cases with the concurrence of the Dharma Raja. From the cares of government the Dharma Raja is almost entirely free and he has no great number of attendants for purposes of state"[133]. Pemberton says that the "blind and implicit veneration with which the Dharma used to be regarded is on the decline"[134] and gifts expressly meant for the incarnation were appropriated by the Deb Raja "even after they had reached his presence". The story of a decade of political convlusions and civil strife which Pemberton's Report unfold show that the powerful secular chiefs were untrammeled by any priestly interference. The Dharma Raja and his followers look like distant witnesses to the struggle and unable to affect its disastrous course, Griffith's diary of the visit of the mission to the boy incarnation states that "he had fewer attendants and his room was less richly ornamented than that of the Deb"[135]. If protocol arrangements project facets of state power Griffith's brief note on the indifferent discretion displayed before a foreign mission tells the tale of the decline of religious hierarchy in Bhutan. In the context of the rise of secular aristocracy the lamentations of the "last Dharma" as recorded by Pemberton, is highly instructive. On the eve of his "temporary withdrawal" from the earthly scene the Dharma Raja was reported to have spoken to his followers about the "demoralisation of the country" and "the disrespect and want of reverence exhibited to the priests". He was determined that "his next apapearance on earth should take place in some other country, more worthy of his presence"[136]. The English enquirer comments that this "sagacious resolve" rekindled the slumbering piety of the followers of the Dharma Raja. Their entreaties,

133. Krishna Kanta Bose, *op. cit., Asiatic Researches,* Vol. XV, p. 131.
134. Pemberton Report, p. 62.
135. William Griffith, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
136. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

professions of regret and promises of of amended moral succeeded to induce "a change in his resolutions"[137].

A Despatch to the Court of Directors in 1855 gives the rather unique information of a rebellion against the Dharma Raja. Certain persons on behalf of the Dharma Raja arrived at Cooch Behar on their way to Gauhati to meet the Governor General's Agent, and narrated that the "Dharma Raja had been deprived of his property and seal by the rebellious Subahs and that he was anxious to make over Bhutan Duars to the British Government and put himself under its protection". At Gauhati they offered "Izara (lease) to the British Government of the 13 other Duars which lie on the west of the Manas river and east of Darjeeling". These lands could be taken over and the amount of revenue "reserved for the (Dharma) Raja or remitted direct to him". Dalhousie's administration, burdened as it was with pressing and important problems of the empire rejected the offer as the "Government of India did not desire to interfere in the internal disputes of Bhutan or to take the Dharma Raja under protection"[138]. In between the lines it is permissible to read that a mere offer from the Dharma Raja without the seal of approval from the secular administration of Bhutan was not considered guarantee enough for a smooth transference of a rich tract of Bhutanese territory. Ashley Eden (1864) found the government of Bhutan "virtually seized by the Penlops whom he bitterly described as "two treacherous and notoriously unscrupulous robber chiefs"[139]. In the context of the decline of the religious hierarchy it is important that the British, consciously or not, worked towards upgrading and recognising the de facto ruler, the temporal authority of the Deb Raja.

Rent and revenue relations in the early Bhutanese state are to be examined in two different orders. Those of intramontane Bhutan or Bhutan proper and secondly, rent and revenue relations in the Duars when these tracts came under Bhutanese control. Earlier Tibetan settlers had to grapple with cultivation in hospitable land and problems of steady expansion of farming.

137. *Ibid.*

138. Political Despatch to the Court of Directors, No. 64, dated Nov. 22, 1855, Paras 165, 170, 171.

139. Pol & PA 1864, Sept. No. 41-49, No. 45, Eden to Durand dated Darjeeling the 12th April 1864, Para 22, N.A.I.

The fulfilment of these objectives were sought not through inducements but the application of laws "enacted by successive Bhutanese rulers"[140]. As it was in Tibet "the chief item in both rent and revenue is that of service rendered without pay". The state organised by the first Shabdung was especially concerned with the maintenance of the tax roll and prescribed succession to property. The earlier laws as quoted by Charles Bell show that a tendency had developed to combine two or more holdings or estates into one "with the result of rendering only one quota of service"[141]. Thus it came to that "the dry tax (grain and money) alone is paid, while the labour tax is evaded". The laws prescribed that if a family has sons and daughters they should each maintain separate holdings and pay taxes due from each. If a family holding ran short of workers "it should be compelled to transfer a portion to any individuals that it may select from a large neighbouring family". It was thought that by these means "the number of real workers will be kept at the full". Further the slave population of Bhutan arising out of people condemned for various criminal offences and later on of people lifted from the plains reinforced agricultural labour[142]. The prescriptions regarding holdings dictated by shortage of farmhands and requirements of tax roll prevented the growth of big and hereditary estates noticeable in well-known reports on Bhutan. Laws of succession ensured lifetime assignment of land to the peasants and though in theory land was resumable after his demise, in practice it was transmitted undivided to his successors. That resumption of land was not the

140. Charles Bell, *People of Tibet*, Oxford, 1868, p. 88.

141. Charles Bell, *People of Tibet*, p. 89. In recent times the tendency to coalesce holdings has been checked by the reforms of King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. He has restricted individual ownership to 30 acres and himself owns only so much. K. K. Moorthy, 'Bhutan...the Economic Scene', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, XXXI, Feb. 23, 1961, p. 333.

142. (a) The present king has declared serfdon illegal and freed "about 5000 slaves who were mostly captives seized from the plains". K. K. Moorthy, *op. cit.*, 'Social Progress', p. 333.

(b) At present in the Western Duars there are Rajbansis living in several villages who are known as "Dobhasias", that is, people speaking two languages. It is said that during their long stay in Bhutan their ancestors acquired knowledge of Bhutanese language, *Jaipaiguri District Centenary Souvenir*, 1970, p. 50.

practice is also clear from Claude White's summation of the laws of Bhutan. Therein it is stated that a ryot who is aged and has neither daughter nor son may be asked only to render such labour and service for revenue as he is able to perform alone as long as he lives. Upon his or her decease "the same holding shall pass to the nearest kith or kin who will thenceforth be expected to render both labour and cash and kind revenues"[143]. According to Pemberton the Bhutanese landholder could invest the "little capital" that might have accumulated only in the erection of a good house. Like every other property it was "liable to resumption by government" on the death of the person who constructed it. However, the prescription of law was obviated by presents to the Penlops and dzongpons "in whose jurisdiction the house is situated".[144]. There are only occasional glimpses regarding landed endowments for monasteries. The Dharma Raja is reported to have been possessing landed estates in the lowlands. In 1836 it was learnt that the Bans Ka Duar in Kamrup was "assigned for the maintenance of the Dharma Raja's family and the priests in attendance upon him". Due to the attachment of the Duar they were suffering considerably "being interdicted from intercourse with the plains"[145]. In 1864 the Bhutanese insisted that the British subsidy of Rs. 10,000 paid for the Assam Duars since 1841 were always forwarded to the Darbar of the Dharma Raja and spent for "eight or nine thousand Lamas" and the "pooja" (worship) of the Mahakal at Punakha and Tashi-Chhodzong. The Tongsa Penlop and his officials never "spent a single pice" on their own account"[146]. In fact throughout the 19th century assignments of revenue and landed endowments for monasteries are well authenticated features of the Bhutanese economic landscape.

A characteristic Bhutanese custom is that "for the most part the husbands live in the houses of their wives, the latter

143. Claude White, *op. cit.*, Appendix I, p. 307.

144. R. B. Pemberton, *Report,* p. 64.

145. From Agent to the Governor General to Secretary to the Government of India in the Political Deptt. Para 2. Foreign P.C. June 27/36, No. 52, N.A.I.

145. Translation of letters from Deb and Dharma Rajas, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Nov. 1864, No. 5069, State Archives, Govt. of West Bengal.

seldom going to their husband's house"[147]. This has been sought to be explained in a recent article which stated that "It all depends on the strength of the two families as an agricultural labour force". The present situation is "the groom comes over if the bride's family's labour needs are greater but if both families have ample labour than the couple may stake out their own plot of land and home"[148]. George Bogle found the taxes "moderate in themselves" and less oppressive for the "simple manner of gathering them"[149]. Krishna Kanta Bose's description implies that the state took a determined share of the grain crop but the basis of assessment is not stated specifically. Pemberton says that the revenue contributed "by the population of the hills" consisted of grain, goats, sheep, ghee, fowls and clothes. These were paid by the cultivators to their chiefs who forwarded them to the Penlops. A portion of them was transferred to Punakha and Tashi-Chhodzong in winter. The immediate requirements of the state were met from these central stores and the remainder were employed in trade by the "Deb, Dharma, Poona and Tassi Zimpes". As "nearly the whole of the revenue" was paid in kind and there was nothing like public records, neither the valuation of articles nor the principles of assessment could be obtained[150]. Eden's report stated that assessments made at an earlier, albeit unspecified, period were on the basis of the capacity of seeds. This was familiar in Tibet and shows, as in many other forms, Tibet's intimate connection with Bhutan on the "secular side"[151]. Eden wrote : "the lands of each village were estimated many years ago as being capable of being sown with a certain number of measures of seed, the estimate was placed on record and the demand standing against the village was fixed at forty measures of grain for each such measure of seed". Even in villages where population was decreasing "no allowance is made and the remaining villages were expected

147. Pedro Carrasco, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

148. K. K. Moorthy, 'Bhutan...the Economic Scene', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, XXXI, Feb. 23, 1961, p. 333, Social Progress.

149. C. R. Markham, *op cit.*, p. 36.

150. R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, pp. 63, 64.

151. A study of the mode of assessment of land revenue in Central Tibet occurs in W. G. Surkhang's article entitled 'Tax Measurement and Lag'Don Tax', published in *Bulletin of Tibetology*, Vol. III, No. I, Gangtok, Sikkim, Feb. 21, 1966.

"to make up the deficiency". Thus a "constant screw is applied to extort the quantity of grain leviable under the old settlement made in the days of Bhutanese prosperity[152]. Charles Bell, a later authority, however, in contrasting the Tibetan and Bhutanese "unit of land taxation" says that the basis of the "former system" of assessment in Bhutan was the number of members in each household[153]. The herders who did not render un-paid labour unless they owned land were assessed in cash at the rate of six narayanee rupees for each milch cow and also had to give two seers of butter per month.

The seven Duars in Kamrup and Darrang in Assam with an area of nearly a thousand square miles had been annexed by the Bhutanese "long before the British came into possession of Bengal". These Duars were held by the Ahoms "until Gourinath's reign, when they were surrendered to the Bhutias in consideration of an annual tribute of Rs. 4,785"[154]. It has been noted that the Duars had been conceded "to the Dharma Raja of Bhutan" to enable him to carry on religious services. However, collection from these Duars on the part of Bhutanese Subahs and Penlops consisted of "almost every article of consumption"[155] not available in the barren mountains and the amount entirely depended on the generosity of Bhutanese officials. Whereas the tribute which the Bhutan government paid for these Duars were obtained from their "own country or from Tibet"[156]. A glance at the list furnished makes this clear. The articles of tribute consisted of "24 tolas of gold dust, 36 ponies, 24 pieces of musks, 24 cow-tails, 24 daggers, 24 blankets and 2,400 rupees in cash having an estimated value of 4785 Narayanee rupees"[157].

The Ahom Raj had surrendered its territorial rights in the Duars and had purchased a "doubtful security". Further, the tenure by which Bhutan held these tracts was complicated by

152. A. Eden's Report on the State of Bhutan, Part III, para 51.

153. Charles Bell, *People of Tibet*, Reprint, 1968, Appendix I...the Unit of Land Taxation, p. 301.

154. E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p. 364.

155. R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, p. 13.

156. R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, p. 14.

157. R. M. Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam*, (1824-'54), 1954, p. 216.

"divided jurisdiction, payment of tribute in kind and money and unsettled boundaries"[158]. As late as 1841, the year in which the Duars were "resumed" the British authorities in India were not clear about rights of tenure. A letter from Government states "the Governor-General in Council sees at present . . . little hope of obtaining a valid opinion of the rights of Bhutan in the Assam duars"[159]. To the extent that these rights remained unknown and unknowable the hapless Cacharee peasants were rackrented and subjected to an "extensive predatory system" and the Duars were threatened with depopulation. It does not seem rewarding to be overwhelmingly concerned with innumerable recorded Bhutanese raids once the source of the malady is even tentatively located. More remarkable is the fact of oft repeated "forbearance" towards Bhutan. Evidently Warren Hastings' policy of wooing Bhutan had not died with his departure. In 1836 the Governor General's Agent wrote in his reply to the letters of the Dharma Raja's father and the Tongsa Penlop : . . . "when the British government between whom and the Bhutan Government there has existed an undisturbed alliance in the strictest friendship since the year 1775, conquered Assam from the Burmese the British government continued to allow the Bhutias to hold the duars on customary tribute"[160].

The principal officers in the Duars of Assam under Bhutanese control were "Kacharees, Assamese or Bengalis"[161]. They were appointed by Sanads of the Deb Raja on the recommendations of Penlops or dzongpons. These latter generally resided in the hills and were "chosen from among the most favoured class of Bhutias"[162]. To the west of Kamrup were the Koch chiefs of Bijni and Sidli described indifferently as Rajas or Zemindars whose territories extended to the river Sankos. In 1792 there had been a dispute regarding the succession to Bijni. On that occasion the Deb Raja of Bhutan asserted his right of nomi-

158. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

159. Foreign P.C. July 26, 1841, No. 82, N.A.I.

160. Governor General's Agent's reply to the Zeenkaffs deputed with letters of the Dharma Raja's father and the Tongsa Penlop, dated 1st and 16th Baisakh, 1243 B.S., Foreign P.C. June 27, 1836, No. 52, N.A.I.

161. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

162. *Ibid.*

nation with success and the incumbent was "permitted" to remain. After 1826 the Chiefs of Bijni are shown on records as holding possession of "Chota Bijni" and some tracts south of the Brahmaputra as "tributary mehals" and they did not like to register themselves as "mere proprietory zemindar" under the British. For the northern portion of their territory extending to the confines of Bhutan they had been subjected to pay annual tribute to the Bhutanese government consisting of "dried fish, cloth and other articles". In a document of 1833 Bijni then under Indranarayan is shown to consist of 100 villages with a "supposed" population of 10,000 and a "supposed revenue" of Narayanee rupees 2000/-[163]. In describing the status of the chiefs of Bijni and Sidli Pemberton says in 1838 that they were "in a degree tributary both to the British and Bhutan government"[164]. In 1865 Eden wrote "the zemindaree tenure in Goalpara was conferred on the Raja (of Bijni) by the Mughal government and was recognised and confirmed by the British government in the Permanent Settlement, but in regard to the Bijni Duars the Rajas have always been regarded as chiefs dependent on the authority of the Bhutan government and not as zemindars in the same sense in which we have constituted them proprietors of the soil"[165]. At best such definition of the terms of tenure would mean dual control and at worst the rights and obligations of three particles namely, the British, the Bhutanese and the local inhabitants involved, remained undefined. In either case cultivation suffered and the frequent raids of the Bhutanese Subah of Chirang in Bijni and Sidli territories spread horror and a sense of insecurity among the inhabitants. It often happened that the Chiefs of Bijni and Sidli resided in British territory in order to avoid payment of tribute to and irregular exactions of the Subah of Chirang. Hamilton speaks of Udayanarayan, the Raja of Sidli, who dodged payment of tribute causing "seve-

163. The Paper on Bhutan is No. 23 along with which a Chart (No. 24) is enclosed. The figures about Bijni occurs in this Chart. Foreign P.C. Jan. 7/1833, No. 82, N.A.I.

164. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

165. Bhutan Political Proceedings, July, 1865. From Eden to Commissioner of Assam, No. 3549, dated on board the Yacht Rhotas 13th July, 1865, p. 48, para 5, State Archives, Government of West Bengal.

ral incursions, and the ruin of the country"[166]. For these reasons no flourishing settlement grew up in the area and Bijni wore a deserted look. In the days of the Duar War (1964-6') a high ranking official found Bijni as a "miserable collection of huts without fort or bazar (market). The Rajbari (place) consists of a brickwall enclosing some fifty thatched houses. I know no such a desolate position in Bengal as that of Bijni". He further noted that Bijni was acknowledged "as de facto Bhutan territory" and the Raja is "tehsildar (collector of revenues) of the produce of the land or duar". In consideration of his paying "a portion of his collections to the Deb Raja of Bhutan he receives a sunnad of appointment from the Deb Raja". The "last sunnad given is about two years back"[167].

A memorandum on Sidli in 1865 states that the "earliest authority on the subject of Sidli seems to be Dr. Buchanan" according to whom the possessor of the rank of the Raja of Sidli in the year 1809 was the "tenth or eleventh person of the same family" who held these lands conjectured to have received as an appanage in virtue of the descent from Viswa Singha, the Cooch prince". The name of the Sidli chief in that year (1809) was Surya Narayan and the same family "appear to have held Sunnads of appointment from Bhutan government from that period to this"[168].

In 1864 important informations about Bhutan's revenue administration in the Buxa and Balla Duars were collected by officials with the Bhutan Duar Field Force, Capt. Lance, Civil Officer, made enquiries regarding the revenue system in these Duars. He found that taxes were imposed on "each ryot's house on the estate". In addition they had to pay certain "fixed tributes" and "presentation of nuzzars" (presents to officials). In "a great number of cases sunnads are given in the Buxa Duar" allotting a "fixed jummah" (deposit) on the estate payable by

166. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Reprint, Gauhati, 1963.

167. No. 14 Travelling Diary of the Civil Officer with the Right Column, Dooar Field Force, for the week ending Dec. 29, 1864, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Feb. 1865.

168. Nos. 5-16 Memorandum on the newly acquired territory north of Goalpara district in Lower Assam, Bhutan Political Proceedings, July, 1865, p. 39.

the zemindar "irrespective of fluctuations in the number of ryots, cultivation etc." The Mechis and the Toto tribes living on the outer spur of hills used to pay rent in kind "to the Subah". The items alluded to are elephant's tusk, stag's skins besides rice[169]. An extensive system of forced labour or corvee was prevalent in this area and soldiers had to be fed while passing through the districts. It would appear that in some cases there were zemindars whom the Bhutanese empowered to collect taxes and defined their rights and obligations in sunnads or title deeds. In others the ryots (cultivators) paid their rental to Bhutanese officials. That the mode of collection of taxes was both through tributary chiefs and also direct from ryots was recorded by Hamilton who wrote : "The hereditary chiefs, so far as I learned, pay a fixed tribute, and the Bhutia officers collect the land rent on account of the government"[170]. This is borne out by later revenue records. The British found in some areas that "middlemen already exist and have acquired prescriptive right" and these were to be "respected and maintained". In other tracts "the sole right holder in the soil are the ryots and the state" and it was considered "inexpedient to create a new class of right holders intermediate between these two"[171]. Away from the lower elevation of the hills there were powerful landholders in the heart of the Duar plains, Members of the Raikat family of Baikunthopur and the Kathams of Mainaguri enjoyed prescriptive right over stretches of territory under Bhutanese control. Durgadev, the "son of the Raikat of Baikunthopur" fought a long drawn war against the Kathams claiming "hereditary right" in the "mehal called Kyranti"[172]. Fortunately there are records which show that land relations in the Duars easily entangled these chiefs with contending factions in Bhutan itself and fair districts in the Duars

169. These informations about the Bhutanese revenue administration in Buxa and Balla Duars are culled from a communication from Capt. W. H. J. Lance to Col. Haughton, Political Agent and Chief Civil Officer, Dated Camp Balla, The 20th Dec. 1864, Paras 10, 13, 16 and 23. *Ibid.*, January, 1865.

170. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam, Gauhati,* 1963, p. 69.

171. J. A. Milligan, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Jalpaiguri District,* 1906-1916, Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1919, p. 134.

172. Foreign P.C. No. 64, Sept. 14, 1840.

were laid waste[173]. Arung Sing of Gooma whose abduction by the Bhutanese in 1856 raised a storm has been described as a "hereditary zemindar"[174] and evidently belonged to the family of Pran Singh whom Ensign Brodie found settling new ryots in Gooma Duar in 1834[175]. Very often zemindars in different Duars like the Rajas of Bijni and Sidli evaded payment of dues to Bhutanese authorities and escaped to British territory. The result was chronic border forays on the part of the Bhutanese the records of which almost border on dull uniformity.

In the western or Bengal Duars prescriptive rights were also enjoyed by "jotedars" under the Bhutanese government. They were the "original reclaimers" of the soil and were strong enough to "maintain on the principle laid down in the laws of Manu, full rights over the fields they have made". Later enquiries revealed that jotedars really had a "vested transferable interest in the land"[176]. It was found by the British that the jotedari system in the Western Duars did not interfere with the "enhancement of revenue". On the contrary "attempts to introduce landowners by granting large estates under the name of jotes to the late Col. Hedayet Ali and others has not proved successful". It had retarded reclamation and the revenue was collected with more difficulty from such proprietors and the "actual cultivators are lowered in position"[177]. Findings of this nature give the lie to overcharged minds thundering that the Bhutanese cared for nothing except "grain, pigs, spirit and money". This observation does not come in the way of subscribing to the view that "all rights, whether to real or personal property must be taken as subject to this limitation that they were continually violated, par-

173. This is dramatically exposed in the long struggle between the Raikats and the Kathams described in Chapter II. The rivalry of the factions in Bhutan and its repercussion in the plains is further elaborated in analysing the functioning of the Bhutanese dyarchy in Chapter I.

174. Despatch to the Court of Directors, No. 97, Sept. 20, 1856, Para 278.

175. Foreign P.C. No. 53-54, Aug. 28, 1834.

176. D. H. E. Sunder *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars in the District of Jalpaiguri,* Calcutta, 1895, pp. 15-21.

177. D. H. E. Sunder, *op. cit.,* p. 20, Para 17. Hedayet Ali was the Commandant of the Cooch Behar contingent which fought against Bhutan in the Duar War (1864-65). He was appointed Assistant Commissioner of the Western Duars.

ticularly during the civil war which immediately preceded our annexation"[178].

The foregoing paragraphs venture to make a case that Bhutan's revenue system in the Duars under its control deserves study as an administrative category by itself. It would be impermissible to dismiss the subject with remarks like "strictly speaking there is no system"[179]. The broad outline of the picture which emerges are :—The Duar plains inhabited by non-Bhutanese people were under the control of a number of chiefs of Koch origin. The chiefs of Bijni and Sidli as also the Raikats of Baikunthopur besides numerous zemindars were accustomed with old traditions and customs in every sphere including revenue relations and rights of property. So long as the Bhutanese could obtain what they wanted through tribute, revenue, trade and last but not least irregular exactions they left the old customs undisturbed. It had to be so because they dreaded the Duars for purposes of residence. There were insurmountable physical difficulties, problems of communication and contact and lack of manpower. While every early report on Bhutan emphasises that there were no "rights of property" and the "hereditary system" was unknown, these very important principles were not interfered with in the Duars. On the contrary the Bhutanese are recorded to have backed up hereditary landholders against powerful entrenched interests in the Duars in order to ensure the permanence of their control of the fertile plains. In the Assam Duars local agents of non-Bhutanese stock were employed for the collection of revenue and tributes were collected from ruling chiefs and zemindars. It is for these reasons that land and revenue relations in the Duars are to be studied in a separate order and not to be confused with such relations in Bhutan within the hills. The categories may well be labelled as the Tibetan and Indian zones.

Section V—Bhutan's Trade and British Commercial Diplomacy :

In describing the early trade of Bhutan, Ralph Fitch, the merchant-traveller, who visited Cooch Behar in 1583, says that

178. D. H. E. Sunder, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

179. Eden's Report on Bhutan, dated Darjeeling, the 20th July, 1864, Para 51.

"there are merchants which (who) come out of China, and they say out of Muscovia and Tartary"[180]. Among the items of trade he mentions musks, blankets, turquoise (agates), silk, pepper and "saffron of Persia". Fitch did not enter the mountains but his narrative evidently shows the commercial importance of the route from Tashilhunpo through the Paro Penlop's territory to Buxa and Chamurchi north of Rangpur. This was the westernmost of the three routes mentioned by Pemberton through which intercourse was carried on in his time between the people of Tibet and the plains of Bengal and Assam[181]. Fitch speaks highly of the prosperity of Cooch Behar and its "distant trade relations with China"[182]. Markham takes his description as a "correct account of the intercourse which then prevailed between India and Tibet through the passes of Bhutan and Nepal"[183].

Cacella and Cabral, who were the first Europeans to penetrate the mountains of Bhutan in 1626 throw light on Bhutan's commercial intercourse not only with the plains of Bengal and Assam but also with Tibet and China. Cacella noted that in those days Hajo (Ajo) in Assam was "very populous and rich". It was the seat of the Koch king Laksminarayan (Liquirnarane). The "Nabob of Mogor" to whom the country paid tribute also resided there. One factor which explains the importance and prosperity of Hajo in those days was that it was at the terminal of two important trade routes through the Manas valley and Towang. The latter did not pass through Bhutanese territory and was a direct commercial artery with Tibet. Pemberton found (1838) that Khampas of eastern Tibet carried on traffic along these two routes. In Cacella's description Cooch Behar appears as a flourishing trade mart. The town was "very populous and plentifully provided both with things which the country itself possesses and those which came from . . . Patna, Rajmahal and Gaur"[184]. Both Hajo and Cooch Behar were undoubtedly focal points of Bhutan's trade with the plains. At the Court of the

180. Hakluyt, *The Second Volume of Principal Navigators' Voyages,* London, Anno 1599, p. 257.

181. R. B. Pemberton, *Report,* p. 78.

182. S. N. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.,* p. 28.

183. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.,* Introduction LIV.

184. C. Wessels, *Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia,* 1603-1721, The Hague, 1924, pp. 127, 128.

Dharma Raja (Droma Raja) the missionaries were entertained with Chinese tea and lodged in a tent "lined with Chinese silk and adorned with a canopy"[185]. Cacella noted that Bhutan was "well provided with Chinese merchandise such as silk, gold and porcelain"[186]. It is noticeable that in Turner's list (1783) of the articles of trade flowing from Tibet to Bhutan tea is mentioned as second to gold dust[187], whereas English broad cloth was the first item among Bhutan's export to Tibet.

In 1771, before Warren Hastings became the Governor of Bengal, the Court of Directors enquired about the "possibility of the northern trade and of sending explorers to Bhutan and Assam[188]. The rising Gurkha power had blocked the "passes through Morung and Demi Jong (Sikkim). The road through Mustang was uneconomical and distant". Therefore the ancient route through Bhutan and Chumbi Valley gained a new importance as a commercial artery towards the north. The "drain of money from Bengal being alarming it was necessary to supply that money by opening new channels of commerce"[189]. The disastrous effects of the great famine of 1770 accelerated the search for new commercial ventures in the north. The famine caused "enormous financial losses, especially in the export of grain and the cotton industry on which the economy of Bengal so much depended"[190]. Already before the famine the Court of Directors had recommended enquiry into the vendibility of European commodities in Tibet and West China by way of Nepal. It was a "late measure"[191] as the Gurkhas themselves had become aware of the value of Tibetan trade and were not favourably disposed towards the English.

Hasting's ideas about the Tibetan trade crystallised in course

185. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

186. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

187. Samuel Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

188. S. C. Sarkar, 'Some Notes on the Intercourse of Bengal with the Northern Countries in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. XLI, Jan.-June, 1931, p. 121.

189. S. C. Sarkar. *op. cit.*

190. Schuyler Camman quoting from Gour Das Bysack's *Notes on the Buddhist Monastery at Bhot Bagan* (Howrah), J.ASB LIX (1891) 59, Text and Note I.

191. Schuyler Camman, *Trade through the Himalayas : The Early Attempts to Open Tibet*, 1951, p. 33, fn. 28.

of the First Bhutan War (1772-74) and he responded with alacrity to the mediation of Palden Yeshe (the third Panchen Lama) in 1774[192]. The Governor-General could afford to be more liberal as Bhutan had been militarily defeated and he had secured his prime objective, namely, complete control over the state of Cooch Behar (The Anglo-Cooch Behar-Treaty of 1772). The clauses of the Anglo-Bhutan Treaty of 1774, which ended the First Bhutan War, make it amply clear that Bhutanese territorial interests in the Duars were favourably considered and in some cases concessions were made at the expense of Cooch Behar as it was "deemed politically expedient to conciliate the good disposition of this State (Bhutan)"[193]. In fact the treaty of 1774 initiated a policy of wooing Bhutan in the interest of trans-Himalayan trade. In the month following the conclusion of the treaty George Bogle left Calcutta, accompanied by Alexander Hamilton on the first mission to Tibet and Bhutan (1774-75) which was an exercise in commercial diplomacy par excellence.

Bogle's transaction in Bhutan is relatively a neglected episode though it merits more than a passing attention. Francis Younghusband wrote, "as regards personal relationship he was eminently successful and that was about as much as he could have expected to establish at the start"[194]. This obviously refers to the rapport Bogle had established with the third Panchen Lama who was held in high esteem by Emperor Chien-Lung and who had admittedly a decisive influence over the Lhasa pontificate. A sense of disappointment is perhaps understandable in view of the hopes raised by Warren Hastings' Tibetan "design"[195]. Nevertheless a study of his remarkable achievements in Bhutan is amply rewarding. The mission travelled by way of Cooch Behar and Buxa to Tashichhodzong. It was detained there till October 1774, while the Panchen Lama was seeking entry permits from the Tibetan government. During his return journey Bogle concluded a treaty with the Deb Raja in May, 1775 conceding important privileges to traders from Bhutan. The treaty distinctly encompassed commercial relations with two countries.

192. The Third Panchen's letter to the English government was received on March 29, 1774 and has been reproduced several times.

193. *Cooch Behar Select Records,* Vol. I, 1882, p. 8.

194. Francis Younghusband, *India and Tibet,* 1910, pp. 24, 25.

195. S. C. Sarkar, *op. cit.,* p. 120.

The preamble was intended for promotion of trade with Tibet. It runs : "Whereas the trade between Bengal and Tibet was very considerable and all Hindu and Mussalman were allowed to trade into Nepal which was the centre of communication between the two countries and whereas from wars and oppressions in Nepal the merchants have of late years been unable to travel into the country the Governor as well as the Deb Raja united in friendship, being desirous of removing these obstacles, so that merchants may carry on their trade free and secure as formerly"[196]. The operative part of the treaty with Bhutan contained the following provisions :—

"That the Bhutanese shall enjoy the privilege of trading to Rangpur as formerly, and shall be allowed to proceed either themselves or by their goomastas (agents) to all places of Bengal for the purpose of trading and selling their horses free from duty or hindrance.

"That the duty hitherto exacted at Rangpur from the Bhutan caravan be henceforth abolished.

"That the Deb Raja shall allow all Hindu and Mussalman merchants freely to pass and repass through his country between Bengal and Tibet.

"That no English or European merchant shall enter the Deb Raja's dominions.

"That the exclusive trade in Sandal, indigo, redskin, tobacco, betelnut and pan shall remain with the Bhutanese and that the merchants be prohibited from importing the same into the Deb Raja's dominions; and that the Governor General shall confirm this in regard to indigo by an order to Rangpur"[197].

In his letter dated June 9, 1775 from Cooch Behar, addressed to the Governor General, Bogle informed that he had "settled matters with the Raja" excepting the "article of Europeans".

In later historical literature the treaty was regarded as an essay below expectation. Bogle failed to secure the Deb Raja's consent to allow Englishmen into his country and, to that extent, as Schuyler Camman says, his mission had "in a measure failed"[198]. But the envoy carefully explained that the entire trade

196. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 184.
197. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, pp. 184, 185.
198. Schuyler, Camman *op. cit.*, p. 50.

with Tibet was in the hands of native agency "before Europeans had anything to do with it"[199]. Bogle believed trade in this region could be promoted "without the establishment of English factories and employment of English Agents". Trade through Nepal was in the hands of native agency before the rise of the Gurkha power. Bogle would consider it an achievement to restore it "back to that point" and he believed that the "connection" he had established with the Panchen Lama and the Deb Raja would accomplish it[200]. It might have been possible to secure access for Europeans when "they were settled in Hindustan merely as merchants", but the "power and elevation to which the English have now risen render them objects of jealousy to all their neighbours"[201]. He foresaw that, without soothing the misgivings of the hillmen about Europeans "it was impossible to obtain a communication with Tibet". Again, the sale of broad-cloth, the most important commodity in the traffic with Tibet, had decreased and "of what is now consumed a large portion is of French manufacture . . . I never could meet with any English cloth"[202]. Conceivably, the French had more effectively utilised the native agency in getting to the Tibetan market and Bogle saw no reason to underrate it. An illuminating comment from Brian Hodgson is :—"let the trade be in accustomed hands and those hands be rendered more effectually operative by the co-operation at Calcutta of English merchants"[203].

Bogle noticed that the Deb Raja and his officers were "in fact the merchants of Bhutan". He had to allay their apprehension, and it would appear that the exclusive privileges which he guaranteed in respect of the import of "valuable sorts of goods" (including indigo) and the abolition of duty on horses (amounting to "six annas in the rupee") was aimed at removing official opposition.

In his treaty Bogle carried out the instructions he had received from the Governor General while at Tashichhodzong[204]. Hastings had written, . . . "you may even consent to relinquish

199. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 188.
200. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 189.
201. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
202. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
203. *Ibid.*, p. 204 fn.
204. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

the tribute or duty which is exacted from Bhutan caravans which comes annually to Rangpur. To that place all their goods for trade, of whatever kind, may come at all times free from any duty or impost whatever, and exempt from stoppage, and in like manner all goods shall pass from Bengal into Bhutan free from duty and molestation". This concession, Warren Hastings thought, was to be the "groundwork" of Bogle's commercial transactions in Bhutan. Bogle was asked to "build such improvement on it" as his judgment and occasion might dictate. With unerring insight into the factors that make all the difference between success and failure the Governor General gave another clear instruction. Bogle was to "discover" how "his (the Deb Raja's) personal interests may be affected by the scheme" and to "encourage any hopes of advantage he may entertain", provided it did not interfere with the general plan. A dramatic fiscal concession and an assurance to the monopolistic commercial privileges of the officialdom in Bhutan were the two powerful levers with which Bogle had been armed before he entered into negotiations. The envoy extended the privileges further as he was "aware" that some of the Bhutanese would wish to proceed beyond Rangpur and even to Calcutta. The privilege of permitting the Bhutanese into the interior parts of Bengal, as Bogle confessed, was "one engine I hope to avail myself with some advantage. I shall have need of them all to bring me to a point in which their own particular interest is concerned". To push up the sale of English broad-cloth[205] he thought it necessary to encourage the Kashmiris, Gosains, Bhutanese and Tibetans to visit Calcutta in winter. These merchants would be "able to procure it at the lowest rate" and passports and escorts to the northern frontier would make them prefer the Company's cloth to any other. The treaty Bogle concluded aimed at "freedom and security" for traders. As he put it : "Merchants left to themselves naturally discover the most proper manner of conducting their trade, and prompted by self interest carrying it on to the greatest extent"[206]. On Bogle's return the Governor General thanked the Deb Raja of Bhutan for "very kindly" receiving his envoy on his way back from Tibet and for the fact that the Deb Raja "has agreed to allow

205. C. R. Markham, *op.* p. 13.
206. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

the merchants to carry on their trade between Bengal and Tibet"[207].

In 1780 Bogle himself organised the fair at Rangpur. Having been "excused (of) all duties", there was a great concourse of Bhutan merchants "who after buying and selling freely went away very well satisfied"[208]. Bogle's treaty with Bhutan ensured the continuance of ancient trade with trans-Himalayan regions through native agencies, though perhaps on a diminished scale for the next half century. In Turner's list (1783) of Bhutan's export to Tibet English broad-cloth is shown as the first item[209]. In 1833 a Bhutanese zinkaff (subordinate official) narrated :—"the Mougol Khasees trade a good deal at Hassa (Lhasa); they occasionally go to Rangpur in Bengal by the Phari and Paro dzong routes for the purchase of other skins"[210]. Surgeon Rennie says (1865) that the trade between Bhutan and Rangpur "gradually fell off" in the time of William Bentinck when the privileges enjoyed by Bhutanese traders were abolished "for the sake of economy". Pemberton's list of imports from and export to Bhutan shows this decline of trade between Rangpur and Bhutan. Even then, broad-cloth was first in respect of value and indigo, second in the list of exports to Bhutan[211]. Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, organised a fair at Titalya which was a "great success while under his control". Subsequently Titalya was included within Rangpur and the "fair then gradually languished and is now one in name only"[212].

During Warren Hastings' administration the importance of Bhutan as " 'gate on the south that prevents entry' "[213] was never lost sight of. The rapport Bogle had established with the third Panchen Lama exceedingly pleased the Governor General. In compliance with a request from the Lama for building a monastery Warren Hastings "granted to him hundred bighas of land on the

207. *Calender of Persian Correspondence*—Vol. IV, 1772-75, Calcutta, 1925, p. 348, Dated October 20, 1775.

208. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, Introduction.

209. Samuel Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

210. Memorandum on the conversation with Cheety zeenkaf, Sent on deputation to Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, Foreign P.C. Dec. 12, 1833, No. 76, N.A.I.

211. R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, p. 77.

212. D. F. Rennie, *op. cit.*, p. 160 fn.

213. Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, 1968, p. 106.

bank of the Ganges opposite Calcutta"[214]. Missions were sent to Bhutan under Alexander Hamilton in 1776 and again in 1777. One of the duties of Hamilton was to examine the claims of the Deb Raja on the districts of Ambari, Falakata and Jalpesh in the heart of the Bengal Duars. He reported that "if restitution was made he would probably be able to induce the Deb Raja to fulfil his agreement with Mr. Bogle and only to levy moderate transit duties on merchandise"[215]. Hamilton returned "after insisting upon the agreement between the Deb Raja and Mr. Bogle being faithfully observed". Hamilton was sent on a third mission in 1777 to congratulate the new Deb Raja. In April 1779 Bogle was appointed envoy to Tibet for the second time. The journey was never undertaken as the Panchen Lama had left for Peking to meet the emperor.

On Hamilton's recommendation, Warren Hastings, in order to preserve the lasting results of Bogle's mission to Bhutan, decided on the cession of tracts known as Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh which were eventually transferred to Bhutan in 1787[216]. These areas belonged to the Raikats (zemindars) of Baikunthopur under Cooch Behar Raj[217]. Ashley Eden, a later British envoy to Bhutan, "entirely failed to comprehend the reasons" and wrote, "I am afraid on this occasion the friendship of the Bhutanese was purchased at the expense of the Baikunthopur zemindar". This historic transaction is an example of how the claim of history or geography, religion or language, were subordinated to the Company's own motive :—securing access to Tibet and through Tibet to China.

The second mission to Tibet was revived under Samuel Turner in 1783 Turner, like Bogle in 1775, fully appreciated that commerce with Bhutan and Tibet could be promoted only through the native agency. Turner sought to extend the scope of Bogle's treaty with the Deb Raja by securing a promise from the Regent of the Panchen Lama for "encouragement to all mer-

214. Calender of Persian Correspondence, Vol. B, 1776-80, Calcutta, 1930, p. 31.

215. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, Introduction, pp. lxx.

216. Bhutan Political Proceedings, Oct. 1865, p. 2, State Archives, Government of West Bengal.

217. Sarat Chandra Ghosal, *A History of Cooch Behar*, Cooch Behar, 1942, p. 420.

chants, natives of India, that may be sent to traffic in Tibet on himself of the government of Bengal"[217a]. Every assistance "requisite for the transport of their goods from the frontier of Bhutan", was assured. The merchants would be assigned places of residence for vending their commodities "either within the monastery, or, should it be considered as more eligible, in the town itself". Like his predecessor, Turner thought that "security and protection were the essential requisites" in commercial intercourse and profit would prove "its best encouragement". It was necessary to "let merchants first learn the way, taste the profit and establish the intercourse". Turner says that "regulations" for trade through Bhutan by means of native agency were "settled by the treaty entered into by Mr. Bogle, in the year 1775, the Deb Raja having acknowledged to me the validity of the treaty, it became unnecessary to insist on the execution of another"[218].

Soon after the departure of Warren Hastings "a contretemps occurred and all his work was undone"[219]. There was a "distinct reversal"[220] of policy with the arrival of the Earl of Cornwallis. The humiliation of Nepal in the Sino-Nepalese war of 1792 completed the disruption of the course of Anglo-Tibetan relations. Forrest writes, "So completely was the policy of opening commercial intercourse between India and trans-Himalayan regions abandoned that the very history of Hastings' negotiations was forgotten, and most of the valuable records of Tibet and Bhutan missions have been lost"[221]. A recent work on Tibet by a Tibetan scholar shows that under the "patron-Lama" relationship China's role in the war of 1792 was that of "an ally of long standing and that the imperial troops did not enter Tibet to attack the Tibetans or to conquer their country"[222]. Without going into the question of the status of Tibet or her authority to pursue her own policy after 1792, it is necessary to underline that the Company's government regarded Chinese exclusiveness as the prime

217a. Samuel Turner, *Account of an Embassy to the Court of Teshoo Lama in Tibet*, London, 1800, p. 174.

218. Samuel Turner, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

219. F. Younghusband, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

220. S. C. Sarkar, *op. cit.*

221. G. W. Forrest, *Selection from State Papers of the Governor General of India*, Vol. I, London, 1910, pp. 313, 314.

222. W. D. Tsepon, Shakabpa, *Tibet : A Political History*, p. 169.

reason for rendering infructuous Bogle's pioneering work not only in Tibet but also in Bhutan. The following excerpt of a letter from Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, to Government[223] is of particular relevance in this connection. The letter, dated 9th June, 1836, runs :—

"I believe. Bhutan is now as it was in the time of Turner's mission a dependency of Tibet, but I am not able to state any particulars as to their connection. Our subjects have been excluded from the trade of Tibet and Bhutan through the jealousy and influence of the Chinese government against the wishes of the Lamas and inhabitants of either country and though the favourable commercial treaty settled by Mr. Bogle in 1775 and subsequently admitted in 1785 by the Deb Raja has never been abrogated yet it has been rendered of no benefit and virtually set aside through the interference of the Chinese government. An envoy might possibly be able to restore to our subjects the privilege of conducting their trade in Bhutan . . . It will not be presumed that the Chinese will be long allowed to exclude British subjects from the privileges granted to other foreigners and to totally interdict them from all the vast possessions that acknowledge their authority".

Thus, as late as 1836, Bogle's treaty with Bhutan had not been abrogated. Only Manchu exclusiveness deprived the East India Company the benefits of trade in a legitimate manner. To Aitchison's comment that Bogle's venture was an "unsuccessful" commercial mission[224]. Claude White replied that this was a "misapprehension" and it was "not fair to say that it (the mission to Bhutan) was unsuccessful"[225]. The Agent's letter, quoted above, proposed a new mission to Bhutan which "should be made the medium of conveying dispatches to the Dalai Lama —referring probably to the circumstances which broke off our intercourse with Tibet, the misunderstanding that our government was connected with the attack of the Nepalese upon Tashilhumpo".

The proposal of sending a new mission was taken up in the same summer (1836) after the attachment of the Banska Duar

223. National Archives of India, P.C. June, 1836, No. 52.

224. C. V. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sannads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries,* Vol. XIV, 1929, p. 80.

225. Claude White, *op. cit.,* p. 241.

in Assam and the discomfiture of Bhutanese troops. The intention of deputing an envoy was communicated to the Deb and Dharma Rajas. After much delay a reply was received in April, 1837. On April 17, 1837, Bhutanese zinkaffs left the presidency with replies from the Governor-General of India "announcing the intended deputation of an envoy after the rainy season"[226]. Among other things the mission was to endeavour "to renew our acquaintance and commercial relations with countries from which we have been so long excluded". It appears that a letter addressed to the Dalai Lama had been drafted in June 1836 which contained the following paragraphs :—

"Events having recently occurred on the frontier of Assam which rendered it desirable that a personal negotiation should be held with the Bhutan government, I have despatched an envoy to that court.

Upwards of 53 years have now elapsed since a mission was (had been) despatched on the part of the British government to the court of Tibet and I am anxious to avail myself of the favourable opportunity which the presence in Bhutan of my envoy affords to renew to Your Highness after so long an interval the expression of regard and attachment which are still entertained towards you by the British Government.

When so long an interval has been suffered to elapse without the renewal of friendly demonstrations on either side it is not surprising if suspicion of neglect or cause of misunderstanding should have arisen.

My sole motive in making this overture is to perpetuate and consolidate a friendship the foundations of which were laid so happily and so long ago and as I think by presence of my envoy he will be able to explain all matters to your satisfaction. I shall be very glad to hear that you have honoured him with an invitation to attend you"[227].

Read in the context of the Agent's letter of June 9, 1836, the "motive" was obviously to reopen the overland trade route to Tibet through Bhutan and the Chumbi valley. In fact, as Bogle had observed earlier . . . "the Company's view in a communication with Tibet are only to an extension of commerce"[228].

226. R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, pp. 36, 37, paras 3-6.
227. Foreign P. C. June 27, 1836, No. 56, N.A.I.
228. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, p. 199.

There is nothing to show that the letter addressed to Dalai Lama reached its destination. Pemberton found that the Bhutanese were most determinedly opposed to "reopening a communication between the British and the Tibetan authorities"[229]. They "shrunk from the very discussion to send a letter to solicit leave to advance (to Tibet) as his predecessor Capt. Turner did in 1783 into Tibet"[230]. Pemberton's negotiations with the Deb Raja failed and the latter refused to sign the proposed treaty "as the Tongsa Penlop objected"[231]. The Court of Directors admitted the failure of the political objectives of Pemberton's mission though they commended it for the collection of "valuable miscellaneous information"[232]. It was observed that "for the first time" the British government was put in possession of a "positive account of the system of internal government obtaining in that province (Bhutan)" and "furnished with informations to guide our conjectures as to the influence that regulates its foreign policy"[233]. In his concluding observations Pemberton recommended the attachment of the Assam Duars, which would enable the British to dictate terms, and refuse to treat with any but the "paramount authorities at Lhasa"[234]

Section VI—Bhutan and Her Neighbours

In the 17th century eastern Himalaya witnessed a "religious rather than a racial" war between Tibet and Kagyud Bhutan. The Mongol-Tibetan combination attempted a political dominance, in the southern lands under the cloak of religious leadership of the reformed church (Gelugpa). They succeeded in Tibet but had to retrace their steps in Bhutan. Shakabpa, in his political history of Tibet, has mentioned at least five confrontations between the Tibetan and Bhutanese forces in the 17th century. It was something more than a Thirty Years' War[235]. It is remarkable

229. R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, p. 98.
230. Robertson's note, Foreign P.C. March 27, 1839, No. 81, N.A.I.
231. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, pp. 96, 97.
232. Despatch from the Court of Directors No. 13 of 1839, File, July 10/39, No. 13, N.A.I.
233. Foreign P.C. March 27, 1839, No. 81.
234. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, pp. 97, 98, para 7.
235. W. D. Tsepon Shakabpa, *Tibet : A Political History*, pp. 98, 112, 113, 118, 122.

that the peculiar dual government in Bhutan came out of the test successfully. In 1676 when the trade between Bhutan and Tibet had come to a halt the Bhutanese attached Sikkim and occupied large areas in the Chumbi valley[236]. Tibet, however, was able to retain its hold over Chumbi valley and Sikkim and the Bhutanese forces withdrew. According to some modern scholars, the "crisis" between Tibet and Ladakh in 1680 was "caused by Ladaki support of a red sect Lama who held spiritual and temporal sway over Bhutan"[237].

During Chador Namgyal's reign in Sikkim (1700-1716) Bhutanese forces again entered Sikkim on the invitation of Phedi Wangmo, the daughter of the Sikkimese ruler Tensung Namgyal by his Bhutanese Queen. Chador Namgyal fled to Tibet and the Bhutanese forces captured the Rabdentse palace and held it for eight years. They took possession of the areas now known as Kalimpong and Rhenok. In the wake of Bhutanese military exploits[238] the Kagyud spread out in Sikkim in the reign of Gyurmed Namgyal (1717-'33).

In the second quarter of the eighteenth century Tibet was under the strong administration of Miwang Pholhanas who has been described by Richardson "as one of the best rulers Tibet has had for he gave the country 18 years of prosperous and peaceful government[239]. Bhutan fell into the grip of a civil strife around 1730. Tibetan troops entered Bhutan to settle claims of two rival Lamas to be regarded as reincarnation of Shabdung Ngawang Namgyal. Bhutanese chiefs were forced to recognise the claim of one of the Lamas. The terms of settlement required that an official Bhutanese representative would go to these and pay respect and give presents to the Tibetan government. This custom "known as Lochak was continued till 1950"[240]

In the second half of the eighteenth century the smaller states of the eastern Himalaya were threatened by the ambition of the

236. W. D. Tsepon Shakabpa, *Tibet : A Political History*, p. 122.

237. Margaret Fisher, Leo Rose and Robert H. Huttanback, *The Himalayan Battleground, Sino-Indian Rivalry in Ladakh*, London, 1963, p. 37.

238. *Sikkim—A Concise Chronicle*, Gangtok, 1963, pp. 6-8.

239. H. E. Richardson, *Tibet and Its History*, Oxford, 1962, p. 53.

240. W. D. Tsepon Shakabpa, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

newly risen Gurkha power in Nepal. Sikkim felt the brunt of Gurkha attack during the reign of Namgyal Phuntsog. The Gurkha thrust was resisted by a remarkable Sikkimese General, Chandzok Chutup, also known as Satrajit. He is said to have beaten back the Gurkhas seventeen times. Although the Nepalese suffered heavy losses they occupied Elam, Topzong and a large part of Western Sikkim. Gurkha power extended across the Mechi river and, during the reign of Tenzing Namgyal in Sikkim, the Nepalese occupied the entire lower Tista. George Bogle raised the issue of Gurkha aggression against Sikkim in his audience with the Panchen Lama on December 28, 1774. He expressed the apprehension that if the Gurkha Raja succeeded in conquering Sikkim, "he would attempt Pari dzong or the Deb Raja's country" and that "having assumed the title of the King of the Hills (Parbat-kai-Raja) he wished to be so in reality[241]. Bogle's view that only the "knowledge of a connection" between the governments of Tibet and Bengal would make the Gurkha Raja desist from his war against Sikkim was appreciated by the Lama Statesman. The Panchen Lama admitted that the war had prevented the importation of sugar, spices and tobacco and other things into Tibet and the "people complained loudly of it". Obviously the Lama was much pleased with Bogle's proposal and "he had no doubt of carrying the point I wished but that it might require a year or two to do it effectually". Bhutan at first joined forces with the Gurkha to keep her hold secure east of the Tista. However, she became aware of the danger posed by the Gurkha power, and, after 1780, co-operated with the Sikkimese in resisting the Gurkhas. Nepalese adventure in Tibet (1788-92) combined with the earlier British penetration of the eastern Himalaya (Anglo-Bhutan Treaty of 1774, and George Bogle's commercial treaty with Bhutan in 1775) put a stop to Gurkha expansion in these regions. The East India Company went out of its way to ensure Bhutanese friendship after the First Bhutan War (1772-'74). Similarly, after defeating the Gurkha (Treaty of Sagauli, 1816), the Company's government propped up Sikkim as a barrier to the eastern progress of Gurkha power in the interest of trans-Himalayan trade. The treaty of Titalya, 1817, ceded the territory "eastward of the Mechi river and to the westward of the

241. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, pp. 149, 150.

Tista river"[242] to the Raja of Sikkim "in full sovereignty". These territories had been recovered from the Gurkhas and a portion of them around Titalya was lost to Sikkim for good. British acquisition of the hill station of Darjeeling in 1835 was a further deterrent to restless Gurkha ambition.

For the first time in 1826 Bhutan came into direct physical contact along a long line of frontier with the growing British power. With the British annexation of Assam her hold on the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang was threatened. Already her suspicions about the ulterior motives of British policy had been confirmed. British grip over Cooch Behar was too firm and Maharaja Harendra Narayan was fighting a lost battle to preserve a vestige of independence for his Raj. Nepal had been beaten (1816) and compelled to cede territory. Sikkimese territorial claims in the Terai were ignored to the extent they came in the way of British aims (Treaty of Titalya, 1817). The aggressive attitude of an expanding empire could not be easily concealed from the peoples of the surrounding nations. And it would "probably have been difficult to convince the Bhutanese or the Tibetans that a policy directed against others might not some day be directed against them. Especially as the former had already enjoyed a somewhat too intimate experience with it"[243]. Suspicion and fear culminated into positive hostility and characterised the attitude of even the lowest official of the Bhutanese hierarchy. Viewed in this light the "delinquencies" of Bhutanese officials mentioned on almost every page of the records after 1826 could be set in perespective. Before long the persistent hostility of the Tongsa Penlop, the governor of the eastern division of Bhutan and his subordinate officials became evident. Revenue relations in the Assam Duars led to bitter controversy and the problem of "arrears" of tribute in all the ramifications worked up a situation by 1841 when it was felt that a drastic measure was called for. Already Pemberton (1838) had recommended that a "distinction" ought to be drawn between the Tongsa Penlop and the other Bhutanese chiefs[244]. This view was endorsed by Robertson in a minute in 1839 wherein he plainly admitted "the difficulty which must be felt by the rulers of Bhutan in

242. C. U. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements etc.*, Vol. I, p. 157.
243. Camman Schuylar, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
244. R. B. Pemberton, Report, p. 97, Para 5.

accommodating their demeanour to the great change effected in Assam by our conquest of that valley"[245]. It was essential not to antagonise the Paro Penlop and other chiefs for the "faults or provocations of the other chief (i.e., The Tongsa Penlop)"[246].

The Duars under the jurisdiction of the Tongsa Penlop in Darrang and Kamrup, were "resumed" in 1841. There are certain peculiarities in the circumstances in which this important step was taken. Aitchison recorded that the whole of the Assam Duars "were annexed to British possessions and a sum of rupees 10,000 was allotted to be annually paid to the chiefs as compensation which sum was considered to be equal to one-third of the revenue of the Kamrup and Darrang Duars. *No written Agreement was made regarding this arrangement*"[247].

The decision to take possession of the Assam Duars does not appear to have originated with the supreme government in India. Lord Auckland's Afghan adventure had sparked off serious events by the autumn of 1841. Disasters followed in rapid succession till the British troops began their tragic retreat in January, 1842. It was in these circumstances that "later in the year (1841) in consequence apparently of instructions from the Court of Directors orders were issued for the resumption of the whole of the Assam Duars"[248]. For about a decade past North-West Frontier officials had struck a cautious note in dealing with Bhutan. In 1833 Robertson had written that a "rupture with Bhutan may lead to far more momentous results than the little we can gather regarding the internal power of that state...". It may involve nothing less than an "eventual war with China"[249]. In 1836 Jenkins warned that in case of a war with Bhutan, China would "probably" come to the aid of the latter. Pemberton spoke of "imperial mandate" from China requiring the Bhutanese "to quell promptly all internal tumult or rebellion and to report immediately on pain of the infliction of a heavy fine, any apprehended invasion from external foes"[250]. The following year Robertson

245. Foreign P.C. March 27/39, No. 81, N.A.I.
246. *Ibid.*
247. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 143.
248. Eden's Memorandum dated Darjeeling, May 6, 1864, para 21.
249. Foreign P.C. Dec. 12/33, No. 75, N.A.I.
250. R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, p. 90.

expressed the fear that if straitened Bhutan would be supported by China with whom "it could never be our interest to come into collision"[251]. The first Opium War (1839-42) had shaken the power of the Manchus. The better firearms of the British made their victory easy enough. The loss of Manchu authority in Tibet was manifest. In the Dogra War of 1841-42 the Tibetans faced the Dogra threat alone and no Chinese troops rushed to their aid. Indeed in the Asian system the erosion of Manchu authority coincided with the growth of the British imperial system in India. In this context of Chinese inability to cross the Himalayan barrier the decision to strike at Bhutan seems to have been taken on the instruction of the Court of Directors. Bhutan persistently refused to recognise the cession of the Assam Duars for the next quarter of a century.

The next great step towards reaching the Himalayan barrier was the Duar War (1864-65) and the annexation of the Bengal Duars. The rupture with Bhutan came in the wake of the Second China War (1856-60) when the "barbarians" were again victorious. The Treaty of Sinchula (1865) which ended the Duar War brought within the purview of British arbitration Bhutan's relations with the neighbouring states of Sikkim and Cooch Behar. Curiously enough her relations with Tibet and China remained an undefined area. It had serious political implications which came into focus when Bhutan was again rocked by civil war in 1885-86.

251. Foreign P.C. March 27, 1839, No. 81.

CHAPTER II

COOCH BEHAR AND BHUTAN (1772-1865)

Cooch Behar[1] or "land of the Koches" once formed part of the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa. It was so called after the Koches had established their political predominance under Biswa Singha in the earlier half of the 16th century. Under Nara Narayan (1534-87) Cooch Behar reached the apex of its glory. The English merchant-traveller Ralph Fitch arrived at Cooch Behar in 1583 and wrote about her trade relations with the distant lands of Tibet, China and Tartary across the Himalayas. Nar Singha, the king's brother, is said to have taken refuge in Bhutan after his expulsion from Cooch Behar. The Baharistani-i-Ghaibi by Mirza Nathan[2], a very important Persian source, for the history of the North-East Frontier and Assam during Jahangir's reign shows the division of the Koch kingdom into Kamats and Kamrup. The rivalry of the two branches of the Koch royal house paved the way for Mughal supremacy. King Lakshmi Narayan of Cooch Behar accepted imperial vassalage in 1609. The kingdom felt the brunt of Mughal attack during Mir Jumla's Assam expedition in 1661. Cooch Behar continued in a state of decadence and in 1711 lost to the Muslims the rich chaklas (a territorial division) of Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag. Systematic expansion of Bhutanese power in the plains began during this period. They interfered in issues of succession in Cooch Behar as early as 1680.

1. The state of Cooch Behar was ceded by its ruler to India by what is known as the Cooch Behar Merger Agreement (Aug. 28, 1949). The state was merged with West Bengal in January 1950. The present district of Cooch Behar has an area of 1289 sq. miles. Its northern frontier is about 20 miles south of the Bhutan range of hills. On the east it is bound by the Goalpara district of Assam. Its southers limit is determined by the international boundary between India and the new state of Bangladesh. The district forms an "irregular triangle" with mostly artificial boundary. Culled from *District Census Handbook, Cooch Behar,* 1961, Part I.

2. *Beharistan-i-Ghaibi,* Translated from original Persian by Dr. M. I. Borah, 2 Vols., Gauhati, Assam, 1936.

Bhutan's sustained interest in the affairs of Cooch Behar throughout the 18th century centred on ensuring her hold over the fertile tract now known as the Western Duars[3]. Historically, these Duars extending from river Tista to Sankos and beyond were held by Koch chieftains. Our best authorities are silent as to when the Bhutanese extended their grip on the plains of the Western or Bengal Duars. The late H. N. Chaudhuri, in his official history of Cooch Behar says that before the First Bhutan War the Bhutanese systematically took possession of a large number of "taluks" (a land unit) in the Western Duars. He remarks that these areas "formerly held in farm under Cooch Behar, were usurped by them and the payment of revenue was stopped. They also openly dispossessed some other lands covered by taluks "Chichakhata, Paglahat, Luckiduar, Kyranti and Maraghat which were under direct management of the state"[4]. This remark throws a flood of light on the process through which the Bhutanese acquired control over the Duars under Cooch Behar though it lacks the basis of firm chronology. The struggle between the Koch and the Bhutanese is fairly an old story about which Dalton wrote : "There were no doubt conflicts between the Kuch and the Butias about three hundred or four hundred years ago but these were struggles for supremacy in the Duars which ended in many of the Kuch leaders as Sidli and Bijni and other chiefs submitting to the Butias"[5].

In the wake of the decline of the empire of the Mughals the plains of the Duars like many parts of northern India were exposed to the depredations of wandering bands known as the Sannyasis[6]. The Koch monarchy founded by Biswa Singha early in the 16th century, had already lost its vitality and was

3. There were eleven Duars on the Bengal Frontier, R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bootan,* Reprint, 1961, p. 29.

4. H. N. Chaudhuri, *The Cooch Behar State and Its Land Revenue Settlements,* 1903, pp. 263, 264.

5. E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal,* Calcutta, 1872, p. 96.

6. The Sannayasis and Fakirs were mendicant orders. They have been described in British official records as "lawless banditti" who levied contributions by violence under pretence of charity. The Sannyasis were held in high veneration by the people in the country side and put up a stiff resistance to the expanding British power at the end of the 18th century. Vide J. N. Ghosh; *Sannyasis and Fakirs Raiders in Bengal,* Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, MCM XXX.

torn by division and internecine strife. "Pendatory" chiefs like the Raikats of Baikunthopur were virtually independent and made a bid to settle old scores by capturing the metropolis, Cooch Behar. It was in this period of instability that the hill kingdom of Bhutan embarked on a career of systematic expansion in the plains of the Duars adjoining the hills. Territorial expansion convinced the Bhutanese that permanent hold over the Duars could not be retained without extending their political hegemony over Cooch Behar. There were extensive tracts in Maraghat and Chamurchi in the possession of Cooch Behar. In the middle of the 18th century Bhutanese presence in Cooch Behar was overwhelming and at times they played the role or the kingmaker. It was with Bhutanese assistance that Maharaja Upendra Narayan (1714-63) defeated the Mughal army that attacked Cooch Behar in support of Dinnarayan. In 1765 the royal preceptor Ramananda, who had conspired in the assassination of Maharaja Devendra Narayan was taken prisoner by the Bhutanese to Punakha and executed there. Thereafter a Bhutanese representative, Pensu Toma, was stationed in Cooch Behar and he began to interfere directly in the affairs of its administration. In 1770 Kumar Rajendra Narayan was raised to the throne by the Bhutanese, and Pensu Toma with his soldiers was the main support of the new regime[7]. One upshot of Bhutanese policy towards Cooch Behar was an attempt at conquest. The Bhutanese king Desi Shidariva[8] descended on the plains of Buxa in 1770 and took prisoner Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan. An appeal from Nazir Khagendra Narayan on behalf of minor Dharendra Narayan evoked prompt response from Warren Hastings. The Bhutanese were dangerously near the British district of Rangpur, and Cooch Behar as a buffer might be lost for ever. The Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty of 1722 ensured British paramountcy over Cooch Behar and promised half the revenue of the state "for ever". A British army of four companies under Capt. Jones arrived and the First Bhutan War began.

Desi Shidariva's policy had the unintended consequence of opening a new arena for the rising power of the East India Company and the singular enterprise of Warren Hastings. The amor-

7. S. C. Ghosal, *History of Cooch Behar*, 1942, pp. 248, 249.
8. George Bogle's Deb Judhur.

phous design of opening Tibet and west China to British trade through the "backdoor" crystallised in course of the First Bhutan War (1772-74) into a decision for commercial reconnaisance of Tibet and Bhutan. The result was the celebrated mission of George Bogle in 1774-75.

The First Bhutan War, fought in Cooch Behar and the adjoining Duars, had certain remarkable features. Perhaps the least appreciated is the role of the Sannyasis who joined hands with the Bhutanese to put up an unexpected resistance in an unknown terrain. The sannyasis enjoyed the veneration of the masses and were known for the rapidity of their movements. They appear to have remarkable hold on the peasants over tracts of the Duars and to have resisted British attempt to dislodge them. In fact the records give the impression that the conflict with the sannyasis delayed peace with Bhutan by nearly a year. Mediation of the Tashi Lama (the third Panchen Lama) has received its due share of applause. The importance of the sannyasi resistance which lengthened the war has been overlooked. After a series of skirmishes the sannyasis fled to the other side of the Tista. On one occasion Capt. Edward's contingent had to give way leaving them alone as "pursuit was dangerous"[9]. Another disastrous engagement at which the contingent under Capt. Thomas was routed, is recorded in Secret Department papers in the following words:—

> "... his defeat did not flow from the want of intelligence of the enemy's number but from the unfortunate measure of attacking them at night when the fear of the sepoys magnifying every object they saw prompted them to throw away their ammunition which the remonstrance of their officers could not prevent or refrain. When the day dawned they had little or no ammunition left. The sannyasis discovering the situation surrounded and attacked the party, who, instead of resisting them with bayonets and endeavouring at a retreat dastardly deserted their gallant leader regardless of the cool and repeated admonition to rally and a total defeat ensued"[10].

Sustained operations against the sannyasis snapped their ties with the Bhutanese. An extensive territory including Purnea,

9. Letter from Hastings to Colebrook, March 31, 1773. Quoted in Regmi's *Modern Nepal*, p. 133.

10. Bhutan Political Proceedings, March, 1865, Index 548, Proceedings in the Secret Department, Monday, the 3rd May, 1773.

Rahimganj and Jalpaiguri were freed from their "marauding raids"[11]. Darpadeva Raikat and his sannyasi adherents were routed by Capt. Stuart who took possession of the town of Jalpaiguri. The treaty of peace with Bhutan in April, 1774, bound the Bhutanese "not to give asylum to the sannyasis, to supply relevant information to the British Resident at Cooch Behar and to allow British troops to pursue them in Bhutan in case of necessity."[12]

In the First Bhutan War British aim was nothing less than extending their possession to the "foot of the hills on that side"[13]. The disadvantages of meeting guerillas from hill terrain were obvious. The British watched every opportunity to fight the Bhutanese in a pitched battle. The converging of the "Bootaners" on the fortress of Cooch Behar was the setting for a full play of British strategy. The capture of Cooch Behar in 1772 was a decisive event in the war. By this costly victory Capt. Jones turned the scale in his favour. The Bhutanese were hotly pursued to the hills as far as Dalimkot at the head of the Duars of the same name. The campaigns early in 1773 were conducted over a wide stretch of territory against isolated Bhutanese outposts in the Duars. The stiffness of the resistance can be visualised from a letter of Lt. Dickson who captured Chekakhata :—

> "The Bhutias behaved with amazing bravery, but their daring courage was only productive of a greater slaughter. They often rushed upon our bayonets and met their death at the very muzzle of our pieces. At Cooch Behar I fought for glory. But here I was obliged to fight for life"[14].

The loss of Cooch Behar and the march of British troops to the foothills spelled the ruin of Desi Shidariva's project. His misfortunes were a powerful lever in the hands of his enemies. The party of priests under Lama Rinpochay took advantage of

11. Letter from Capt. Jones to Hastings, January 30, 1773, Quoted in Regmi's *Modern Nepal*, p. 133.

12. Article 8 of the Anglo-Bhutan Treaty, 1774, C. U. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements etc.*, 1909, Vol. 2, Part IV, pp. 296-97.

13. Bengal Secret Consultations, Letter from J. Stuart to Charles Purling, dated the 11th March, 1773.

14. Proceedings in the Secret Department, Fort William, the 29th March, 1773, The letter is dated Chekakhata on the utmost border of Behar, the 16th March, 1773.

his absence with the army. The recklessness of Sidariva had caused widespread discontent. His endeavour to secure the friendship and protection of the Emperor of China by circulating the latter's seal in Bhutan was resented by the Lamas[15]. On this issue the priests evidently succeeded in whipping up popular sentiments appealing to the old tradition of resisting Gelugpa expansionism from Tibet in the 17th century. A new Deb Raja was installed. Shidariva received the news at Buxa and with a few followers he narrowly escaped to Tibet.

The Tashi Lama who had doubtless been informed by the Bhutanese of their plight decided on mediation. Of late it has come to light that the Gurkha Raja of Nepal also advocated the course with the Tibetan authorities. This has been revealed by translation of his correspondence "as preserved in Tibetan records"[16]. Petech has shown from the autobiography of the Tashi Lama that the Gurkha embassy led by Brahmachari Bhagirathi and Jayas Ram Thapa emphasised the necessity of the Tashi Lama's mediation in course of an audience[17]. The diplomatic initiative and skill of the remarkable Lama-statesman led to the Anglo-Bhutan Treaty of 1774. The Tashi Lama was too eager to counter Regent Gesub Rinpochay's influence over the Lhasa government through a friendly contact with the rising British power and also to detach Bhutan from Shidariva's proclaimed attachment to the Lhasa government and the Chinese. Warren Hastings received the Lama's letter of mediation on the 29th March, 1774. The Lama's deputation to Calcutta was composed of a Tibetan named Paima and Purangir Gossain. The letter from the Lama has been reproduced several times. Samuel Turner described it as "an authentic and curious specimen of the Lama's good sense, humility, simplicity of heart, and, above all, of that delicacy of sentiment and expression which could convey a threat in terms of meakness and supplication". The prospects of commercial relations with Tibet through Bhutan kindled Hastings' imagination. He could now afford to be generous to-

15. C. R. Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa,* 1879, p. 38.

16. Camman Schuyler, *Trade through the Himalayas, The Early British Attempts to Open Tibet,* 1950, p. 28 fn.

17. L. Petech, 'The Mission of Bogle and Turner According to Tibetan Texts', *T'oung Pao,* VXXXIX, Leiden, 1950, pp. 339-340.

wards Bhutan. The initial objectives of the Cooch Behar expedition, very aptly described by Camman Schuyler as "the possession of Cooch Behar and no aggression from the Bhutanese" had been already secured. In April, 1774 a treaty with Bhutan under the new Deb Daja was concluded. Incidentally, the war with Bhutan was the "first move in the diplomatic game"[18] to secure commercial access in Tibet. It is misleading to suppose that contact with Tibet began with peaceful and friendly overtures. It may be added that the government of the new Deb Raja lived in perpetual fear of an insurrection in favour of Desi Shidariva "supported by the government at Lhasa"[19], and was, therefore, favourably disposed towards the English.

The Anglo-Bhutan Treaty of 1774 marks the opening of a new chapter in Cooch Behar-Bhutan relations. Far from ensuring peace between the two countries the treaty unleashed a catena of conflicts. A reputed historian of Cooch Behar has adduced the testimony of a document, called the Bhutanese 'Proposals' along with a copy of the treaty of 1774 to illustrate the remarkable territorial gains made by Bhutan[20]. The proposals were received before 20th March, 1774. In them the Bhutanese claimed the lands of "Kyranti, Maraghat, Luckipur and Dalimkot all of which adjoin the jungles". The treaty conceded them in the west "Kyranti, Maraghat and Luckipur and to the east Chekakhata and Paglahat" (Clause 1). The cession of the fertile tract of Maraghat and Luckipur in effect meant the cession of the whole of the Chamurchi Duar which the Bhutanese originally had not claimed. Further, for the possession of Chekakhata "province" (Clause 2) the Deb Raja agreed to pay an annual "tribute of five tangan horses to the Hon'ble Company". It is not clear how the Company was to receive the tribute instead of the Raja of Cooch Behar whose ancient claim it was.

Fortunately for Bhutan the hour of her military defeat coincided with British anxiety to gain access to Tibet through a new route, now that the more western passes had been closed by the Gurkhas of Nepal. As early as 1768 the Court of Directors in London had recommended obtaining intelligence on trade

18. Camman Schuyler, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

19. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.*, pp. 183, 184.

20. Amanatulla Ahmed, Khan Chaudhury, *A History of Cooch Behar*, (in Bengali), Part I, Cooch Behar State Press, 1936, p. 341.

in Tibet[21]. Warren Hastings spoke of the ambition of a "rising state" and of "adventure for possibilities"[22]. The Tashi Lama's offer of mediation was accepted with alacrity. By a policy of wooing Bhutan became prominent as soon as the initial shocks of war were over. The Bhutanese aim of political predominance in Cooch Behar had been successfully checked. Once British paramountcy over Cooch Behar was ensured by the Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty of 1772 the interests of Trans-Himalayan trade widened the gulf between Cooch Behar and Bhutan. Among the territories ceded to Bhutan by the treaty of 1774 Maraghat and Chamurchi became the bone of contention in the Bengal Duars. Disputes degenerated into armed conflicts which bedevilled Cooch Behar-Bhutan relations right up to the Duar War (1864). The frontier was in a permanent state of ferment which in its turn became the excuse for an aggressive forward policy.

The Maraghat-Chamurchi Dispute

The highly productive tract known as Maraghat was bound on the south by the territory of Cooch Behar, on the north, by an ancient road called Bhangamallee leading from Cantalbari and on the west, by the Jaldhaka river as shown on Rennell's map[23]. Even when the tract was ceded to Bhutan the Raja of Cooch Behar retained his rights over a number of "insulated spots" or farms, locally known as chalas. It may be recalled that Koch chieftains of the Duars had a long tradition of resistance against the Turko-Afghans and the Mughals. A series of old Bengali letters[24], collated by Dr. S. N. Sen, highlight the rivalry of the Koch and the Bhutanese centring round Maraghat and Chamurchi. They also reveal that Bhutanese hopes about British rectitude in reducing tension were illusory. With the departure of Warren Hastings the broad imperial perspective receded and border chiefs on both sides, like the Lords marchers of ancient

21. Susobhan Chandra Sarkar, 'Some Notes on the Intercourse of Bengal with the Northern Countries in the Second Half of the 18th Century', *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. XLI, January-June, 1931, p. 121.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Cooch Behar Select Records, Vol. I, 1882, p. 19.

24. Dr. S. N. Sen, *Prachin Bangla Patra Sankalan* (A collection of old Bengali letters), Calcutta University, 1942.

times, were left free to fight their own battles. The letter received from the Deb Raja of Bhutan on the 28th May, 1795[25] describes the ejection of the Bhutanese from a number of Mauzas[26] by two chiefs, Bulchandra and Kantababu, under Cooch Behar. Another letter from "Penlow Shabeb" somplains that Lala Raghubir, an officer of the Raja of Cooch Behar, "has been causing trouble about the boundary of Chamurchi and Maraghat"[27]. This letter informs that the Raja of Cooch Behar has claimed the whole of Maraghat and apprehends that "war may ensue between the two parties over the question" unless the boundary is settled by the Governor General. The communication from the Deb Raja, received on 18th Aug. 1812[28], shows that Maharaja Harendranarayan of Cooch Behar had made good his claims and "forcibly occupied Chamurchi". It is notable that Bhutan had no settlement records to back her claims. When called upon to "name the gentlemen in whose time and the year in which the dispute was settled" the Bhutanese reply was in amusingly uncertain terms : "two or three gentlemen on behalf of the Company came to Maraghat and fixed the river as boundary and put the Deb Raja in possession of Jalpesh and other disputed lands . . . they do not remember the month and the year precisely but think it was about the year 1186 (Bengali) or two or three years earlier. Mr. Purling or Bogle or some other officer (they do not precisely remember) might have granted the decree with which they were satisfied"[29].

Shortly after the conclusion of the treaty of 1774 the lands of Maraghat were relinquished and the Bhutanese "obtained possession of them without any formal settlement of boundaries"[30]. In 1777 the Dinajpur Council interpreted the first clause of the treaty in favour of Bhutan. The decree of the Council recommended the transfer of five "taluks", namely, Chekakhata, Pagla-

25. *Ibid.*, English Synopsis (No. 132).

26. A territorial division consisting of several villages.

27. Dr. S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, No. 401, Received 26th Nov. 1811.

28. *Ibid.*, No. 412.

29. Dr. S. N. Sen, *Ibid.*, Representation of Cheeta Tundu and Cheeta Tashi on behalf of the Deb Raja, dated 8 Aswin 1222 B.S., No. III.

30. From D. Scott to J. Adam, *Cooch Behar Select Records*, Vol. IX, 1884, p. 19.

hat, Luckipur, Kyranti, and Maraghat to Bhutan[31]. The Bhutanese took possession of Maraghat only after the murder of the Koch chief Narendra Narayan about the year 1780-81[32]. From that time they were in quiet possession of the tract till 1809. The early years of Maharaja Narendra Narayan of Cooch Behar who came of age in 1801 were marked by a determined bid to dislodge the Bhutanese from the plains of the Duars. There was flare-up on the Maraghat-Luckipur frontier at the end of 1808 and troops were sent for the protection of the Maharaja's territory. Enquiries began under Morgan and were completed by the British Commissioner at Cooch Behar, Digby. Maraghat was adjudged to form part of Cooch Behar territory and consequently the Maharaja took possession of them in 1811-12. It was alleged by the Bhutanese that Digby's proceedings did not include an inspection of the two important documents, the Treaty of 1774 and the decree of the Dinajpur Council, 1777, which could not be traced on the records at the time. These were the documents that sanctioned Bhutanese occupation of Maraghat and Chamurchi.

The fact is, soon after the departure of Warren Hastings a reversal of his imaginative Bhutan policy had taken place. Since the triumph of the Sino-Tibetan army and the humiliation of Nepal in 1792 negotiations with Tibet had come to an end. The policy towards the states of the eastern Himalayas was marked by "indifference and neglect"[33]. The impeachment of Warren Hastings discredited his style of diplomacy. Consolidation of British hold over Cooch Behar, rather than generous gestures towards Bhutan, characterised Digby's settlement in 1809.

The letters received from the Deb Raja of Bhutan and the "Penlow Shaheb" in 1811-12[34] speak of a "former Deb Raja" having obtained a decree from a "former Governor General" assigning Maraghat and Chamurchi to Bhutan and fixing river Jaldhaka as the boundary. The copy of the decree had been lost "accidentally when his residence caught fire". Records and maps

31. Letter from the Dinajpur Council to Governor General, dated the 28th May, 1777, *Cooch Behar Select Records,* Vol. I, p. 1.

32. *Op. cit.,* p. 19, para 6.

33. C. R. Markham, *op. cit.,* Introduction, p. LXXX.

34. Dr. S. N. Sen, *op. cit.,* received 26th Nov. 1811, No. 201, and received 18th Aug. 1812, No. 492.

relating to Chamurchi in Bhutanese possession "have been committed to the care of God Mahakal. The door of the building is opened only once in every twelve years. This period has not elapsed since it was last opened"[35]. Koch occupation of Maraghat under the "ex-parte decree" of Digby was unacceptable to the Bhutanese and they threatened that "war may ensue between the two parties over the question"[36].

The outbreak of the Anglo-Nepalese War in 1814 once again impressed the English of the seriousness of Bhutanese claims and the necessity of prompt accommodation. Krishna Kanta Bose and Rammohon Roy[37] were sent to Bhutan in 1815 by David Scott, the magistrate of Rangpur for amicable settlement of territorial disputes between Cooch Behar and Bhutan. One letter from the Deb Raja of Bhutan[38] states that they carried letters for the Chinese representatives in Tibet which were duly forwarded to Lhasa. Krishna Kanta and Rammohan convinced the Deb Raja that in the war between the Company and the Gurkhas the latter were in the wrong. They secured an assurance that Bhutan would not entertain any representation from the Nepalese for a joint offensive against the Company[39]. In the crisis of the Anglo-Nepalese War, Norman Macleod, British representative at Cooch Behar, charged the Maharaja of having secret intrigues with the Bhutanese Subah at Buxa and Chamurchi and with the Government of Nepal. These serious charges proved to be wholly unfounded and Macleod was shortly after recalled[40]. During his stay in Bhutan, Krishna Kanta collected a lot of information about the country and the people. His account of Bhutan was translated into English by David Scott and is still an eminently helpful study.

The exigency of the situation prompted a new settlement

35. Dr. S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, No. 139 I, From Deb Raja to Magistrate of Rangpur.

36. *Ibid.*, No. 401.

37. It is possible that he was no other than later Raja Rammohun of renascent Bengal who was in Rangpur with Digby and who settled in Calcutta in 1816.

38. Dr. S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, received Nov. 12, 1815.

39. *Ibid.*, Postscript.

40. A. Mitra, Census 1951, District Handbook, Cooch Behar, p. xxxiv.

brought about by David Scott in 1817. The Deb Raja's claim over the whole of Maraghat (excepting 22 chalas) was accepted and the Bhutanese were put in possession of the territory[41]. The correspondence of David Scott during this period shows that Bhutanese claims over a sizable portion of the Duars was not older than 1774. In fact Scott cites the evidence of the Anglo-Bhutanese Treaty (1774) and the decree of Dinajpur Council (1777) which were so long untraceable as the main reasons for reversing the decision of Digby in 1809 in favour of Cooch Behar[42]. The settlement of 1817 was far from definitive. The twenty-two farms (Bais Chala) within Maraghat were adjudged to Cooch Behar but they were not surveyed. Ensign Brodie who had been deputed to the Bhutan frontier in 1833 wrote "that gentleman (David Scott) did not fix the boundary of any of Cooch Behar Raja's chalas within Maraghat"[43]. The farms under Cooch Behar were of various sizes and scattered in different directions in some instances several miles asunder. The absence of a "known frontier line" ideally suited the purpose of ambitious zemindars on both sides.

The Chakla Kheti Dispute

Next in importance to Maraghat-Chamurchi dispute was one centring round a tract called Chakla Kheti. This led to the breach of peace on the frontier again and again and had dangerous potentialities. These disputes left a trail of ill-feeling and suspicion and the accumulated bitterness came handy to the advocates of a forward policy against Bhutan. Details of the Chakla Kheti dispute were stated in Dr. Campbell's memorandum, dated Camp Kheti the 11th February, 1845.

This memorandum along with a sketch of the ground are preserved in the Cooch Behar Select Records. In 1844 the Raja of Cooch Behar complained that Bhutanese subjects had trespassed into his territory. They had placed a fishing trap on the river called Gerandi south of the recognised line. Further west

41. From David Scott to T. C. Lushington, dated Cooch Behar, the 26th August, 1817, para 7, *Cooch Behar Select Records.*

42. From David Scott to John Adam, dated the 25th May, 1817, *Cooch Behar Select Records,* p. 19.

43. From Ensign Brodie to Capt. Jenkins, Goalpara, the 16th April, 1834, Foreign P.C. Aug. 28, 1834, No. 53, 2B.

of the river they had forcibly occupied a stretch of territory and three to four hundred armed people carried off the produce of the land. The man whose property was thus violated was named Sakaloo (who appears as a wealthy jotedar under Cooch Behar). Dr. Campbell who had been given charge of the frontier three years back, came to the spot in 1845 to settle the dispute through negotiation with Bhutanese Subahs of the frontier. The Subah of Chamurchi and the representatives of the Subahs of Dalimkot and Lucki Duar were present. The Bhutanese deposed before Dr. Campbell that the wealthy jotedar had secured only grazing right from Bhutan but afterwards settled ryots on them and had stopped payment of rent for some years. Curiously, they had no documents to prove their claims, whereas Dr. Campbell was satisfied that Sakaloo had been in possession for twenty years and had paid rent to Cooch Behar. The "evidence of the neighbourhood" also proved it. His verdict went in favour of Cooch Behar and the Bhutanese officials failed to register their objection within a prescribed time. In 1849 Dr. Campbell visited Kheti for the second time after complaints of fresh aggression from the Raja of Cooch Behar. He confirmed his previous decision and placed a guard of twenty sepoys from the Hill Rangers. These guards were withdrawn in 1850 for the protection of Darjeeling when relations with Sikkim reached a new low.

The otherwise drab account of the Chakla Kheti dispute is important for it focussed the persistent uncertainty in the relations between Bhutan and British India in the 1840s. Since the annexation of Assam in 1826 there had been no relaxation in the effort to open a channel of communication with the central authority in Bhutan. Pemberton's mission (1838) failed to accomplish this very important task. Dr. Campbell seized the only alternative of negotiating with Bhutanese subahs of the frontier. His mediations in the Kheti disputes are incontrovertible proof that this new approach had a remarkable success. He reported that the Bhutan officers "had no disposition to openly encourage encroachment on us" and very meaningfully recorded that it was because of the political organisation of the Bhutanese state "so unsteady, so rapacious and so unprincipled" that their border subjects had become almost uncontrollable. Secondly, the Chakla Kheti dispute leaves the unavoidable impression that matters were allowed to drift in this part of the North-East Frontier till they

seriously jeopardised peace. That is to say, there was lack of policy. Little wonder that much of the good hard work of Dr. Campbell was undone. After 1850 there were new men with new ideas. Dr. Campbell was succeeded by Major Jenkins. Jenkins recommended in 1851 that there ought to be "no interference unless we are called upon to settle a dispute and then only as to the particular case in question". This was patently a negative approach on the part of the "paramount power in Cooch Behar". This was a dangerous attitude since it did not envisage a settlement of the entire frontier through negotiations with Bhutanese authority, central or local. In fact, the very idea of negotiations, on which Dr. Campbell relied so much, receded and the idea of retaliation against Bhutan gained ground which in its turn led to war and more annexations.

Thus relations between Cooch Behar and Bhutan were vitiated for decades. They centred round ownership and control of large segments of land in the Western Duars. These territorial disputes so copiously recorded in Cooch Behar state publications throw into relief a number of interesting aspects which account for the chronic lawlessness on the border.

There were no attempts to have the entire boundary "line clearly defined by some distinct and lasting mode of demarcation". Scott's settlement in 1817 was confined to Maraghat locality and on record only half-done. Ensign Brodie in 1833-34 made a promising start and "speedily settled" the disputes on the north-east part of Rangpur. But no arrangements could be made for setting up permanent "posts or pillars" even in this limited area. The services of Brodie could not be spared for long and he was directed to join his "other duties of Goalpara". Col. Mathie and Bedford drew a line of demarcation at Chakla Kheti in 1851-52 but the Bhutanese ignored it as "only one side was present" at the time of demarcation. When the Subah of Bala Duar was shown Col. Mathie's map, his reply was "such a map they could also draw up". It is remarkable that all these occasional attempts at demarcation of the boundary between Cooch Behar and Bhutan were undone for lack of finance and never envisaged an overall settlement through negotiation. None of the parties involved were prepared to bear the expenses of surveying and erecting permanent boundary posts. Dr. Campbell wrote in 1841 that the British Government had "already been at much

expense", the frontier zemindars were unwilling to bear the expenses and it was "never possible to get a farthing out of Bhutan." "In 1848 he remarked that "it was our great neglect of the Cooch Behar and Rangpur frontiers of Bhutan that led to the state of things before my appointment to the care of the border in Jan. 1842"[44]. Secondly, there were no "established means of intercourse with, and influence over the Government of Bhutan". In 1838 Pemberton broached the subject of stationing a British representative to the Deb Raja in Bhutan. The Deb Raja instantly repudiated the idea, telling the envoy not to raise the subject any more. Dr. Campbell's policy of dealing with Bhutanese frontier officials coupled with his conciliatory gestures reduced the "confusion along the border" and greatly improved the state of affairs.

Thirdly, as the paramount power in Cooch Behar the British Government was under an obligation to protect the subjects of the Raja in the Duars. Since 1773 Cooch Behar state was not allowed either to negotiate independently or to take action on its own to prevent lawlessness on the border. The jurisdiction of the courts of Cooch Behar to try criminals in the Duars was denied. In 1842 Dr. Campbell released seven persons charged with kidnapping and murder for the Raja of Cooch Behar insisted on the rights of his courts to try the cases. Undefined jurisdiction no less than undefined boundary made the Duars a criminal's paradise. It was not till 1866 that the appellate jurisdiction of the Calcutta High Court was extended to the Western Duars. Proper enquiry would have revealed that subjects of Cooch Behar and Baikunthopur were no less responsible than the Bhutanese for the endemic lawlessness in the Duars. Even Col. Jenkins, who was by no means ill-disposed towards Cooch Behar, believed that one very important reason for "alleged cases of aggression" on the part of the Bhutanese was the "practice" of the ryots in the Duars taking refuge in Cooch Behar "to avoid payment of revenue or to escape from exaction"[45].

Fourthly, after Dr. Campbell's relinquishing charge of the frontier in 1850 exponents of forward policy shaped the course

44. Bhutan, Sikkim & Tibet Papers, Foreign Deptt. Oct. 10, No. 80, No. 30 of 1848, dated Darjeeling the 11th Sept. 1848, N.A.I.

45. Foreign P.C. Nov. 18, 1853, No. 77, dated Gauhati, Oct. 28, 1853.

of events to a great extent. Already the resumption of the Assam Duars in 1841 and taking over the "management" of Ambari Falakata the year following had given the Bhutanese a glimpse of things to come. Col. Jenkins frankly urged there would be no peace until the Bengal Duars were annexed. The "delinquent" behaviour of Bhutanese frontier officials increased and so the list of complaints from Cooch Behar till the outbreak of the Duar War.

Territorial disputes apart there were other issues which ruined chances of permanent peace and kept relations between Cooch Behar and Bhutan in a state of permanent tension. These were : (i) Violations against persons and property; (ii) Run-away criminals on both sides; (iii) Theft of elephants. Dr. Rennie gives a resume of violations against persons and property between the years 1828 and 1861[46]. He first describes a series of incidents on the Assam side of the Duars involving raids from Bijni and Banaka which revealed the connivance of the Tongsa Penlop and his subordinate officials notably the Dewangiri Raja. In the Bengal Duars he briefly alludes to the revolt of Hargovind Katma and the circumstances leading to Pemberton's mission to Bhutan. The author did not have at his disposal records of the Bengal Duars for the period 1842-52 which coincides with the Kheti disputes and Dr. Campbell's mediatory role. He cites a series of cases involving theft of elephants between 1854 and 1857 in in which the Bhutanese Katham of Mainaguri was the chief offender. In 1861 the Maharaja of Cooch Behar submitted a list of seventeen elephants carried off from his territory from time to time. The most revealing part of the narrative is that which shows that in 1856 Col. Jenkins recommended the "immediate annexation of the Bengal Duars as the only measure likely to be effective short of invading the country". This was endorsed by Dalhousie's government. A suitable threat to the Bhutan Government induced the letter to tender apology, and the value of the property plundered by the Dewangiri Raja was deducted from the Assam Duars compensation money. The outbreak of the Great Revolt (1857) prevented threats of annexation being carried out. Year after year complaints from Cooch Behar multiplied. Among the persons lifted by the Bhutanese contemporary

46. D. F. Rennie, *op. cit.*, pp. 384-407.

records give prominence to one Arun Singh and Ram Dulal. Ram Dulal was a wealthy subject of Cooch Behar who, the Bhutanese alleged, owed money in Bhutan. The Deb Raja claimed that Arun Singh was "a servant of his own" who took refuge in British territory to avoid payment. Canning's government evidently upheld the recommendation of the forward school, represented by Col. Jenkins, and ordered the "attachment" of Ambari Falakata and the stoppage of rent due in 1860.

Not much is known about the institution of slavery in Bhutan though from time to time the records refer to people being lifted up from the plains and condemned to slavery in the hills. At Pemethong Eden found a large number of Bengalee slaves who had been abducted many years before. They had but confused ideas about the country from which they came. In the neighbourhood of Paro the mission came across not less than three hundred Bengalee slaves. When their release was demanded the Deb Raja is reported to have said "the nobility of Bhutan had purchased them at high prices; it would be difficult to release them. Besides many have been so long in the country that they were naturalised and were unwilling to leave"[47]. The essence of the system was unpaid labour which was a recognised custom in Bhutan. The issue of run away criminals was as old as the first recorded British contact with Bhutan. The forests of the Duars were an ideal hide-out for criminals and gangsters. It is noticeable that both on the Assam and Bengal sides of the Duars powerful zemindars sheltered them and used their services in private disputes. The Dewangiri Raja and the subordinate officials of the Tongsa Penlop are recorded to have employed criminals on a professional basis. Even today, in local Rajbansi parlance the forest-clad northern belt of the Duars is spoken of as "Hujurer Desh", that is, a country where free lance activities could be carried on without any restrictions. In the first half of the 19th century the long dispute about jurisdiction of courts between Cooch Behar and the "paramount" British power rendered the issue of criminals an intractable one. The draft treaty which Pemberton (1838) presented to the Bhutan Government incorporated provisions for the mutual extradition of criminals.

47. *Further Papers Relating to Bhutan*, presented to Parliament by her Majesty's command, printed Feb. 8, 1866, p. 57.

But Tongsa Penlop's persistent opposition led to the rejection of the draft treaty. The treaty of Sinchula (1865) provided, inter alia, for the release of persons and mutual extradition of criminals. The important thing was violations against persons and property, and the issue of slavery and run-away criminals were a set of problems deeply rooted in socio-economic moorings not only of the thinly populated Duars but of Bhutan as well as Cooch Behar. It would be wrong to look upon them only from a juridical or even political point of view. It is also noteworthy that, by allowing events to drift, a stage was soon reached when the only answer seemed to lie in retaliation against Bhutan. Powerful exponents of the forward policy effectively warmed up the Bengal Government long before the open rupture with Bhutan in 1864.

The Raikats and the Bhutanese

In the period after the annexation of Assam (The Treaty of Yandaboo, 1826) Koch chieftains in the Western Duars hotly contested Bhutanese hold over extensive areas. The foremost among them was the house of Raikats ("the chief of the fort") with their centre at Baikunthopur near Siliguri. The Raikats were a branch of the Koch royal family. Siswasingha, the founder of the house, had held the umbrella over the head of his step brother, Maharaja Viswa Singha at the time of his coronation in 1529-30[48]. His successors at Baikunthopur had to resist persistent encroachment of the Bhutanese, the Mallas of Nepal and the Muhammedan subahdars of Bengal[49]. In 1687 Baikunthopur become tributary to the Mughals[50] The prominence of the Raikats in the affairs of Cooch Behar was demonstrated in the confusion following the death of Maharaja Modnarayan (1665-

48. S. N. Bhattacharya, *A History of Mughal North East Frontier Policy*, Calcutta, 1929, p. 77 fn. Also S. C. Ghosal, *A History of Cooch Behar*, 1942, Chapter XIII, The Baikunthopur Estate of Biswa Singha survived for 410 years (1545-1955). It was abolished under the Bengal Estate Acquisition Act of 1954. C. C. Sanyal, *The Rajbansis of North Bengal*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 8.

49. S. C. Ghosal, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

50. Sir Jadunath Sarkar, *A History of Aurangzib*, Vol. III, Calcutta 1916, p. 219 fn.

80). In the struggle for succession Bhutanese soldiers appeared in Cooch Behar and supported Yajnanarayan. At this time Jagadeva and Bhujadeva "the sixth and the seventh Raikats", advanced towards Cooch Behar and the Bhutanese escaped after looting considerable property including the royal umbrella, sceptre and throne. The issue of succession was decided in a battle fought on the banks of the river Mansai. Yajnanarayan was overwhelmed and took to the hills. The Raikats returned to Baikunthopur after installing Mahindranarayan on the throne (1682-93).

The Koch monarchy fell into the grip of court intrigues and internal strife in the middle of the 18th century. Maharaja Devendranarayan was murdered in 1765 and two high officials of the state, the Dewan Deo and the Nazir Deo, fell with each other. The Bhutanese systematically extended their hold over the Western Duars and ranged themselves with the party of the Dewan Deo. The situation bears resemblance with the struggle between the Nazir Deo and the party of the Rajguru (royal priest) at a later date which helped in stabilising British hold over Cooch Behar in the period after 1783. Dewan Ramnarayan was brutally murdered by Maharaja Dhairjendra Narayan in the palace at Cooch Behar in 1769. This served as the casus belli for the ambitious Bhutanese king Deshi Shidariva. In these circumstances Darpadeva, "the twelfth Raikat" embarked on the project of occupying Cooch Behar with the assistance of the Bhutanese. At the end of the First Bhutan War (1774) the Bhutanese claimed that Darpadeva had promised to cede Jalpesh and Ambari Falakata to them in lieu of their assistance. Warren Hastings acceded to the claim and in the interest of trans-Himalayan trade these areas were handed over to Bhutan. In 1787 the Deb Raja of Bhutan claimed that he held all the territory from Bijni to Falakata in accordance with Hastings' decision and complained that Darpadeva had "unjustly taken possession of" some of his taluks which he begged to be restored[51].

Among the Koch rulers of modern times Maharaja Harendranarayan (1783-1839) shines as a man of exceptional ability. In his relations with the East India Company he was circumspect as well as independent in spirit. He was keen to prevent any interference with his royal prerogatives as is evident from his

51. *Cooch Behar Select Records,* Vol. I, 1882, p. 2.

long disputes with the Company over civil jurisdictions and the issue of Narayani coins[52]. Harendranarayan made a determined bid to recover the tracts occupied by the Bhutanese. He succeeded in enlisting the assistance of the Raikats in his persistent conflict with Bhutan. A letter from the Deb Raja of Bhutan to the magistrate at Rangpur in 1815 stated . . . "the Raja of Cooch Behar and the Raikat of Baikunthopur forcibly took possession of these lands[53] (i.e., Chamurchi and Rangdhamali).

The story of a long feud between Durgadev, "the son of the Raikat of Baikunthopur" and Hargavind Katham, a Bhutanese official in the heart of the Bengal Duars is on record. Both were landholders of Rangpur and engaged their "followers and friends, British subjects, to support them against the Bhutanese party to which they were themselves opposed"[54]. Hargavind was in revolt against Bhutan since 1833 and had defeated all attempts to subdue him by force. His conflicts with the Raikats began over the possession of a mehal (tract) called Kyranti.

The founder of the fortunes of the family of Hargavind was Haridas "the father of Hargavind and the grand-father of Krish nakanta". Haridas was a "mohurir" (writer) of the Deb Raja. He "adhered to the faith of the Bhutias" and the Dharma and Deb Rajas "settled on him various taluks (estates) in Lackeraji (rent free)". The present Raja (Deb Raja) having "insisted for payments of rents for those lands" his son and grandson resisted the demand and "now for four years they have been in actual rebellion". The Katham's possession consisted of Mainaguri, Bhuthat, Changmari and Gopalganj "about sixty miles long and six to twelve broad". He paid the Deb Raja a tribute of

52. These coins were struck by the rulers of Cooch Behar. They are so called from the title "Narayan" borne by the Maharajas of Cooch Behar. The fidst find of these coins belong to the reign of Naranarayan, the second ruler of the dynasty, corresponding to the year 1555 A.D. After the establishment of British paramountcy over Cooch Behar (1772) the issue of the Narayani coins was restricted. The coin ceased to be legal tender in Cooch Behar in 1866.

53. English synopsis No. 140, Received Nov. 12, 1815. Dr. S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*

54. From the Agent to the Governor General, North East-Frontier, to the Offg. Secretary, Government of India, dated the 22nd Aug. 1840, Foreign Political, Sept. 14, 1840, No. 64, N.A.I.

"about eight thousand five hundred narayanee rupees per annum exclusive of presents and expenses of religious ceremonies"[55].

The Raikats claimed "hereditary rights" over Kyranti and were supported by a faction within Bhutan itself. Hargavind was looked down upon by the Raikats as "little better than a ryot" who had lifted up his head in the Duars as a Bhutanese stooge. Durgadev built a 'kote' (fortified post) at Kyranti and held his ground till 1840. Anantadev, evidently another member of the Raikat family used Ambari Falakata as a base in his operations against Hargavind. The latter made a futile attempt to secure direct British involvement. On January 19, 1840 Durgadev was decisively defeated by Hargavind[56] and fled to Cooch Behar. Hargavind and his Bhutanese allies hotly pursued him, setting on fire the houses of the subjects of the Company and plundering property[57]. In the end Hargavind fell victim to a conspiracy of the Bhutanese and was murdered, while climbing a "chang" (elevated building) for worshipping the Bhutanese deity, Mahakal[58]. A large part of the Duars between Ramsaihat and Mainaguri lay in desolation and people attributed it to the wars of Hargavind. The abandoned country was called "Karjeebus".

The struggle for "ascendancy" between the Raikats and the Kathams passed on to their successors. Durgadev Kooar described as the "son of the Jalpaiguri Raja" and "the opponent and conqueror of Hargavind", had reportedly defeated the Katham and drove the forces of the Deb Raja out of Kyranti and Karjibus. The mantle of Hargavind fell on his son Krishnakanta and nephew Gourmohon. In 1842 Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, instructed the magistrate of Rangpur to bind both the parties under surety (muchelka) not to cross into Bhutan territory. It may seem curious that when the Duars near Cooch Behar were laid waste by civil strife the British Indian Govern-

55. The career of Hargavind is culled from materials available in (i) Pemberton's Report, (ii) Foreign Deptt. papers, and (iii) papers in the State Archives, West Bengal.

56. From magistrate of Rangpur to Agent to the Governor General, dated 15th July, 1840, Sept., 1840, No. 64, N.A.I.

57. *Ibid.*

58. Travelling diary of the Chief Civil Officer and Political Agent, Bhutan Duar for the week ending 21st January 1865, No. 43, Bhutan Political Proceedings.

ment should adhere to "strict neutrality"[59]. Capt. Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General, had put forward two proposals for consideration. First, whether "after a successful revolt" the Kathams have not the right to be considered as "sovereigns" and entitled to negotiate with a third power. Secondly, whether for the "sake of humanity" and peace in the frontier districts it might not be advisable to offer "to the Bhutan Government to resign the tribute of Assam Duars on their yielding supremacy over the Kathams and allowing us to make terms for ourselves"[60]. The Government, however, avoided involvement. In explanation it was stated . . . "in the present deficient state of our information, His Lordship would be unwilling to adopt any measure which should commit the Government to any line of conduct" and again, "it might be irritating to the Bhutan Government were we to come forward with the avowed object of mediating between that Government and its revolted subjects". As yet there was no available means of approaching the de facto authority in Bhutan. The conquest of Assam had opened limited communication with the Tongsa Penlop, the governor of eastern Bhutan and his subordinate officials at Dewangiri and the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang. The disposition of the Tongsa Penlop was far from friendly, and, since the resumption of the Assam Duars (1841) was openly aggressive and uncompromising. In fact even British officials did not fail to realise "the difficulty which must be felt by the rulers of Bhutan in accommodating their demeanour to the great changes effected in Assam by our conquest of that valley". They contrasted the intransigence of the Tongsa Penlop with the evident unconcern felt by the distant and unaccessible western Bhutan chief, the Paro Penlop. It was reported that "there has been a difference on the conduct towards us of the authorities in Bengal and the Assam Duars". As Robertson stated "of this fact there is no doubt and consequently a corresponding distinction ought to appear in our conduct towards them and cares should be taken not to visit (?) upon the Paro Penlop

59. From Secretary to Government to Capt. Jenkins, dated the 27th Feb. 1837, Foreign P.C. Feb. 27, 1837, No. 60.

60. From Capt. Jenkins to the Secretary to the Government of India dated January 31, 1837. *Ibid.*, No. 59.

—the faults and provocations of the other border chief"[61]. This attitude may explain British unconcern at the devastations in the Bengal Duars under Paro Penlop resulting from the struggle for ascendancy between the Raikats and the Kathams.

It has been narrated above how the exigencies of Warren Hastings' Tibetan policy led to the cession of the fertile tracts of Jalpesh and Ambari Falakata to Bhutan[62]. The Raikats never despaired of restoring their territory in the heart of the Duars "which is still looked upon by the family and its retainers and dependents and indeed by the whole countryside as a piece of their old domain improperly given up to the Bhutanese. Jalpesh itself which is not far from the Bhutan fort of Mainaguri, is the seat of the old family temple of the Baikanthopur (or Jaipaiguri) family"[63]. Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh were held in farm by the British Government since 1842 on an annual payment of Rs. 2000 to the Bhutan Government. The payment was discontinued since 1860 for alleged acts of aggression. In the wake of the fiasco of Eden's mission in 1864 the tracts were "permanently annexed to British dominions"[64]. In the days of the Duar War (1864-65) Chandrasekhardeva, the "sixteenth Raikat", petitioned the Government stating the services he had rendered to Eden's mission and supplies provided to the Bhutan Duar Field Force, "amounting to fifty or sixty thousand rupees". He had offered these free and only drew the attention of the Government to his application "for that portion of this zemindary (Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh) which was ceded to the Bhutanese by the government in time of my forefathers and which has now again come under Her Majesty's dominion". The British-Indian government rejected the request and expressed inability to restore the tracts now under British occupation[65].

61. Note signed by Robertson, dated the 31st January, 1839, Foreign P.C. March 27, 1839, No. 81, N.A.I.

62. Eden's memorandum dated the 6th May, 1864, states that the estimated collection of Jalpesh according to the list given at the time of cession by the zemindar were narayanee rupees 16,454, and the collection of Falakata "we know to be Company's rupees 2000 per annum".

63. Foreign Political, April 17, 1857, No. 65, N.A.I. (62) dated Kurseong March 5, 1857.

64. Foreign Proceedings, June, No. 130, N.A.I.

65. Bhutan Political Proceedings, May 1865, p. 66. State Archives, Govt. of West Bengal.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW FRONTIER : ASSAM DUARS

In the 19th century Bhutan was brought within the orbit of British-India albeit she retained the status of an independent kingdom. Two great steps towards the achievement of this momentous result were the annexation of the Assam and Bengal Duars. The acquisition of these fertile plains on which Bhutan so much depended for goods her hilly terrain could not produce and the provision for payment of annual subsidy in lieu thereof ensured a grip over her internal tribal politics till a satellite hereditary monarchy emerged triumphant at the dawn of the 20th century. Incidentally, this papered over the cracks caused by tribal fissures and put an end to the age-old dyarchy in Bhutan.

There were altogether seven Duars in Assam, five in Kamrup and two in Darrang on which the Bhutanese had established their hold in the days of the decline of the Ahom Raj[1]. Unable to deal with frontier outrages and incursions the latter was glad to purchase security by making over the seven Duars to the Bhutanese for an annual payment of Yak-tails, ponies, musks, gold-dust, blanket and knives of an estimated value of Narayani rupees 4,785 and 4 annas, an agreement which has been described as a "mutual compromise between conscious weakness and barbarian cunning"[2].

In its last days the Ahom Raj was afflicted by internecine struggle for power. A triangular contest had broken out between the Bar Phukan, the Bar Barua and the Bar Gohain. The seed of civil war yielded the bitter harvest of foreign conquest. The first comer were the Burmese (1819-24) who hunted down the Bar Barua and the Bar Gohain[3] and inaugurated a period of unprecedented savagery. In the wake of the defeat of the Bur-

1. To the east of Darrang the Kooreaparah Duar was controlled by the Chief of Towang, a tributary to Lhasa. Further east the Char Duar and the Now Duar came under the British when they annexed Assam.

2. R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bootan*, Reprint 1961, p. 12.

3. E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 227.

mese in the first Anglo-Burmese War Assam formally passed into British hands[4]. One of the legacies of this conquest was the existing unsatisfactory revenue relations with Bhutan in respect of the Assam Duars[5].

It is precisely these revenue relations that endangered amity between Bhutan and the newly established British power in Assam. An endless stream of disputes flowed from the fact that the "tribute was paid in kind while its value was fixed in specie"[6]. The British wanted to ensure full payment of tribute due from Bhutan. A meticulous system of accounting showed an "arrear" every year and Bhutan was reminded of her obligations. The process worked in the following manner : The tribute paid by the Bhutan Government was put up for public auction. In many cases the original articles were replaced by greedy collectors or simply lost in transit. As a result they hardly realised the stipulated sum due from the Bhutan Government and the deficiency was shown as arrear. It appears that accounts were never compared with a view to satisfactory mutual adjustment. This was perhaps obvious due to absence of regular communications and even a contact with the central authorities in Bhutan[7]. The indignation of the British collector of Kamrup is understandable when he was reporting in 1839 "I cannot be held in the slightest degree responsible for the non-realisation of Government demands unless allowed to proceed against these in the same manner as all other wilful revenue defaulters"[8]. The system of

4. Treaty of Yandaboo, 1826.

5. From Agent to the Governor-General, North East Frontier to Secretary to the Government of India, Political Deptt. P.S. "The extent of the Assam Duars may be assumed as 990 sq. miles, that of the Bengal Duars above 2584 sq. miles"—Foreign P. C. July 26, 1841, No. 81-2A, 93.

6. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sunnads etc.*, Vol. 2, p. 287.

7. R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bootan,* Reprint 1961, Appendix No. 4, p. 106. There are many startling examples of the lack of rapport even among the Bhutanese frontier officials and their own government. Pemberton says "the Bootan Government appears to have been quite ignorant of proceedings on the frontier." The Tongsa Penlop stated in 1836 that he was "not aware before now of the circumstances of dacoities or of the arrears of revenue which have now come to light".

8. Copy enclosed with a letter from Governor-General's Agent to Secretary to the Govt. of India in the Political Department, dated "on the river" the 21st Feb. 1839—Foreign P.C. March 27, 1839.

collection of tribute through intermediaries known as Sajwals encouraged widespread corruption. These were the officials responsible for transferring the articles received from the Bhutan authorities to different provincial headquarters. They indulged in every sort of "misstatement, knaveries and neglect".

The two Duars in Darrang, namely Kulling and Buriguma were under a peculiar administrative arrangement. The Ahom Raj administered them for five months in the year (July-Nov.) and for the rest they were under Bhutanese control. Conceivably two sets of officials collected revenue from the hapless ryots who were rackrented. Official oppression caused widespread misery and desertion of villages. British revenue officials found that dual control nullified fixity and regularity of income, the two cardinal principles of land revenue administration. In the place of this system of alternate jurisdiction two possible courses were suggested. During the Buriguma controversy (1828-34) the Governor General's Agent suggested "territorial division". The other measure was that of attaching these Duars by simply refusing to restore them at the expiration of the period of British control. The later expedient was resorted to in 1840. A political Despatch to the Court of Directors[9] recommended : "it appeared to us that no course was open to the Government but to retain possession of the Duars for the year round, crediting the collection made in the months of Bhutan occupation against our future claims on the Bhutan Government. A communication was made to the Agent to this effect".

The non-restoration of these Duars amounted to virtual annexation and this was approved by the Court of Directors in another Despatch in 1841[10] The story of the attachment of the Darrang Duars is notable for a new experiment in revenue administration[11]. It was here that an alternative to the system of payment in kind was tried and found wanting. The substitution of money payment was in the shape of a tax on hearth and ploughs. "The hearth tax had been originally fixed at one rupee

9. Political Despatch to the Court of Directors, Nov. 13, 1840, No. 71, Para 47.

10. No. 12 Despatch from the Court of Directors, Para 23, Answer to Political letter, dated the 13th April (No. 19), 1840. Foreign P.C. May 11, 1841.

11. Kooreaparah Duar was also included in this experiment.

and the plough tax at three rupees each"[12]. The imposts fell heavily" on the poorer classes of ryots" and led to the desertion of villages. The innovation was tried without the "full and free consent of the people" who were not "given time to convert their produce into money before the instalments were due". An immediate reduction in the hearth tax to the extent of not less than one half was recommended with the hope that it might be abolished altogether" was to be shown at the time of assessment and there was to be no forcible commutation leaving the cultivators free to pay in kind if they so desired[13].

Payment of tribute in kind, accumulation of arrears and dual sovereignty over a wide stretch of the Assam Duars enlarged the area of misunderstanding between Bhutan and the new British power in Assam. Before long the latter took advantage of a series of events to expound and elaborate the concepts of "attachment" and "resumption" as a convenient means of extending their control to the foothills of Bhutan. The "delinquent" behaviour of a number of Bhutanese border chiefs led to the "temporary" attachment of Buriguma in 1828 and a serious collision with the Dewangiri Raja in 1836. The Buriguma incident[14] flared up as the result of a raid by a Bhutanese chief named Dumpa Raja in pursuit of some persons who had fled from his jurisdiction. He entered the pargana of Chatgari near Batakochi on the frontier which has been described as a "disputed" territory taken possession of by the British in 1828. A thana officer proceeded to Batakochi to enquire into the circumstances when he and his party were attached resulting in serious loss of life. As an answer to this "atrocity" Buriguma was attached and when in 1831 the Deb Raja wrote to the Government soliciting its restoration the Governor General's Agent opined that restoration would be "inexpedient" and remarked that the revenue from the Duar had "nearly trebled" since its occupation. He also suggested a "territorial division" of the Duar in case restoration was decided upon. In 1832 messengers arrived at Gauhati bearing letters to the Governor General's Agent from the Deb Raja, Benkar Subah and Tongsa Penlop. They again urged the restoration of

12. Political Despatch to the Court of Directors No. 71, Nov. 13, 1840.

13. As above.

14. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

the Duar and declared that the Dumpa Raja was dead. This also proved to be fruitless. It was on the suggestion of T. C. Robertson that a formal deposition was given before Capt. Jenkins in 1834 affirming the death of the Dumpa Raja. The testimony revealed that the latter was "kept in iron at Punakha where a sudden fire destroyed the edifice" and the "principal accomplice" perished. The controversy ended when the Bhutanese agreed to pay a fine of rupees two thousand and were allowed to reoccupy the Duar (1834).

In 1836 a daring dacoity in Banska Duar led to the "most serious collision that had ever taken place between local officers of the two Governments from our first occupation of Assam"[15]. A Bhutanese official named Bura Talukdar was privy to the crime causing loss of life and property. Capt. Bogle at once proceeded from Nalbari[16] with a detachment under the personal command of Lt. Mathews. His object was to put an end to the "extensive predatory system and to obtain satisfactory settlement of the arrears due from all the Duars tributary to Kamrup"[17]. A known criminal named Jadu Cachari was intercepted. He was subordinate to the Dawangiri Raja who acted under the orders of the Tongsa Penlop, the governor of the eastern division of Bhutan. Bogle decided that attachment of the Banska Duar was "unavoidable". Two "good routes" to the mountains were plugged in order to "intercept all supplies and cut off the Bhutanese from communication with the plains". The attached territory was described as consisting of a "large extent of well-cultivated rice land probably four thousand acres and a population of about four thousand souls". It was reported that the "mountaineers must experience the greatest inconvenience in a very short time and will I trust soon come to our terms"[18].

When events had gone to this length the authorities in Calcutta were trying to avoid an armed clash. A minute[19] expressed the view of Government that if the Dawangiri Raja and other

15. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

16. Letter from A. Bogle to Capt. Jenkins, dated Nalbari the 11th Feb. 1836. Foreign P.C. March 14, 1836, No. 88.

17. Foreign P.C. March 14, 1836, No. 90.

18. Report of Capt. A. Bogle to Governor General's Agent, dated Hazaragang, the 16th Feb. 1836, Foreign P.C. March 14, 1836, No. 88.

19. Foreign P.C. March 14, 1836, No. 94. It is mostly illegible.

Bhutanese chiefs did not manifest any disposition to "contest our occupation, Bogle could with propriety return for the present signifying our intention to reoccupy the Duar . . . in the event of our reasonable demands are not being upheld"[20]. The offences of the chiefs of the Duars were just the "delinquencies of local officers and there was no reason to suppose that the Government of Bhutan was cognisant of them"[21].

The rapidity of events at Banska nullified all sober counsel. Bogle had an interview with the Dewangiri Raja who entered his camp with "twenty sirdars on ponies and six hundred followers with matchlocks, bows and arrows, swords, spears and shields". The Raja refused to surrender all wanted persons particularly the Bura Talukdar who was appointed by the Deb Raja and all communications were at an end. In order to drive out the Bhutanese from the plains the British contingent captured their stockade at Silkee and Lt. Mathews engaged them in a pitched battle near Subankhata. Twentyfive of the Bhutanese were slain and twice that number wounded. The Dewangiri Raja escaped on his swift elephant abandoning his "tent, baggage, robes of State and standard"[22]. Formal possession was taken of the Banska Duar and Bogle addressed a letter to the Deb Raja stating the circumstances leading to the attachment. The "extreme distress caused to innocent people" was represented by two Bhutanese deputations to the Governor General's agent at Gauhati. The second deputation consisted of representatives from the Deb Raja and Dharma Raja and the father of the latter. They also brought a letter from the Tongsa Penlop. Being unable immediately to comply with British demands which included assurance for the satisfactory management of the Duars and surrender of all offenders they hurried to Dewangiri and came back to Gauhati with blank forms impressed with the seal of the father of the Dharma Raja. An agreement "well calculated to realise the objects"[23] was then concluded. The Ikrarnamah or Agreement signed on the 2nd June 1836 consists of eight articles. The first two provide for the surrender of criminals and the next four articles assure regular payment of tribute in future, elimination of the sys-

20. *Ibid.*, para 6
21. Foreign P.C. March 14, 1836, No. 94, para 5.
22. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
23. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

tem of collection through Sajwals, payment of arrear dues and a free hand to the British to occupy any Duar falling in arrear[24]. On these conditions Banska Duar was restored and the arrangement was reported to the Court of Directors[25].

The Banska affairs of 1836 highlighted the following. First, local officials in many cases exceeded their authority and rendered political decision at the highest level infructuous. Capt. Bogle's papers in connection with the attachment of Banska leaves one with this impression. Secondly, there were incontrovertible evidence that the head of the Government in Bhutan was not cognisant and the offences on the frontier were the deliquencies of local officers. It was admitted to be one of the reasons which broke Bhutanese resistance at Subankhata. Pemberton says, "there were many circumstances which might have tended to paralize their exertions and none more powerfully than the belief that, their leader, the Dawangiri Raja, was acting without any authority from his government"[26].

Thirdly, since the incidents at Buriguma and Banska took place in a region under the jurisdiction of the Tongsa Penlop, the governor of the eastern division of Bhutan, it was felt necessary that this chief, and he alone, should be made to face the consequences. This led to the growth of a school of powerful opinion that there should be a difference in British attitude in respect of the eastern and western Duars of Bhutan. It explains in a way why the former was brought under permanent possession in 1841 and the latter a quarter of a century later. Fourthly, the clash enabled the English to estimate more correctly than before the numerical strength and equipment of the force which the Bhutanese were capable of collecting on emergency on any point of their frontier. Fifthly, the height of the crisis revealed that British intention was nothing less than the attachment of the Assam Duars and if necessary of the Bengal Duars. Capt. Jenkins in a letter to government stated that "if negotiations are broken off I conceive it will be necessary for us to take possession of all the Assam Duars". And if by the next cold season

24. Translation of an Ikrar-namah agreed to by the Bhutanese zinkaffs on the 2nd June, 1836. Foreign P.C. June 27, 1836, No. 52.

25. Political Despatch to the Court of Directors, Foreign P.C. Jan. 16, 1836, No. 3.

26. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

there was no amicable settlement "I should strongly recommend the further attachment of all the Duars on the frontier of Bengal"[27]. To reinforce his arguments he added "the revenue we should draw from them would be amply sufficient to maintain any such increase of force as would enable us to maintain our acquisition". Lastly, the crisis brought home the necessity of sending a mission to Bhutan. The wisdom of opening a dialogue with the central Bhutanese government had been underlined by two successive Agents to the Governor General. T. C. Robertson expressed in a memorandum[28] the fear that a war with Bhutan may be "serious indeed involving nothing less than an eventual war with China". It would further lead to the "suspension of all measures now in progress for the improvement of the internal administration of Assam; and probably the loss of a year's revenue from that portion of the country lying north of the Brahmaputra". Warlike operations if "defensive" would have to be confirmed to an unhealthy region at the foot of the hills, if "active and offensive" they would have to be pursued at the "imminent hazard of a war with China without the slightest prospect of any compensatory result". In case hostilities became inevitable it might be necessary to "sequester their possession in the plains" (viz., the Duars). But he expressed the hope that there would be no need of "coercion" and recommended that an envoy might be deputed to the Court of the Dharma Raja to settle terms of "commercial intercourse" and an "adjustment of the tribute payable for the Duars".

The second document set forth in detail the objects of a mission to Bhutan. This was a letter from the Governor General's Agent addressed to the Government and dated 9th June 1836. The Agent thought that the despatch of an envoy was eminently desirable for two reasons. First, commerce with Tibet and Bhutan was a subject worthy of his pursuit. Secondly, in case of "eventual hostilities with Bhutan", he thought, Chinese intervention not only probable but also "might be very calami-

27. From Agent to the Governor General to Secretary to the Government, Political Deptt. No. 12, dated the 26th Feb. 1836. Foreign P.C. March 14, 1836, No. 87.

28. From Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier to Secretary to the Government, Political Department, dated Calcutta, the 6th Dec. 1833. Foreign P.C. Dec. 12, 1833, No. 75.

tous to our affairs in this quarter". Therefore it was important for the Government of India to make itself fully acquainted "with the resources of the Chinese and the feeling of the people towards that government". On the subject of the Tibetan trade the letter recounted that "the favourable commercial treaty settled by Mr. Bogle in 1775" (with Bhutan) had been "virtually set aside through the interference of the Chinese government"[29]. The Agent emphatically advocated opening of communication with the Dalai Lama and visualised gaining strategic advantages in Bhutan against the Chinese. One cannot miss what he wanted to convey in the following lines :—[In case of a war with Bhutan China would "probably" come to the aid of the latter]. Then "it might be very difficult to dislodge them, whilst on the other hand were we to obtain prior possession of its (Bhutan's) northern passes (leading to Tibet) our position would be entirely altered—no force of Chinese could dispossess the small bodies of troops we could conveniently spare and were the Tibetans thereafter disposed to revolt we should be able to take any advantage of the circumstances"[30]. The last remark is almost breath-taking in its implications.

The foregoing will have served to show that though the "efficient management" of the Assam and Bengal Duars was the immediate concern for the proposed mission it would be expected not to lose sight of what lay at the end of the horizon. Among the "secondary" objects of the mission the letter noted an extension of the knowledge of geography and natural production of Bhutan, her form of government, the "disposition" of the Bhutanese towards the Chinese and British Government and the resources of the country for offensive and defensive operations.

It was a new experience that even a temporary attachment of two Duars was sufficient to stir the central Bhutanese government so as to make the Deb and Dharma Rajas and the Tongsa Penlop appeal for munificence. The event focussed how the Duars could be used as an economic lever to make the hillmen amenable. But as yet there was an unknown quantity in the

29. Foreign P.C. June 27, 1836, No. 62, N.A.I.

30. From Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier to Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, dated Political Agent's Office, North East Frontier, June 9, 1836. Foreign P.C. June 27, 1836, No. 52, N.A.I.

political arithmettic. This concerned the physical geography, resources, communication and especially foreign relations of Bhutan. Indeed the records before 1838 demonstrate the imperfect state of knowledge among British officialdom. Robertson, the Governor General's Agent, sought to identify the Dharma Raja with the Tashi Lama[31] and said the latter was respected "as the supreme spiritual authority throughout the vast realms of Tartary and even at the Court of Peking itself". He concluded that the "consequences of a rupture with Bhutan may be serious indeed involving nothing less than an eventual war with China". In this letter he also stated that in 1792 the Court of Peking had stopped Chinese general from attacking Bhutan after he had chastised the Nepalese because "Bhutan is respected by the votaries of the Lama as the Patrimony of the Church by those of the Pope".

The mission to Bhutan under R. B. Pemberton in 1838 was the first essay at a realistic appraisal on these points. Pemberton saw more of Bhutan than George Bogle in 1774 or Samuel Turner in 1783. He entered the country through Dewangiri (Jan. 1838) and was led in a direction "nearly due north" to the confines of Bhutan and Tibet. From there he turned west to Punakha covering a distance "rather more than two hundred and fifty miles" in "twentysix marches". He returned through the Buxa Duar arriving at Goalpara on the 31st May 1838. His Report on Bhutan more than compensated his failure to conclude a formal treaty with the Deb Raja. Its first part dealt with the two earlier missions to Bhutan and devotes two sections on the Duars of Assam and Bengal. The second part of the Report presents information in six sections. The first contains a narrative of his own mission; the second gives a general description of Bhutan, her rivers, roads and geology; the third deals with the political conditions of the country, its government, priesthood, revenues and military resources; the fourth section describes the productive industry of Bhutan in agriculture, livestock, wild animals and birds, manufacture and commerce; the fifth describes the civil and social state of Bhutan, her population, language, religious observances, dress, building, food, amusement and moral

31. From T. C. Roberson, Agent to the Governor General to Secretary to the Government, Political Department, dated Calcutta, the 6th Dec. 1833. Foreign P.C. Dec. 12, 1833, No. 75.

character. The sixth and the last section is concerned with the political relations of Bhutan with Tibet, China, Nepal and Sikkim. The Report ends with the Envoy's "concluding observations" on the relations between Bhutan and his own Government.

The Report attempted for the first time to portray in an adequate manner Bhutan's strength in terms of her population and resources. In many important respects Pemberton's estimate lacks the quality of accuracy. This was perhaps inevitable in view of physical difficulties and the general unsettled condition of the country during his visit. Speaking of population be noted "of the inhabitants of the hill portion of Bhutan it is almost impossible to form anything like an accurate estimate[32] from the total absence of even the most imperfect attempt at a census of the population . . . the number of people in the Duars may be assumed at 66,000 souls; . . . . for hill portion . . . . a total of 79,200 souls....and for the whole Bhutan country including both hills and lowlands, a total population of 145,000 souls"[33].

Of the receipts of Government he says "the amount of revenue raised in the country is so utterly insignificant, as scarcely to do more than suffice to satisfy the most urgent demands for food and clothing . . . By far the greater portion of expenditure entailed in conducting government is disbursed by contributions from the Duars the total amount of which is estimated at about forty thousand rupees per annum . . . The total amount of revenue drawn from every source can hardly be estimated at two lakhs of rupees per annum; and of this but a small portion can be fairly considered available for any public exigency"[34]; . . . Of the distribution of power within Bhutan he says "the real power of the state is vested in the two haughty barons of Paro and Tongsa, within whose jurisdiction are comprised nearly three-fourths of the whole country and population, the Deb (Raja) holds his precarious tenure of office at their pleasure' [35]. Or, again, of the military resources : "[they] are on a scale of insignificance commensurate with its wealth and population". An earlier estimate by Krishna Kanta Bose in 1815 put the number of men capable of bearing arms at 10,000. According to Pemberton 'nothing like that

32. This is true even today. P. P. Karan, *Bhutan*, p. 49.
33. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, pp. 83, 84.
34. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 64.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

body could be concentrated at any spot . . . (for) the inadequacy of supplies for so large a number and the great distance from which they must be drawn". He had an opportunity to test the quality of their gunpowder at Tongsa before the Penlop himself. The gun failed until the charge was mixed with "English powder". Pemberton's report and the Journal of William Griffith cite the case of Hargovind to elaborate on the military inefficiency of Bhutan. Hargovind was a servant of the Bhutan Government at Mainaguri in the plains. He carried on a war of definance and virtually shook off the Bhutanese yoke.

The last section of the Report and the concluding observations removed doubts in official thinking on many vital points. They gave not only a direction to Bhutan policy but also suggested a modus operandi. In describing Bhutan's relations with Tibet and China it was stated that though the authorities in Bhutan showed a marked deference to the "supposed views and wishes of the authorities....both Chinese and Tibetan"[36] there was general ignorance in Bhutan about Tibet and China. It was only to the portion of southern Tibet inhabited by the Khampas that the knowledge of the Bhutanese was confined. The "only occasion" in the year when anything approaching a regular communication took place was when an imperial mandate from China addressed to the Deb and Dharma Rajas and "written on fine cambric" was received[37]. It urged the Bhutanese Government to be careful in governing the country and prompt in suppressing rebellion. Bhutan used to send a presentation of "malbhog"[38], Assam erendi silk, and a few pieces of cloth and receive a present consisting of "China flowered silk and scarf, coral, and moulds of silver and gold". The shadow rather than the substance of suzerainty was displayed on this occasion and the "Chinese authority at Lhasa appear to exercise no direct control in the Government of the country"[39]. The Bhutanese entertained a very "salutary apprehension of any direct interference"[40] and they would rather incur the "inconveniences of their most un-

36. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
37. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 90, para 7.
38. A fine variety of rice grown in Assam.
39. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

settled government than endeavour to escape from them by an appeal to a power which they both dislike and dread".[41].

In his Report Pemberton reminded his government that in course of the Anglo-Nepalese war Nepal had sought the assistance of China and had tried to persuade the Emperor to send an army through Bhutan "Spreading alarm and consternation among Europeans as far as Calcutta". The "cautious policy of China prevented the adoption of the plan recommended"[42]. The restless ambition of the Gorkha power was checked by the determined policy of Marquis of Hastings which "interposed the petty state of Sikkim as a barrier to the eastern progress of the Nepalese. [and] . . . gave an additional seal to the security of Bhutan"[43]. A conflict between Nepal and Bhutan might bring the Chinese in the picture "a result which the British Government could hardly contemplate with indifference"[44].

In his concluding observations Pemberton was more forthright. A rigid policy would justify "the immediate permanent resumption of all the Duars, both in Bengal and Assam"[45]. But there were more powerful motives for pursuing a less severe course. Since the British occupation of Assam "aggression" have been committed in an area under the jurisdiction of the Tongsa Penlop, punishment should fall more heavily upon him than upon other members of the Bhutan Government. A "distinction" ought to be drawn. It is only then that "the justice which attached the Assam Duars would be felt, and the generosity which spared those of Bengal, appreciated". The divisive policy, if imaginatively pursued, had limitless possibilities. And it was safe. To regain the Duars the Bhutanese would supplicate the intercession of Tibet as they had done in the days of Warren Hastings. Opportunity "would thus be afforded of reopening a communication between the British, Bhutanese and Tibetan authorities, to which the Bhutanese are now determinedly opposed"[46]. The "united influence" of the Deb and Dharma Rajas and the Penlops would

41. *Ibid.*, para 10.

42. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, pp. 93, 94.

43. This result was achieved by the Treaty of Titalya, 1817, Vide, Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagement and Sunnads etc.*, Vol. I, p. 157.

44. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

46. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

be brought to bear upon successful negotiation. The lure of the trade of Tibet and west China was still strong and it reminds one of the ambition of a rising state of which Hastings spoke. Before the so-called Opium War these observations would seem to suggest yet another attempt at commercial penetration of China through the "backdoor".

Again, it was necessary "to ascertain the return of the foreign relations of the Tibetan authorities"[47]. The envoy had learnt from Tibetan merchants that "there were foreigners residing there" who "sat at tables, and were constantly engaged in writing and reading books". He came to believe that agents of Russia had found their way to Lhasa. It was therefore most desirable to counteract the diplomatic influence of Russia which was already agitating the sturdy Afghans in the west.

Pemberton thought it "perfectly practicable" either to open dialogue with the Tibetan authorities or to "dictate" terms to the Bhutan government "as long as the Duars continued attached". Such a policy did not involve any unnecessary risk. True it is that people in Bhutan, and important people at that, would be reduced to "extreme distress" if suddenly deprived of sustenance from the Duars. Military preparedness "from the Dhunsiri to the Tista" along the whole line of the frontier would be advisable to meet any possible incursion. Such a step would not excite "more than an increased degree of jealousy and uneasiness on the part of the Chinese and Tibetan authorities" who would hardly commit their Governments to repel British arms. In fact only a "hostile invasion" of Bhutan would ruin the chances of contact with Tibet. It would aggravate the existing "extravagant suspicions and jealousy" and lead to closure of the passes "which lead from Bhutan into Tibet". The commercial intercourse with Tibet would be postponed to a period of "hopeless futurity" whereas a firm but forbearing policy would produce the extremely desirable "effect". The piecemeal measure of attaching the Assam Duars and punishing the Tongsa Penlop alone had another advantage. In the words of an official document it would prevent the dispute being given a "national character". Military involvement would be limited without depreciating the bargaining strength. About stationing a permanent European functionary

47. *Ibid.*, para 9.

in Bhutan Pemberton opined that it might evoke just a formal "remonstrance" from the authorities at Lhasa or the court of Peking as they had done on the appointment of a British Resident at Kathamandu more than twenty years ago.

Pemberton's view that there ought to be a difference in British attitude towards the Bhutanese authorities of Assam and Bengal Duars was endorsed by Robertson in a minute[48] wherein be stated "There has been a . . . difference on the conduct towards us of the authorities in Bengal and Assam Duars . . . consequently a corresponding distinction ought to appear in our conduct towards them and care should be taken not to visit (?) upon Paro Penlop the faults or provocations of the other border chief" Tongsa Penlop). However he struck a note of caution saying that in the direction of Kooreapara and Towang "we have been . . . for sometime past unwittingly in contact with the Chinese empire" and "insignificant as the immediate power of Bhutan is it would if seriously menaced or straitened if supported by a state with which it can never be from our interest to come into collision". He thought that "our measures of coercion ought to be in some degree regulated and I should therefore be averse at the present juncture to any general attachment or resumption such as Capt. Jenkins apparently contemplates".

The Court of Directors in a Despatch[49] expressed their appreciation of Pemberton's work in the following terms" . . . entire success in the objects of the mission was obviously unattainable. Yet we are of opinion that a foundation has been laid for their partial if not complete accomplishment at some further time"[50]. Again, "Capt. Pemberton is also entitled to great commendation for the attention he has shown to the acquisition of a mass of valuable miscellaneous information in the departments of geography, statistics, and natural history, both by his own personal labors, and with the able assistance of his assistants Lt. Blake and Dr. Griffith"[51]. In this despatch the Directors gave freedom to the government of India decide on the issue of "attachment"

48. A note signed by Robertson. Foreign P.C. March 27, 1839, No. 81.

49. Despatch from the Court of Directors No. 13 of 1839, File 10 July/39, No. 13.

50. *Ibid.*, para 4.

51. *Ibid.*, para 5.

as and when necessary : "It remains for you to take the means(?) which are in your power for enforcing the payment of tribute and the repression of frontier dacoities by the attachment whenever necessary of one or more Duars or by any other measure which the circumstances of the case may suggest"[52].

The plain fact of taking possession of the Assam Duars (1841)[53] was described as "resumption" of an old right. The pith of the theory was : The Bhutanese had taken possession of the Duars "at no very distant time". It was a "usurption" of the rights of the weak Assam princes who confirmed it by a "compromise". They never renounced their "Sovereign rights over the people" whom they still considered their subjects. From time to time even the weak princes interfered to control the arbitrary exactions of the Bhutanese. These sovereign rights were inherited by the British power who wanted to make them a reality by resuming what had been usurped. By mismanagement and failure to pay arrear tribute the Bhutanese had forfeited their rights to the possession of the Duars[54].

As late as July 1841 Auckland's Government which was already in the midst of the disastrous Afghan imbroglio was thinking in terms of employing sufficient police to restore "order and security". Capt. Jenkins was urged to employ the Assam Sebundy Corps[55] if necessary. His Lordship in Council expressed surprise "why there should be greater difficulty in managing at least several of the Duars than has been experienced in regard to the three . . ."[56]. Jenkins himself had been writing in June 1841 : "the deficiency of our troops, the nature of the country and the unknown consequences of a military occupation render it . . . very desirable to avoid this course except in the failure of all other attempts"[57].

52. Despatch from the Court of Directors No. 13 of 1839. File 10, July/39, No. 13, para 6.

53. Already the Darrang Duars had been attached.

54. Foreign Political May 11/41, No. 12. Despatch from the Court of Directors, N.A.I.

55. This additional Corps was raised from local people in the Duars or "men bred in tracts similar to those", R. B. Pemberton, *Report*, p. 20.

56. Letter No. 2049, From Secretary to the Govt. of India to Capt. F. Jenkins, dated Fort William, the 26th July 1841, Foreign Political July 26/41, No. 82, N.A.I.

57. *Ibid.*, No. 93, June 27/41, N.A.I.

Ashley Eden's version of the immediate circumstances of resumption is as follows : Capt. Jenkins reported that the Bhutanese were prepared to cede the Duars on payment of a fair compensation "for what they drew from the Duars". Whilst the matter was still under consideration a fresh aggression was committed "in pergunnah Kossty Ghat". Lord Auckland addressed a letter to the Dharma Raja on the 14th June warning him of measures which it would be his painful duty to adopt. "Later in the year, in consequence apparently of instructions from the Court of Directors orders were issued for the resumption of the whole of the Assam Duars, and ultimately we agreed to pay the Bhutanese Government a sum of rupees 10,000 per annum"[58]. Aitchison recorded that "this sum was considered to be equal to one-third of the revenue of the Kamrup and Darrang Duars. No written agreement was made regarding this arrangement"[59].

The story of the annexation of the Assam Duars (1841) shows that it was an almost inevitable corollary of the British conquest of Assam (1826). The fertile plains on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra could not adequately be secured until the natural frontier along the foothills of Bhutan was reached. That it did not come sooner may be ascribed, first, to the unknown consequences of a rupture with Bhutan and, secondly, the records and still more the observations of R. B. Pemberton in his Report make it amply clear that the Duars were intended to be used as an economic lever to secure the good offices of the ruling aristocracy in Bhutan who drew from the Duars "the means of supporting their own position and of maintaining their crowd of habitual dependents"[60], for resuming the dialogue with Tibet which had so abruptly ended after the Gorkha-Tibet war of 1792.

58. Eden's Memorandum, dated June 6, 1864.

59. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sannads*, Vol. I, p. 143.

60. Alexander Mackenzie, *North East Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884, Chapter II.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW FRONTIER : BENGAL DUARS

The Western or Bengal Duars[1a] were eleven in number, extending along the foot of the Himalayas between the Tista and the Manas rivers[1b]. At present the Bengal Duars have an area of 1,968 Sq. miles[2] but were supposed to comprise about a 1000 Sq. miles more in 1865[3].

This fertile plain had gone out of Muhammedan control and, when the Company's power extended over Cooch Behar, the Bhutanese were in firm control of them. In this period and for a long time afterwards the Bengal Duars were not a well-defined territory. The Cooch Behar Raj had considerable portion of territory within his dominions in the Maraghat-Chamurchi area. For some tracts he used to receive tribute from the Bhutanese. It is known that for the "province" of Chekakhata the Bhutanese used to pay him a tribute of five tangan horses". The records of the period after 1774 reveal that there were a number of border chiefs who often encroached upon Bhutanese territories in the Duars. They were very much like the Lords Marcher of ancient times. Further, territories were rendered "confused and irregular" by large tracts of jungle and forest lands and "unsettled habits of the population".

1a. D.F. Rennie, *Bhotan and the Story of the Dooar War*, p. 2. The term Duar is derived from dwar meaning passes, gate or entrance. It is inappropriately applied to the level tract upon which the mountain passes open. Thus a much wider meaning has become attached to the word than that which etymologically belongs to it.

1b The limit of the Bengal Duars shown in modern census is from river Tista to Sankos.

2. *District Handbook, Jalpaiguri, Census*, 1951, Appendix 1C IV. From West to East the Duars are named Dalimkote, Mainaguri, Chamurchi, Lucki, Buxa, Balka, Guma, Chirang and Bagh. D. F. Rennie, *op. cit.*, p. 48 : The relation said to exist between the number of passes and the number of Duars is "erroneous".

3. From J. C. Geddes, Offg. Deputy Commissioner, Eastern Duars to Col. H. Hopkinson, Commissioner of Assam, dated Dutma, the 27th June, 1865, State Archives, Govt. of West Bengal, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Oct. 1865, p. 43, para 7.

The Bengal Duars were under the jurisdiction of Paro Penlop, the Governor of the western division of Bhutan. The Tongsa Penlop's jurisdiction extended from the river Manas eastward and included all the Duars in Kamrup and Darrang in Assam[4]. These two chiefs were "the really effective pieces upon the Bhutanese chessboard"[5]. Next in rank to the Paro Penlop were Bhutanese officers known as "Soobah" or Subah. There were three such Subahs in the area between the river Tista and Gadadhar, the Subah of Dalimkot, that of Lakhimpur Duar and the Subah of the more important Buxa Duar. Below the Subahs there were a class of subordinate officials known as Kathams. They were resident in the plains and exercised immediate control in the management of the Duars. In the great majority of cases the Kathams were directly appointed by the title-deed (Sanad) of the Deb Raja. Though subordinate in rank, resourceful Kathams were the pivot of Bhutanese administration in the plains. It seems that the appellation 'Katham' was prevalent only to the west of the Gadadhar. Eastward, it took the forms of "Luskar, wuzder or Mundal"[6]. The demography of the Duars under Bhutan had this peculiarity. They were not inhabited by the Bhutanese. The slopes of outer hills were inhabited by Mechis, Garos, Cacharees, Parbatias, the Totos and other tribes[7]. The plains were settled by the Koch, the Rajbansi, Bengalees and others.

East of the river Gadadhar there was the Subah of Bara Duar whose authority also extended over the Duars of Balka and Guma. The territories of the Subah of Ripu Duar were confined in the plains along the western bank of the Sankos river. The jurisdiction of the Subah of Chirang was very extensive, lying between the Sankos and the western bank of the Manas river. The Daka Penlop exercised jurisdiction over the Subah

4. Political Despatch to the Court of Directors No. 56, dated 8th Sept. '57, para 187, "The boundary of the Tongsa Penlow's (sic) jurisdiction was, according to Capt. Jenkins, the Manas river. East of this, the Tongsa Penlow governs more or less authoritatively". National Archives of India, Foreign Political 17th April, '57.

5. Earl of Ronaldshay, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

6. R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bootan*, p. 32.

7. Minute by Cecil Beadon, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, No. 42, dated Darjeeling, July 22, 1864.

of Chirang, and "it is doubtful whether he has any other Duar than that of Chirang under his authority"[8].

The Rajas of Sidli and Bijni were amenable to the authority of the Chirang Subah in their relations with Bhutan. The territories of the former chief were bound by the Sankos on the west and river Ayee on the east. The tribute paid by the Raja of Sidli to the Bhutan Government consisted of "five hundred rupees, some oil, dried fish and coarse cotton cloths, but this amount is merely nominal, and far greater exactions are made at the pleasure of the Subah of Chirang"[9]. The Raja of Bijni used to receive his title deed (Sanad) from the Deb Raja and is described as the Deb Raja's "tehsildar of the produce of the land or Duar"[10].

According to a later survey and settlement of the western Duars[11], "under the Bhutan Government land was left rent free for five years after the forest had been cut and was then assessed at area rates according to the hal or plough, a local measure of about five acres". There was also a "special cess on mustard seed indicating the commencement of assessing the higher ground". A local rate of "one rupee a hal and two rupees per house was levied for pujas" (worship). There were other taxes like the "dao tax", levied from those who temporarily squatted in the jungles, taxes on loom, licences to trade and to ply boats. These were designed rather to "realise something from the wandering Mechis, the weavers and traders than to impose any additional burden on the parmanent cultivators". In the Buxa Duar, a very productive tract, the land used to be farmed out among people who paid a fixed deposit ("jummah") on the estate.

8. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

10. Travelling Diary of the civil officer with the Right Column, Dooar Field Force, for the week ending the 29th Dec. 1864. The terms of tenure of Rajas of Bijni, and Sidli have been described in Chapter I in connection with Bhutan's revenue administration in the Duars. Bhutan Political Proceedings, Feb. 1865 [No. 14], State Archives, Govt. of West Bengal.

11. D. H. E. Sunder, *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars in the District of Jalpaiguri* 1889-1895, Bengal Secretariat Press 1895. Note on the Settlement of the Western Duars by P. Nolan, Commissioner, Rajshahi Division, dated Nov. 24, 1894, pp. 15-21.

This deposit was irrespective of fluctuations in cultivation or in the number of ryots[12].

Immediately after the annexation of the Western Duars (1865) Mr. Tweedie, the first Deputy Commissioner, made enquiries regarding the mode of collection under the Bhutanese. He found that revenue was realised by Tehsildars direct from the "jotedars". The latter were the people "who represented the original reclaimers of the soil, that their rights were hereditary and in fact passed through many generations". One very striking fact in the "pattern of arrangement of the population" in the Western Duars was recorded by Baden-Powell in 1896. There was scarcely a village to be seen from one end of the Duars to the other. The whole of the land was held in detached farms or jotes (cultivating lot). The jotedar was head of the little community that clustered around his house. The size of the homesteads varied with that of a jote. Some contained as many as forty or fifty houses (i.e., cottages) while others had not more than six or eight; the common characteristic was that the jotedar was looked up to as the master over all; he managed the affairs of the whole jote and used to let out the lands to the under-tenants and retained what he chose for his special use; his word was law; in fact he was a "little patriarch living in the midst of his family and dependants whose influence for good or evil is felt by every member of the society"[13]. This description portrays the jotedar as the central figure of the land-holding system though no specific reasons are cited which discouraged formation of villages. It must be the topography which discourged it. Beneath the jotedars there were three classes, namely, the "chukanidars", the "ryots" and "prajas". It would be wrong to suppose that "these four classes are always found one above other on the same land, the last being the actual cultivator, and the other three living on his labours." In fact, most jotedars ploughed their own lands and those who employed "prajas" used them only as the small farmer uses the labourers he hires. The

12. From W. H. J. Lance, Chief Civil Officer, Lt. Centre Column in Col. J. C. Haughton, dated Camp Balla, Dec. 20, 1864, Bhutan Political Proceedings, [No. 37].

13. Baden-Powell, *The Indian Village Community*, Longman, 1896, Chapter IV, pp. 142-143.

"ryots" of Mr. Tweedie's report "are not said to hold under the Chukanidars from whom they are distinguished only by the length of the term for which they engage". In British revenue settlements these two classes were amalgamated "under the name of chukanidars". This was in pursuance of a policy aimed to settle the land in the Western Duars with resident small capitalists who would in general cultivate some or all their lands themselves"[14]. It thus "appears that under the Bhutias there were only two sorts of cultivators—the jotedars found everywhere in a privileged position directly under government and in some places the chukanidars, tenants of the jotedars for a term, or year by year". There were also farm labourers, a landless class, working for hire on a peculiar system.

It is not possible to have an exact idea or the amount of revenue the Bhutan Government raised from the Duars. According to Pemberton the greatest portion of the expenditure of Government was "disbursed by contribution from the Duars, the total amount of which is estimated at about rupees 40,000 per annum"[15]. By his own admission this was an approximation to truth. Accuracy is impossible where nearly the whole of the revenue was paid in kind and correct valuation of articles could not be obtained from officers responsible for collection. Besides no public records were kept at the capital. That Pemberton's estimate was merely tentative is convincingly shown by a document which gives a concise statement of the receipts and disbursement of Mainaguri for one year. This document was found among the rubbish when that place was captured in 1864. The estimate was "for the year ending 30th Kartic, 354 R.S." (of the Cooch Behar Era) and was stated in Narayani coinage. The total collection given is Rs. 43,264-2-0 from the three areas of Karjeebus, Bhuthat and Changmari under Mainaguri[16]. It is to be noted that Mainaguri represented only a very small portion of the Bengal Duars under Bhutan. It was no larger than a

14. J. A. Milligan, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Jalpaiguri District,* 1906-1916, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1919, p. 135.

15. R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bootan,* p. 63.

16. Journal of the Chief Civil Officer and Political Agent, Bhutan Duar Field Force for the week ending Dec. 2, 1864, State Archives, Government of West Bengal, Bhutan Political Proceedings No. 6.

hamlet in an English shire. Ashley Eden gives an estimate of Bhutanese collection from the Bengal Duars in the following words : "the Duars held by the Paro Penlow (sic) are a very small portion of the whole Bengal Duars and if he receives a lakh for his portion the total revenue of the Duars must be several lakhs. I do not think, however, that any real estimate can be formed of the revenue derived from the Duars"[17].

In any account of Bhutan's revenue administration the widespread prevalence of the system of unpaid labour must always be underlined. It would appear that Bhutanese officials in the Duars could not exercise anything like administrative control without resorting to the "custom" of unpaid labour. It is recorded that the Totos, a tribe who inhabited the lower slopes of the hills, used to give labour in lieu of rent for land. They used to carry the Subah's burden from one place to another and build bridges annually[18]. Another tribe, the Mechis, used to pay rent in elephant's tusk, stag skin, etc.[19].

A very common "custom" prevalent in the Duars was the feeding of Bhutanese soldiers and officials who happened to be there or passing through them on some kind or other of official business. It would appear that corvee, forced requisitions, oppression of Bhutanese officials and "endless" civil strife in the Duars made the lot of the cultivator an unenviable one. A large number of people migrated to Darjeeling Terai after 1850. Many of them were engaged in road building and working in the new settlement. At times steps were taken to ensure continuity of cultivation and residence. Thus when one tract was running into ruins, the Deb Raja took a series of remedial measures. He granted remission of taxes for five years. In order to encourage settlement of "new ryots" six kinds of cesses were dispensed with. Requisitions for soldiers and officials were remitted for five years and concessions were granted to Mechis and other tribes[20].

17. Eden's memorandum dated Darjeeling, April 21, 1864, Foreign Proceedings, No. 45, para 27.

18. From Capt. W. H. J. Lance to Col. Haughton, dated Camp Balla, Dec. 20, 1864, Para 26, Bhutan Political Proceedings, No. 37.

19. *Ibid.*, para 13.

20. From Capt. W.H.J. Lance to Col. Haughton, dated Camp Balla, Dec. 20, 1864, Para 26, Bhutan Political Proceedings, No. 37. These are the purport of two deeds recorded in the communication.

Bhutanese officials in the Duars used to receive payment for allowing their subjects the right to intra-Duar trade. Ensign Brodie, who adjusted the bounderies of Balka, Guma and Ripu in 1934, speaks of a "singular custom" among the inhabitants of these Duars : "In the neighbourhood of Balka some of the inhabitants of the Songamma and other surrounding villages are in the habit of giving written agreements to pay what is called Gaongeeree to the *Katma* (sic) of Balka, who is the Deb Raja's Khas Tehsildar, in consideration of which they obtain the right to trade to all the different Duars of Bhutan. There are other kinds of gaongeeree but this is the principal one and when it is not paid regularly the Katma has taken the law into his own hands and seized the goods of the ryots in default and occasionally their persons". He further adds that the system of gangeeree was of very "ancient date" and that there was no evidence that the Katham exercised any oppression "towards the ryots of Behar (Cooch Behar), excepting such as are also Bhutan gaongeeree ryots". He adds "I have made the most minute enquiries and I find that the ryots in general have no dread whatever of the Bhutias"[21].

It was in the period after the British annexation of Assam (1826) that the potentiality of the Duars was grasped. In 1832 Robertson in his paper on Bhutan[22] expressed his conviction that Bhutan could be reduced to "our terms" by merely shutting up the passes and preventing the Bhutanese from coming to the plains or receiving any supplies therefrom. The expenses of retaining possession of the low-lands could be easily met by the establishment of "Hauts or market" on the principle of those in the Goalpara district. They would prove a "most fruitful source of revenue". In 1838 Pemberton in his Report observed that "the Duars were the most valuable portion of Bhutan territory". It was from them that the Bhutanese either directly or indirectly obtained "almost every article of consumption or luxury". Their trade was with the Duars and the priests and higher

21. Latter addressed to Capt. Jenkins from Brodie Ensign, dated Falakata, the 22nd March, 1834, Foreign Political Aug. 28/34, No. 53, N.A.I.

22. From Agent to the Governor General N.E.F. to Chief Secretary, dated Goalpara the 14th Dec. 1832, Foreign P.C. Jan. 7/33, No. 23.

classes subsisted almost "exclusively upon their produce"[23]. He recommended that a "rigid" policy would justify "immediate permanent resumption of all Duars both in Bengal and Assam"[24]. In 1841 Captain Jenkins in his letter[25] pointedly referred to the offers made by Hargovind Katham to pay rupees 50,000 if the Company's Govt. maintained him in his portion of the Duars (a very insignificant portion of the whole). In another letter[26] the Agent to Governor-General expressed the view that the extensive tracts of the Duars could absorb the "outpouring" of population from Rangpur and Cooch Behar. Their rich forest resources would be of inestimable value for the restoration of the timber trade of eastern Bengal. Before the outbreak of the Duar War (Nov. 1864) Ashley Eden, British Envoy to Bhutan, tried to remove the prevailing "mistaken impression" about the Duars. They were neither unhealthy nor unproductive, "a portion of these now under jungle may be unhealthy in the rains, but when the jungle is cleared and a free current of air admitted they will be just as healthy as any other part of the plains or healthier for the natural drainage of the country is excellent . . . the soil is a rich black vegetable mould abounding with magnificent timber". There is some of the "finest" grazing ground in India in the Duars[27]. Writing from his camp at Ambiok the envoy wrote that, "under a good Govt.", the Duars would present a new panorama with flourishing "cotton fields and tea fields and timber depots"[28]. Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, noted in his minute[29] that the Duars would provide a new field for the enterprise of European timber merchants and cotton planters. He stated that "there can be no reasonable doubt that the lowlands of the Bengal Duars, being nearly ten times as large as Darjeeling Terai . . . would yield

23. R. B. Pemberton, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

24. *Ibid.*

25. From Capt. Jenkins to Secretary to the Government, dated the 27th June, 1841, Foreign Political July 27/41, No. 93, N.A.I.

26. *Ibid.*, No. 69, dated the 21st May, 1841.

27. Eden's memorandum dated Darjeeling, the 21st April, 1864, Foreign Proceedings, No. 45, Para 26.

28. Eden's Report on Bootan, Part II, Para 28, dated Darjeeling July 20, 1864, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Nov. 1864.

29. Cecil Beadon's (Lt. Governor) Minute, No. 42, dated, Darjeeling the 22nd July 1864, N.A.I.

a revenue of not less than four or five lakhs of rupees while the amount to be realised by the sale of waste land would be very considerable".

More information was garnered in the days of the Duar War. Lime deposits near Buxa were so abundant that it would end the monopoly of Cherapunji in Assam. The carriage to the plains was so cheap that some military officials were "sorely tempted to turn contractors"[30]. The country was rich in "tea soil, lime and timber". The Dharma Raja had prevented the agriculturists from "cultivating tea lest the profitable trade with Tibet be affected". Col. Haughton estimated that the revenue of the rice tracts alone will yield two lakhs of rupees in the "first year" and will "increase to six lakhs in a few years". With a force of 1800 men to guard the frontier and present civil establishments, even the former sum will yield a profit". *The Friend of India* commented, "the days of annexation are so long past that it is well to prove the Empire will suffer no loss, before an act so necessary"[31].

The "resumption" of the Assam Duars in 1841 had deeply perturbed the Bhutanese mind. The posture of the Tongsa Penlop when he met Ashley Eden 22 years later is an indication of the lingering wound. However, when the fabric of the British Empire was in the making, challenges had to be met elsewhere. The disastrous Afghan adventure was followed by the Sind and Sutlej campaigns (First Sikh War 1845-46). Dalhousie's hands were full with the Punjab problem, the Burmese War and organising a modern system of administration. During his regime the Bengal Government reported that the Bhutanese had violated British territory by abducting two frontier zemindars, Arung Sing, and Ramdulal. A bold policy against Bhutan, spelt out as annexation of the Bengal Duars, was overdue. The circumstances of the abduction of Arung Singh gained exceptional prominence in official despatches and as such merit attention. The Court of Directors were informed[32] that Arung was a "hereditary zemindar" of Guma Duar in Bhutanese territory but had been "permitted to take up his residence for three years within British territory" (Goalpara district). According to information furnished

30. *Friend of India,* July 13, 1865, p. 801.

31. *Friend of India,* July 13, 1865, p. 801.

32. Despatch to the Court of Directors, No. 97, Sept. 20/1856, para 278.

by Capt. Agnew, Arung Sing "availed himself of the position to evade the payment of dues to the Bhutia authorities". It was further admitted that Arung Sing "ought not to have been permitted to remain on such terms in the village where had had established himself nor should have met with any direct encouragement from Col. Jenkins"[33]. In the next year the Deb Raja "admitted the act of abduction" and defended it "on the ground that the person carried off was servant of his own who had offended and no notice was taken of the demand for an apology"[34]. Dalhousie's policy had the merit of firmness. Eden noted that he distinctly directed" the permanent occupation of the Bengal Duars in the event of a recurrence of marauding incursion from Bhutan[35]. An undated note, preserved in a Foreign Department File[36] reads : "the Agent was instructed that if the apology demanded was not made, the Bengal Duars would be taken possession of by the Government . . . time will not be lost in giving effect to the orders of the Government for taking possession of Bengal Duars should that step become necessary".

Canning's administration began in March 1856. In the matter of punishing Bhutan he insisted that the option before the Government of India must be open. In other words, the frontier officials and the Government of Bengal could not be permitted a free rein. Even before the summer of 1857, when the Mutiny broke out in full fury, be rejected the idea of taking possession of the whole of Bengal Duars. In his note of 1st April 1857 the utmost he could approve of was, "if measures of force should become necessary", to acquire on permanent possession the tract of country which the Bhutanese government held on this side (right bank) of the Tista. If, "when the time comes", there should be reason to think that it would not be sufficiently coercive, "the occupation and retention of Jalpesh (on the left bank of the Tista), *but not reaching the Duars,* will be open to us". Further, "the Lieutenant Governor should be requested to direct that a fresh demand . . . (be) made upon the Dharma and Deb Rajas, taking

33. *Ibid.*

34. Despatch to the Court of Directors, No. 56, dated Sept. 8/57, para 184.

35. Foreign Proceedings, dated Darjeeling May 6, 1864, para 23.

36. A note by the Governor General, Foreign Political May 9/56, No. 42 KW (40-42).

care that nothing be said which shall in any degree hamper the Govt. of India in determining hereafter when and how it shall act in the event of this demand being refused". This note was in reply to a communication from the Secretary to the Bengal Government[37]. The two significant points in this letter were, first, the ready means of coercing the Bhutan Government by the stoppage of payment for the Assam Duars was not favoured. It was felt that the Tongsa Penlop, "through" whom the payment was made, should not be made to suffer because he was "at present well disposed and with whom it is advisable as long as possible to preserve amicable relations". This reminds one of the division sought to be made between the Penlops of Paro and Tongsa before the annexation of the Assam Duars (1841). In fact, it was understood that one means of coercing Bhutan would be not to allow powerful Bhutanese chiefs to unite. In a political despatch to Court of Directors[38] this policy was explained in the following words : "In strictness we would be justified in dealing with the whole country as one, and in recognising no division of authority or interest from one end of Bhutan to the other. *But to act upon this view might not only fail of success but prove practically unjust*".

Secondly, in this letter efficacy of employment of force to take possession of "one or more of the Bengal Duars" was highlighted. Military preparedness for the purpose involved "very little difficulty, especially as it would be easy to transport a couple of howitzers to Jalpaiguri by the Tista during the rains together with their contingent of native artillerymen to be ready in case of need". Summing up the mode of application of force, the letter stated that "punitive operations" against Bhutan "might very properly be small and successive so that each successive blow should be seen and felt to be a distinct and decisive punishment for a declared offense"[39].

37. From Secretary to the Government of Bengal to Secretary to the Government of India, dated the 5th March 1857, Foreign Political April 17/57, No. 507, 1857.

38. Despatch to the Court of Directors, No. 56, dated Sept. 8/57, para 188.

39. From Secretary to the Government of Bengal to Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, dated Kurseong the 5th March, 1857, No. 507, Foreign P.C. April 17/57, N.A.I.

Before long the ordeal of the Revolt shook the foundations of British power in Gangetic India. It should not go unrecorded that in the Revolt when disgruntled feudal princes dreamt of independence Bhutan was quiscent. When the storm abated, it increased the debt of India by about 38½ millions and the military charges, which ensued augmented the annual expenditure by about £ 18 millions[40]. Obviously there was little scope for an adventurist policy against Bhutan. Canning was now not prepared even to allow taking permanent possession of the tracts he was to sanction in 1857 (viz., Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh). In 1860 he passed severe strictures on the action of Col. Jenkins when the latter took permanent occupation of the tract of country west of Tista (Ambari Falakata) and issued a threat to the Bhutan Government that unless certain delinquents were made over "other tracts of territory belonging to Bhutan will be occupied". The Viceroy remarked that the Agent had gone "very much beyond the letter and spirit of his last instructions or indeed of those which he received in the Spring of 1857"[41]. He directed that "the full extent of Col. Jenkins' error should be noticed to the Lieutenant Governor. His Honour will not fail to see that at no time and in no circumstances has the Governor General's Agent been authorised to address to the Bhutan Government threats that their territory would be occupied, while he has been ordered not to hamper the Government of India in determining when and how it shall act in the event of its demand being refused"[42]. Further "Governor General in Council does not regard itself (?) as committed to a line of retributive coercion if by that is meant that having seized the land west of the Tista, we must go on to seize other lands east of it and so onward"[43].

The Viceroy, who did much elsewhere to "heal rather than inflame the wounds", had realised before the Mutiny that opening of dialogue with Bhutan was one way of ensuring stability

40. A Tripathi, 'The Financial Policy of British Raj 1858-1865', *Bengal Past & Present*, Vol. LXXXIX, July-Dec., 1970.

41. Governor General's (Canning) personal draft on the occupation of the tract west of the Tista, dated the 6th June, 1860, Foreign Political Part A, June 60, No. 170-71.

42. *Ibid.*, Para 4.

43. *Ibid.*, Para 5.

on the frontier. In 1861 Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner and Governor-General's Agent, expressed the hope that a mission might succeed in establishing a permanent Agent at the Bhutanese Court. The latter would be the "best instrument for paving the way for friendly intercourse with Lhasa"[44]. Before leaving India worn out in body and mind, Canning expressed in a note[45] that "it is very expedient that a mission should be sent to explain what our demands are and what we shall do if they are not conceded". He was doubtful "as to placing an Agent in Bhutan" and thought that the question could be decided "after the result of the mission is known". In July 1862, a messenger named Mukunda Sing was despatched from Assam to the court of the Deb Raja. The reply he brought was "unsatisfactory and contradictory"[46] but had the merit of frankness. The Deb Raja wrote, "you ask an interview, that is good ; I want to speak to you about the Duars". The next Viceroy, Earl of Elgin, permitted the mission to enter Bhutan before he died at Dharmsala in Nov. 1863. Thus the mission under Ashley Eden which gave a new turn to Bhutan policy and directly led to the open rupture with that country" did not start till the interregnum between the death of Lord Elgin and the arrival of Sir John Lawrance"[47].

The story of the mission to Bhutan under Ashley Eden and its "entire failure"[48] may be briefly told. In Nov. 1863 Eden collected information that Bhutan had been thrown "into a state of anarchy and general confusion by one of the frequent periodical struggles for the Deb Rajaship"[49]. He insisted on entering Bhutan with his "present escort" provided the Deb Raja was not opposed to it. The "other party" could be easily dealt

44. From Commissioner and Governor General's Agent to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated Gauhati the 12th March, 1861, Foreign P.C. dated March 12, 1861.

45. A note by Canning, dated 17.1 (1862), Foreign Political A Jan./62, N.A.I.

46. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

47. Rulers of India, Sir John Lawrence—by C. U. Aitchison, p. 137.

48. From Envoy to Bootan to Secretary to the Government of India, dated Darjeeling April 21, 1864, Foreign Polt. A. No. 45.

49. From Hon ble A. Eden to Col. Durand, Secretary to the Government of India, dated Nov. 10, 1863, para 3. As above No. 3.

with, since "as warriors they are despicable"[50]. Eden left for Bhutan "by way of Darjeeling and Dalimkot towards the close of 1863, accompanied by Capt. Austin as his Assistant, Dr. Simpson as Medical Officer, Chiboo Lama as interpreter, and an escort of 100 men under the command of Captain Lance"[51]. Without receiving any friendly communication from the Bhutan Darbar be reached Paro. Of the kind of reception accorded to him here he says that "every place that we proposed to pitch our tents was objected to on the score of its being sacred" and "we were kept standing on a sandy plain for more than two hours"[52]. At Paro he learnt that the Tongsa Penlop had usurped all authority and Deb and Dharma Rajas were puppets in his hands. Having been detained at Paro for 16 days, the mission left the place on the 10th March and on the 15th reached Punakha[53], where they had to "go down the side of a hill and come in by a back road". In his very first meeting with the Darbar on the 20th March Eden presented the draft treaty which he carried with him. After reading the first two articles the Tongsa Penlop said that a clause must be added to the effect that the resumed Assam Duars would at once be made over to the Bhutanese officers[54]. Eden answered that it was better to dismiss all consideration of the subject from their minds and to take measures "to prevent the loss of further lands". The Penlop took up the draft treaty, crumpled it up and said, "there we will have war ! You are nobody; you have no authority from the Governor General; we don't want Ambari Falakata" .... The Envoy was invited to the Darbar again on the 22nd and the issue of the draft treaty again came up. On the insistence of the Tongsa Penlop. Articles VIII and IX (relating to stationing a British Agent in Bhutan and freedom of trade) were deleted. After preparation of papers the Envoy attended yet another

50. From Hon'ble A. Eden to Col. Durand, Secretary to the Government of India, dated Nov. 10, 1863, para 3, Foreign Poltl. A. No. 3.

51. Annual Report on the Administration of the Bengal Presidency for 1863-64, Bengal Secretariat Office, 1864, Section X—Political, p. 105.

52. From Envoy to Bootan to Secretary to the Govt. of India, dated Darjeeling April 21, 1864, Foreign Poltl. A. No. 45, para 4.

53. *Ibid.*, para 8.

54. From Envoy to Bootan to Secretary to the Government of India, Darjeeling April 21, 1864, Foreign Political A. No. 45, para 13.

Darbar on the 24th. Once again the Tongsa Penlop expressed his strong feelings about the Assam Duars and asked that "they should be given up to him as soon as the Treaty was signed, and that the whole revenue collected on them since the date of resumption, calculated on three lakhs of rupees per annum, should be paid over to him by the Governor General's Agent in Assam"[55]. When Eden remarked that his power was confined to the draft, the Tongsa Penlop is said to have picked up "a large piece of wet dough" and began rubbing the Envoy's face. The Wangdiphodrang dzongpon was reported to have spat on Dr. Simpson. When the Envoy thought it better to depart, the Tongsa Penlop called out, "I want nothing but the Assam Duars, and if I don't get them it is better to have war than treaty"[56].

All through the proceedings the Deb and Dharma Rajas and the majority of the Council were speechless "if even they were friendly"[57]. In order to get the mission out of Bhutan safely Eden consented to sign a paper drawn up by the Tongsa Penlop. It was in the form of an Agreement marked with seals "purporting" to be those of Dharma and Deb Rajas. The Agreement provided for the restoration of the Assam Duars along with certain other tracts and bound four states, "Bootan, Feeringees (the English), Behar and Sikkim", to the effect that if any one of them committed aggression, "the other three should punish it"[58] Eden signed the treaty formally with the words "under compulsion".

On its way back the mission passed through Paro and reached British territory in "fifteen marches" whilst "it took us two and half months to reach Punakha from the Tista"[59].

The fiasco suffered by the Eden mission had certain remarkable features which deserve attention. There were "errors of judgment" when the envoy decided to enter Bhutan even when

55. *Ibid.*, para 19.

56. From Envoy to Bootan to Secretary to the Government of India, dated Darjeeling April 21, 1864, Foreign Poltl. A., No. 45.

57. *Ibid.*, para 22.

58. Translation of the paper drawn up by the Tongsa Penlop and signed by A. Eden "under compulsion", Eden to Durand, dated Darjeeling the 30th May, 1864, Foreign Pol. A., No. 53.

59. From Envoy to Bootan to Secretary to the Government of India, dated Darjeeling April 21, 1864, Foreign Poltl. A., No. 45, para 33.

he had information that the country was in the grip of a civil strife. At Paro, where he was detained for sixteen days, "he had ample time to make enquiries to come to a sound conclusion as to the proper line to adopt. The mere circumstances of the protracted detention at Paro might have convinced him that a favourable reception at Punakha was extremely unlikely"[60]. The Viceroy further noted, "I came to the conclusion that Mr. Eden had evinced a want of judgment in pressing on after his arrival at Paro" The responsibility of the Bengal Govt. is evident from the following remark of the Viceroy : "It is quite true that the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal had strongly encouraged Mr. Eden in his forward movement and had intimated that he was satisfied with his progress. But I cannot admit that on this account, Mr. Eden was freed from the responsibility of forming an independent judgment on the circumstances of his position"[61]. In his concluding remark the Viceroy observed, "I must submit that the Govt. of India was justified in noticing.....the error of judgment which he committed".

After the publication of Bhutan Blue-Book by Parliament *The Friend of India* commented that "when he (the Envoy) reached Paro the opposition was such as would have compelled any but the most conceited and foolhardy person to return". Remembering the courage shown by Eldred Pottinger at Kabul under similar circumstances ("cut off my head; you never shall have my signature to that paper"), the Editor observed, "If in the wildness of his courage Mr. Eden thought it right to go on beyond Paro, it is a pity that the same courage was not true enough to teach him that he should do his duty and leave the result to God. But there were giants in those days"[62].

Comparing Mr. Eden's instructions with his conduct C.U. Aitchison noted in a precis that "there are three important points on which the Envoy appears to have departed from explicit instructions which were given : 1st, he seems to have pushed on ahead leaving the presents (to the Dharma and Deb Rajas) to

60. Minute by the Viceroy on Mr. Eden's mission to Bootan, dated the 21st March, 1866, No. 234, N.A.I.

61. Minute by the Viceroy on Mr. Eden's mission to Bootan, dated the 21st March, 1866, No. 234, para 3, N.A.I.

62. *Friend of India,* June 15, 1865.

be brought up afterwards, whereas he was told to open his negotiations by delivering the presents. 2nd, he commenced his negotiations by delivering to the Darbar a copy of the draft treaty, thereby showing his whole hand....It is remarkable that the only clauses to which objection was made, however insincere and treacherous the Darbar may have been were those (Article 8 and 9) on which Govt. entertained doubts, and one of which the Envoy was instructed not to press. 3rd. Although the Envoy marked the document as signed under compulsion he gave the Darbar no reason to believe that he had done so, on the contrary the papers appear to have been signed with all formalities of a voluntary engagement and the Envoy accepted presents for the Governor General. All this was in deliberate violation of the instructions of the 25th Sept. 1863"[63].

In the period between the return of Eden's Mission and the outbreak of the Duar War (April-Nov. 1864) it was the Bengal government that virtually decided on the issue of war. Two documents of the period relate the story of the initiative. The first was a memorandum (dated Darjeeling, the 6th May 1864) drawn up by the humiliated Envoy. In this document he stated that there were three courses open to the Govt. of India : "1st—Permanent occupation of the whole country. 2nd—a temporary occupation of the country, to be followed by the withdrawal of the occupying force after destroying all the forts and letting the people see and feel our power to reach them at any future time. 3rd—the permanent annexation of the tract at the foot of the hills called the Duars and Jalpesh". The erstwhile envoy went to the length of chalking out a politico-military blueprint for the invasion of Bhutan. According to him the first course "would not be expensive : the people would gladly welcome the measure". The country was the "only place I have seen in India in which the theory of European settlement could take really a practical form". The policy to be pursued in Bhutan would be to support those chiefs "as were friendly" by being "made farmers". By this means in course of a few years it should be possible "to have a class of landed proprietors interested in the well being and prosperity of the country".

63. No. 126 dated May 19, 1864, Aitchison's precis, Potl. A., June/1864, No. 122A-37, N.A.I.

Military occupation of Bhutan could be effected "without difficulty" and the best course would be to mobilise four columns through the Bagh Duar, Chirang, Buxa and Samchi. Perhaps after second thought Eden expressed the fear that the Govt. of India might be unwilling "to go so far as to give the whole of Bhutan the benefit of British rule" and recommended the third course, namely, the permanent annexation of the Bengal Duars.

It appears that as late as the summer of 1864 the Government of India remained wedded to the idea of limited retaliation. Financial and political embarrassments came thick in the wake of the Revolt and were yet far from being solved. In a communication addressed to the Deb Raja the Bhutan Government was informed that the "district of Ambari Falakata heretofore held in rent from the Bhutan Govt. is permanently annexed to British dominions and all payment of rent from that district and the revenue from the Assam Duars to the Bhutan Government has ceased for ever". But the officialdom in Bengal and the Lieuteant Governor had reached the point of no return. Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, whom the *Friend of India* once described as the "evil genius" of Sir John Lawrence and the most "skilful of charmers"[64], drew up an elaborate memorandum on the course to be pursued[65]. Broaching the subject of security of British territory, Sikkim and Cooch Behar, the Lieutenant Governor remarked that the objective could not be attained by "merely" holding the inferior Bhutan functionaries responsible. Secondly, the only intelligible policy would be "to regard the Bhutan nation as a whole and to look to its ostensible Government, and to that alone for reparation and future security". Thirdly, if the Bhutan government failed to comply with British demands[66] by the first September, "we ought without doubt" to

64. *Friend of India,* Nov. 16, 1865.

65. Lieut. Governor's minute, dated Darjeeling the 22nd July, 1864, No. 42, 22nd July/64, N.A.I.

66. These demands were already spelt out in the communication addressed to the Deb Raja, dated Simla, June 9, 1864. They were: "all British subjects of Cooch Behar and Sikkim, of whom there are said to be more than three hundred, who are now held captives by your chiefs in your monasteries, or are detained in Bhutan against their will, must be released, and that the property which has been carried off from Bri-

occupy the Bengal Duars. The occupation was not to be confined only to the plains but extend up to the crest or water-shed of the outer hills as well as the outer range shutting on the Assam Duars. He also recommended the occupation of a small tract of hill country north of Dalimkote "which would protect Darjeeling from surprise attack and render Sikkim territory more secure". Fourthly, occupation should be permanent and the territory occupied should be "annexed at once and for ever to British India". Temporary occupation would give no encouragement to industry or enterprise. People of "respectability and influence" would not be inclined to support the new regime. The ryots would be subjected to a system of oppression "worse than that which they now groan under" and still more intolerable after an "interval of freedom and security". It would be far better not to occupy an acre of Bhutan territory than to occupy it with the intention of ultimately restoring it. Economically, the Duars would be an asset, and militarily, there would be "no risk" in sending a force to Bhutan to impose "conditions of peace at the seat of Government". The Lieutenant Governor thought that optimism was justified on the ground that enough was known of the "Bhutanese character, their means of resistance and the feature of the country" and on the ground of experience "we have gained in the Sikkim campaign of 1860-61 and the Khasi hill campaign of the succeeding two years".

The Secretary of State, Wood, declined to approve a large campaign, either to annex Bhutan or to reduce it, impose terms and withdraw. Either course, he told Lawrence, would inveigle Britain into the affair of a disordered state to no purpose : "we shall gain nothing but trouble and expence". In the despatch of 18th July 1864 he discussed the policy to be pursued in Bhutan more fully. After stating the three possible courses already mooted by Eden, the Secretary of State said, "I am not prepared to sanction either the first or the second of these measures, either the permanent or the temporary occupation of Bhutan, and I am very much averse to sending expeditions into the country for the purpose of destroying the forts of local chiefs . . . On the whole I am of opinion that the occupation of all the

tish territory, or Cooch Behar, or Sikkim within the last five years must be restored".

Duars in the first instance is the best course to be adopted"[67]. Thus the idea of "slow and successive" punitive" operations of 1857 was given the go-by. The Duar War was in the offing.

Here was a policy which marked a departure from traditional thinking about Bhutan. George Bogle's conclusion that an invasion of Bhutan was strategically and economically a blunder had given way to the thinking that for the Bengal Duars it was worth undertaking. The possibility of Chinese or Tibetan involvement in case of a rupture with Bhutan did not at all disturb the Bengal civilians. China had been humbled twice and by 1861 "may be said to have been fully though grudgingly opened to the westerner". Significantly, Eden had nothing to say about the "relations of China with Bhutan, as well as with Lhasa and Nepal"[68], a subject with which Pemberton had so much concerned himself in his Report (1838). Nearer home Sikkim had been opened to trade and brought within the British-Indian ambit (Treaty of Tumlong, 1861). The course of events henceforth leading to the outbreak of the Duar War (Nov. 1864) leaves inescapable impression that the Bengal Government left no option for which Canning had so vigorously advocated. The main burden of arguments in going to war against Bhutan was the insecurity of the border. It was an argument well documented for decades and as such irrefutable. Perhaps the best comment on this was from a Correspondent of the *Bombay Gazette*[69] :

"The Bhutan complication might have been prevented by a little management...the raids from which our territory suffered were described as being very numerous, but I think it safe to add that they were also very petty...there appears to have been nothing in them of the desperate and extensive nature of the raids on the Punjab Frontier". The fact ("there is no good to he got by mincing matters") was that "the Bengal Police were utterly inefficient especially as guardians of the frontier".

Alastair Lamb elucidates the views of the Bengal Government that it was best to act on the assumption that the Himalayan states were completely independent; "Eden, indeed, felt that it was only by acting on this assumption that the Sikkim

67. *Friend of India,* Aug. 17, 1865.
68. *Ibid.,* March 16, 1865.
69. Quoted in *Friend of India,* Dec. 15, 1864.

and Bhutan campaigns had been concluded without giving rise to international complications"[70]. In the context, however, it appears that Lamb wants to emphasise that a gesture towards Tibet and the reopening of relations with her would facilitate the trade in tea from Darjeeling District to Lhasa[71].

Eden's assumption, be it noted, was thought to be sound policy quite a few decades earlier. In 1839 the *Friend of India* wrote, "were the border irregularities corrected, it must be the best policy of the British Government to preserve Bhutan as independent as she now is, both of China, and Tibet and Nepal. Her rugged mountains unoccupied by any martial or powerful state form a frontier wall to our territories of the best description, let us do what we can do to keep them so"[72].

It may be added that absence of international complications perhaps does not mean that the Bhutan policy of the period was a peripheral matter unconnected with the substance of British policy elsewhere. These were the times when the French were rounding off their territories in Indo-China, British frigates were moving up the Irrawaddy and Tsarist expansionism was causing tension on the north-west frontier. In this context British Bhutan policy is truly a study in the contacts of expanding imperialism all over the world.

70. A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia,* Road to Lhasa, 1960, p. 127.

71. *Ibid.,* pp. 127, 128, 129.

72. *Friend of India,* Nov. 21, 1839.

CHAPTER V

THE UNEQUAL WAR
STRUGGLE FOR THE DUARS 1864-65

The failure of Eden's mission irresistibly led to the rupture with Bhutan. In the crucial months after the return of the mission the Bengal Government left no option for the Supreme Government which itself was now on the war path. At the beginning of June, 1864, Charles Wood, the Secretary of State, was not sure about the method of punishing the Bhutanese. Any act of hostility might put a spanner in the friendly relations with Paro Pillow (sic). Insult could not be passed over but the British army should not enter Bhutan. The Duars should be occupied until the Bhutanese had sent an ambassador to deliver up the Treaty forced on Eden and to apologise humbly[1]. Two weeks later Wood was still opposing Beadon's plan to occupy Dalimkot and dictate terms[2]. Next month he would occupy the Duars but not allow an advance on Punakha neither would he try to take the Tongsa Pillo (sic) or destroy him[3]. On the 16th August he was for continuation of payment for Assam Duars but permanent annexation of the corner near Darjeeling[4]. "I prefer the course" he wrote on 1st Sept, 1864, "of occupying the posts at the head of the passes where healthy situations can be selected —holding them as your positions". From his own experience of a line of forts in north England to hold the Scottish Highlanders he should know[5]. By Aug. 1864, the war aims were defined as the "security of the Bengal Duars" from Bhutanese raids and the acquisition of a "healthy line of sites for frontier posts", extending from the Sikkim frontier on the West to Dewangiri on the east" skirting the tops of the highlands which overlook the plains of the duars"[6]. The hour had now arrived

1. Wood to Lawrence, 2 June, 1864, Lawrence papers 10.
2. Same to same, 15 June, 1864.
3. Same to same, 18 July, 1864.
4. Wood to Lawrence, 16 Aug., 1864.
5. Same to same, 1 Sept., 1864.
6. State Archives, Government of West Bengal, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Nov. 1864, p. 8, No. 421.

to secure control of the line extending for nearly two hundred miles from the river Tista to Dewangiri. This immense stretch, rich in tea-soil, rice fields, inexhaustible timber resources and unexplored mineral wealth, had for the most part remained undefined after the "resumption" of the Assam Duars in 1841 and the acquisition of Darjeeling Terai in 1850. From the territorial point of view the Duar War was in the logic of events.

It is not surprising that political and military initiative was wholly on one side. That there was no uncertainty in British intentions was amply made clear in two documents. With the outbreak of the war in Nov. 1864, H. M. Durand, Secretary in the Foreign Department, communicated to the Bengal Government that "the occupation" of the country was not to be delayed on any ground. No overtures from the Bhutan government were to be entertained unless the latter were prepared to: (i) surrender all the Bengal Duars and the hill country on the left bank of the Tista up to such points on the watershed of the lower range of hills as may be laid down by the British Commissioner, (ii) give up the two documents extorted from Mr. Eden, and (iii) surrender all captives. In the event the Bhutan Government was willing to comply with them British Government would be prepared to give them an annual grant of Rs. 25,000/- to be increased "with reference to the prosperity of the tract we now take . . ." up to Rs. 50,000/.[7]

The second document was a proclamation bearing the same date (12th Nov. 1864), copies of which were "sent to Nepal and Tibet". The proclamation re-counts the "obligations imposed" upon the British Government by the Treaty of 1774 in respect of crimes against persons and property in the Duars and the insults suffered by Eden's mission, and further declares that the Government of India was "reluctantly resolved to occupy permanently and annex to British territory, the Bengal Duars of Bhutan and so much of the hill territory, including the forts of Dalimkot, Pasakha and Dewangiri, as may be necessary to command the passes and to prevent hostile or predatory incursions of Bhutanese into the Darjeeling District or into the plains below. A military force amply sufficient to occupy this tract

7. State Archives, Government of West Bengal, Bhutan Political Proceedings, No. 485, dated Nov. 12, 1864.

and to overcome all resistance, has been assembled on the frontier, and will now proceed to carry out the resolve".

The concluding portions of the proclamation called upon the borderers, that is, Chiefs, Zamindars, Mandals, ryots and other inhabitants, to render every assistance to British troops and to remain quietly at their homes. Protection of life and property was guaranteed to all who did not resist and a promise was given that the lands would be moderately assessed and oppression and extortion absolutely prohibited. The future boundary between the territories of the Queen of England and Bhutan would be surveyed and marked off. and the "authority of the Bhutan Government within this boundary will cease for ever"[8] Military preparations were completed as early as Sept. 1864 and the Duar Field Force was under orders to move[9] In the ensuing invasion of Bhutan the force was to operate in four columns with centres at Gauhati, Goalpara, Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri under the command of Generals Mulester on the Assam side and Dunsword on the Bengal side of the Duars. A force "in round number amounting to 10,000 men" was collected at these points[10]. The records of the war, as preserved in Bengal Government monthly proceedings 1864-66[10], present a graphic narrative of how the modern appliances of steam-ship, Enfield Rifle and telegraph were deployed in the Duar War against an enemy infinitely inferior, ill-equipped and unprepared. Most of the army for the right and right centre columns and thousands of "Coolies" for the construction of roads and logistic services were disembarked at different points of the river Brahmaputra at Dhubri, Goalpara and Gauhati. It is also on record how Cooch Behar rendered invaluable service in terms of communication and supply and also direct participation under a commandant named Hedayat Ali.

Through Bhutanese Eves :

Initial Bhutanese reaction to the opening of the Duar War was summed up in the expression, "we are the people to de-

8. Quoted in full in P. P. Karan, *Bhutan,* p. 92.

9. J. C. Paton, Quarter Master General to Secretary to the Government of India, Simla, 13th Sept. 1864, No. 30, *Ibid.*

10. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *Bhotan and the Story of the Dooar War,* London, 1886, Reprint, 1970, p. 157.

11. Under catalogue heading, Bhutan Political Proceedings, 1864-66.

clare war, instead of which they are doing it"[12]. Cheeboo Lama of Sikkim, who worked as interpreter with Eden's mission, was reminded of his responsibility as the "go-between", and in respect of crime against person and property it was asserted that the "faults are equal"[13]. Surgeon Rennie observed, "the remarks about faults being equal on both sides as regards aggression against property has very likely a fair amount of truth in it —at least much is my opinion"[14]. He further adds that in official sources "but one side of the case was prominently shown, and as 'every medal has its reverse', so, in all probability had the Bhutanese a strong complaint also"[15], "raiding within the Duars by natives living under British protection having apparently been as common as it has been within our own frontier by the Bhutanese"[16].

The Deb Raja claimed that the British had appropriated the seven Assam Duars (1841) and had withheld payment for Ambari Falakata for several years. The vital trade between the Bhutanese and British subjects in the plains had been stopped. From ancient times the Bhutanese were carrying on this trade and used to purchase "fish, oil, clothes and molasses and other necessary articles" from Cooch Behar and if this commerce was stopped "You (British) will derive no good from it"[17]. In a letter from one Deo Lama, addressed to the "Saheb accompanying the troops", Bhutanese disapproval of the way the war began was stated with disarming simplicity. He complained that the British had not disclosed the reason for fighting nor indicated the time when they wished to do so but "began by taking possession of our country". Propriety demanded that "when two Rajas desire to fight they send words, informations, as to when they will begin the fight"[18]. Stripped of the trappings of

12. Translation of a Parwana of the Amlah of Bhutan to Cheeboo Lama, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Nov. 1864, Index 42.

13. *Ibid.*

14. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

17. Translation of a letter addressed by the Deb Raja to the Saheb at Gauhati, Forwarded to the Government of India under endorsement No. 5069, dated 7th instant, Bhutan Political Proceedings Nov. 1864, No. 2, Index 164.

18. Translation of a letter said to have been sent by Deo Lama to

injured sentiments, this letter brings into prominence the unpreparedness of Bhutan at the outbreak of the Duar War. Rennie appositely noted, "when we first commenced operations in Dec. 1864 the Bhutanese had made no preparation to resist us, probably looking upon the ultimatum of the Government as a mere threat that would not be enforced"[19].

The First Act of the Campaign in Bhutan :

The military annals of the Duar War, which lasted for a year (Nov. 1864—Nov. 1865), had one chief feature. It was believed that an effective economic blockade would bring about an early surrender of the hill kingdom. Unexpected Bhutanese resistance almost belied such expectations however. A study of the train of events from the capture of Dalimkot in December 1864 to the fall of Dewangiri in February 1865 would bear out the merit of the above observation.

Towards the close of November 1864 the left column moved out of Jaipaiguri. It occupied in quick succession Bakali, Gopalganj, Mainaguri, Domohani and Kyranti before it reached Dalimkot[20]. This was the fort captured by Capt. Jones in 1772 in course of the First Bhutan War. "The natural position of the fort being a very strong one it was not taken without difficulty. Three officers and fiftysix men were wounded and eight men killed". The struggle lasted about eight hours and an accidental explosion killed Captains Griffin and Anderson and Lt. Waller and seven artillerymen. This is how the Bhutan expedition began, in the words of the *Friend of India,* "with a doubtful triumph and a real disaster"[21]. The Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, while congratulating the Governor General on his . . . "first success in Bhutan matters" observed, "but you lost more men than I expected from the non-resistance hopes that Beadon held out"[22]. The left column also captured Dhumsong and the more important

the Shaheb accompanying the troops, dated Dec. 27, 1864, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Feb. 1865, Index 12.

19. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, pp. 290-91.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

21. *Friend of India,* Serampore, Thursday, 15th Dec. 1864.

22. Wood to Lawrence, 7 Jan. 1865, Lawrence Collection, Letters from the Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, 1865, Nos. 1 to 59, Microfilm Reel I (N.A.I.).

Chamurchi. The left centre column, moving out of Cooch Behar, captured Balla and Buxa in December 1864.

On the Assam side the forces were under the overall command of Mulcaster. He made Koomrikatta, about forty miles from Gauhati, the advanced post for operations. It was from here that Capt. Macdonald led an offensive operation and captured Dewangiri on the top of the Durunga Pass[23]. In contemporary reviews as in newspapers it was observed that Dewangiri was far to the east of the point at which an effectual blow could be struck at Bhutan[24]. Cecil Beadon, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, met this criticism with the assertion : "Dewangiri, first and above all, because it shuts up Tongsa Penlop always the most dangerous member of the Bhutan Government"[25].

Although a force of 2000 had been deployed to capture Bisensing[26], Mulcaster, on arrival found it to consist of a single stone house occupied by an old Lama. In brief, this was how the Bhutan hill posts were occupied. A report dated 10th February 1865 declared, "The orders of the Government for the occupation of the Duars have now been completely carried out by the Field Force under Mulcaster"[27]. The Government of India called for the breaking up of the Duar Field Force early in February 1865[28]. But as the sequel showed, "Mr. Beadon's Little War" took a curious turn, and a "trumpery affair" turned into an "imperial disaster"[29].

A correspondent to the *Friend of India* regarded these early victories as "success by fluke"[30]. Now that the Duars had been occupied, "all that we can do is what ought to have been done from the very first viz., have an effectual police along our frontier". If the raids were frequent before they would be incessant now because the Bhutanese were deprived of their "source of

23. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 187.
24. *Friend of India,* Feb. 16, 1865.
25. Minute by Cecil Beadon, Bhagalpur, 20th May, 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, April, 1866, p. 49.
26. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
27. Letter from J. S. Paton, Quarter Master General, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Military Deptt. No. 400, Bootan, dated Feb. 10, 1865.
28. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 193.
29. *Friend of India,* Aug. 17, 1865, p. 950.
30. *Ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1864.

sustenance". It is worthy of notice that in contemporary non-official opinion insecurity of the border was looked upon as a police problem rather than as a justifiable pretence for going to war against Bhutan—"we have no proof", wrote the *Friend of India,* "that the Bhutan Government instigated the raids or that they had the power to stop them, than we have to suppose that the Amir of Cabool (Kabul) is the root of all disturbances on the north-west frontier"[31].

The Rout at Dewangiri

Bhutanese response to the successful winter campaign of 1864 has been described as "passive resistance"[32]. It was said that had they been a "little wiser" they would have continued to pursue this "clever policy" till the troops had withdrawn and police, surveyors and officials had taken their place. But "fortunately" they did not wait beyond the close of January (1865). The Tongsa Penlop[33] had been collecting forces among the clansman of his own province and preparing to vindicate his treatment of Eden's mission. He paid "little attention" to the representation of ryots that, in the event of his making war, it would be difficult for them to carry on their transaction and trade with the inhabitants of the plains and to procure supplies of provision. With a force of more than 2000 men[34] he converged on Dewangiri and between 31 January and the fateful 4 February surrounded the post effectively and cut off its sources of water. The following is a summary of two documents[35] giving

31. *Friend of India,* Dec. 15, 1864, p. 1414A.

32. *Ibid.,* Feb. 3, 1865.

33. Translation of a statement by a Bhutanese subject of Dewangiri, dated March 24, 1865. From Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, dated Gauhati March 26, 1865.

34. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.,* p. 201 ... "all those concerned in the fighting of 30th Jan. and 3rd Feb. agree in stating that the enemy aggregated about 5000 men".

35. (i) From C. T. Metcalf, Civil Officer, Duar Field Force to Col. Haughton, Chief Civil Officer and Political Agent, NEF, dated 11th Feb. 1865. Bhutan Political Proceedings, March, 1865.

(ii) *Ibid.,* Copy of a report from Capt. Macdonald, Supdt., Duar Police, to D.I.G., Assam Circle, dated Kumrikatta, Feb. 13, 1865. Forwarded by Lt. Col. Bruce, I.G.L.P. to Secretary to the Government of Bengal, No. 1228, dated Gauhati March 22, 1865.

the story of the "Dewangiri affair". The Bhutia attack on the 30th was repulsed after six hours' fighting in which Lt. Uruqhart was killed. On the 2nd Feb. the Bhutias erected a stockade in one night which "completely commanded" the camp. Lt. Welchman failed to dislodge them losing some five men. On the night of the 3rd the soldiers were so panicky that at the "slightest noise" they expended ten to twelve rounds of ammunition by "firing at the stars". It is on record that on the 4 Feb. a reinforcement from Koomrikhatta under Capt. Cunliff failed to make its way up. When this became known, men of the 43rd Infantry "threw off all restraints" and plundered the mess store. The same day Lieut. Col. Campbell, commanding the 43rd Infantry, summoned a "council of war" consisting of nine officers. The choice lay between sacrificing the whole force or retreat. Sources of water had been cut off, there was no chance of arrival of reinforcement, ammunition had run short and there was the possibility of the passes being blocked up. A "certain plan" of retreat was made out. The main body of the force with the sick and wounded left after an hour the advance guard had started. All baggage and stores were left behind. The party seemed to have lost its way in the pitch dark in an unknown terrain and were misled by guides. They had to avoid all noise. The force was on foot from the midnight of the 4th to the midnight of the 5th Feb. The Eurasians, unable to carry any longer two 12" howitzers, spiked them and threw them over a precipice. Emboldened by the evacuation, the Bhutanese followed the rearguard down to the village of Subankhata where the police under Macdonald drove them off. The force reached the plains in utter confusion, the rear guard arriving before the advance guard.

The attack on Dewangiri was but one of the series made about the same time along the whole line of the hill posts to Chamurchi. Tazagong, which commanded Balla pass, was abandoned by Watson, who twice failed to dislodge the Bhutanese. There was a retreat from Buxa after days of severe fighting in which Lt. Gregory and Kingscole were dangerously wounded. At the same time Chamurchi was threatened.

Sir Charles Wood was furious at the retreat from Dewangiri : "it was disgraceful to the officers in command if bows and arrows drive armstrong guns out of the field, we shall no longer

be looked up to as invincible"[36]. Lawrence assured him that there was no cause of anxiety. The Bhutanese were proving different from what Beadon or Eden had led the Indian government to suppose but they were not formidable[37]. There are certain remarkable features of the Dewangiri affair which threw British strategy in the Duar War in the melting-pot and led to a change both in command and formation. First, the encounter with the Bhutanese revealed that earlier reports about their character and organisation were both meagre and misleading. C. T. Metcalfe, the Civil Officer, reported they were capable of collecting a far stronger force of men "than we ever gave them credit for. They had a good system of military organisation and larger resources in the shape of food in the interior than we were led to believe". As soldiers they were "Cool under fire" though they cannot stand close-quarter fighting. They were admirable marksmen both with fire arms and bows[38]. After the publication of Bhutan Blue-book the *Friend of India* observed : "... The Blue-book furnishes fact which saddle the Bengal Government as much with the responsibility for failure of the first campaign as its Secretary with disgrace for the dishonour to the English name. Mr. Eden, Capt. Lance and the Lieut. Governor of Bengal all agree in representing the Bhutias (sic) as cowardly and ill-armed and few in number"[39]. It quoted Sir Hugh Rose as saying, "the whole tone of communication is entire unacquaintance with foreign territory now considered hostile". Recalling the determined resistance of the Bhutanese at Chekakhata in 1772 the C-in-C further observed "whatever may be the unfavourable opinion which the Bengal government may entertain of the military qualifications of the Bhutanese, it is always dangerous to undervalue an enemy, especially mountaineers in their own and that in the present case remarkably unknown country".

Secondly, lodgment in Bhutan hill territory, as represented by the capture of the post at Dewangiri, could not be stabilised without an effective intelligence network. There seems to have

36. Summary of letters from Sir Charles Wood, From January to December, 1865, Vol. 2, Microfilm, N.A.I. Reel I.

37. Lawrence to Wood, 18 Feb. 1865.

38. Memorandum from C. T. Metcalf, Civil Officer, Duar Field Force, dated Camp Kumrikatta Feb. 15, 1865.

39. *Friend of India,* June 15, 1865, pp. 684-685.

been none. Rennie observes that before the fall of Dawangiri warnings were received from the local peasantry which were confirmed by a Bhutia (sic) boy named Bundoo[40]. One interesting information is that the Tongsa Penlop had sent a letter before he attacked Dewangiri. None could read it and it had to be sent to Cheboo Lama at Darjeeling, a distance of 200 miles, for translation. The letter proved to be a warning to the local commanding officer to evacuate Dewangiri within a week from the date of its receipt.

Thirdly, the same author recorded that among the fighting men under Tongsa Penlop there were people "fair and large limbed". It was ascertained from those who fell in British hands that they came from Khampa, a Tibetan province, "upwards of a month's march" from Bhutan. This, however, did not indicate any commitment of the Tibetan government in the Duar War. The aid "must have been given by some Tibetan local authority on friendly terms with the Tongsa Penlop"[41].

Fourthly, it was feared that the blockade against Bhutan would collapse once the chain of hill posts were out of hand. After all "blockade is a matter of time and patience and requires care and caution"[42]. It could ill afford the stress of disasters like that suffered at Dewangiri. Coupled with the loss of prestige involved in this "deepest disgrace", this led to the growth of chauvinist school in the Anglo-Indian press. It was argued that Dewangiri was of no use whatever and the war might be speedily brought to a conclusion by a march from Dalimkot to Punakha and razing the latter to dust. The Governor General, however, was decidedly against it, not only for strategic reasons, but for its financial implications[43].

The Second Act of the Campaign in Bhutan :

The new phase began with a change in command and formation. Brig. Generals Tombs and Tytler succeeded Mulcaster and Dunsford respectively. The four columns of the Duar Field Force were regrouped as two Brigades (Right and Left). Euro-

40. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 195.
41. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
42. *Friend of India*, March 16, 1865, p. 301.
43. Lawrence to Wood, 4 March, 1865.

pean troops were hurried up and the decision was to retrieve prestige by the recapture of Dewangiri and the hill posts to the west.

On the 15th March Tytler commerced operations and recaptured Balla without difficulty[44]. A very interesting document was found in the Balla stockade. It was a letter addressed by the Mangdi-Phodrung dzongpon to all subahs[45]. Describing the English as "ambitious and all country destroying", the dzongpon writes "it is better to have our bodies cut into pieces than to come back without punishing the enemy". The subahs were informed that the Paro Penlop was determined to fight at all hazards and everyone should resolve to "retain our country".

The document shows that "however much the Bhutanese may fight amongst themselves, and however chronic the state of warfare may be between the Penlops of eastern and western Bhutan they nevertheless seem to act in unison in resisting foreign invasion"[46]. It became a matter of prime importance for the British to avail opportunity to promote a crack in this unity. Col. Haughton urged the Government in a telegram that the best policy would be to "try to separate the Western party from the eastern and induce them to join us against Tongso"[47].

On the 23rd March Tytler took the Bhutanese stockade at Buxa[48] and then moved towards Chamurchi where he found the stockade evacuated. Tytler remained in the Western Duars till the end of April. Before his departure be put forward his views about the best means for the "permanent defense of the Bhutan frontier" in a memorandum. This document is dated Jalpesh, the 30th April, 1865, and contained the following observation :—

Weak posts on the range of mountains would not secure the end in view and the number of posts "should be confined to two". The western post should be in the vicinity of Sibsoo and the

44. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, 285.

45. The letter is dated 23rd day of the 12th Month, Corresponding to the 20th Feb. 1865. Memo from Lt. Col. J. C. Haughton to Government No. 297, dated Camp Balla Feb. 19, 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, March 1865.

46. D. F. Rennie, *op. cit.*, 287.

47. Telegram from Col. J. C. Haughton to Lieut. Governor, dated Camp Balla, Feb. 19, 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Feb. 1865, Index 158.

48. Bhutan Political Proceedings, April 1865, Index 74.

eastern one should be located somewhat to the west of Buxa. A road from the western post to the Sikkim frontier and another from the eastern post to Punakha road ought to be constructed. This would ensure "rapid lateral movement". Predatory bands might slip out here and there. A few police horse at selected points could deal with it. A reserve should be posted at Falakata, and the Torsha and the Jaldhaka should be bridged or provided with good ferries.

On Feb. 25th Richardson led a column to Bisen Sing, destroyed the position and withdrew. The post was ascertained to be in "Bhutan Proper" and outside the Duars and, therefore, could not form part of the measure of satisfaction which the government announced by the Proclamation. The only reason for occupying it was the protection of the Sidli Raja. It was now thought that his district and people could be protected at a point much nearer to the Brahmaputra[49]. Tombs arrived at Gauhati on the 7th March and from there went to the camp at Kumrikatta. Tombs seems to have been a man who could brook no opposition and no delay. His peremptory requisition for labourers and supply for the recapture of Dewangiri were regarded by the Governor General's Agent as "exorbitant". The latter wanted to postpone operations "until after the rains". He argued that "national existence was not in danger as in the days of the Mutiny" and, should it happen that Dewangiri was to be abandoned after retaking, the British would suffer "a double instead of a single defeat in the eyes of the frontier tribes". The requisition of Tombs in respect of labourers would stop cultivation in the districts. These arguments were of no avail and the course adopted was "retaking" and "evacuation"[50]. It was not an agreeable experience for Tombs and perhaps explains his abrupt departure as soon as his immediate task was over.

Immediately after his arrival Tombs reconnoitred the two principal passes "Durunga" and "Subankhata" leading up to Dewangiri. While the force was thus occupied until the European artillery and infantry arrived, two messengers were sent to Dewangiri to make enquiries about the prisoners in the hands of the Bhutanese. Rennie noted that from what they said on their

49. Bhutan Political Proceedings, March, 1865, No. 400/Bhutan, dated Feb. 10, 1865.

50. Bhutan Political Proceedings, March 1865, Index 355.

return to Kumrikatta a favourable impression was formed of the Tongsa Penlop. He was "by no means such an objectionable character as he had made himself to Mr. Eden". He treated the prisoners well and gave the messengers "a good dinner and safe convoy clear of the hills"[51]. In a subsequent communication the Tongsa Penlop made a few relevant enquiries and observations in the following words : "You are wanting Dewangiri again, but from whom did you receive permission to take possession of it ? You will either have to fight us or write a letter to the Dharma Raja, if you are desirous to recover Dewangiri. If he gives it to you then we must yield. Apart from the question of Dewangiri it is our desire to obtain possession of the lands formerly possessed by us . . . There is no quarrel at all between us, if you will allow us to possess the lands on the former boundaries"[52]. The story of the recapture of Dewangiri on April 2, 1865 is based on Tombs' report. He took a force of about 1800 men equipped with Enfield rifles and reached the stockade by the Durunga Pass. His telegram stated : the "enemy fought hard until the key of their position fell"[53]. An indiscriminate slaughter took place after the storming of the stockade in which even the wounded were not spared. "Everyman in the stockade was killed or taken prisoner"[54]. The position was defended "stoutly" but not "scientifically"[55]. The fire of the enfield rifles kept British loss to the minimum. In the fighting alone about two hundred Bhutanese were killed. Tombs pursued the course of victory which "ought to have been followed four months ago". He destroyed the stockade. To hold it would have been "as useless as dangerous"[56]. As the place was untenable in the rains, it was evacuated on the 6th April. The relevant telegram runs : "Dewangiri was evacuated yesterday; everything that could be destroyed

51. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 290. Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan—Twenty-One Years on the North-East Frontier* p. 279.

52. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

53. Telegram from Tombs to Military Secretary to Government and Adjutant General, dated Dewangiri through Goalpara, the 2nd April 1865.

54. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 293. The author ascribes the massacre at Dewangiri to Sikh and Pathan soldiers to whom the word "quarter" to the beaten foe was unknown.

55. Bhutan Political Proceedings, June 1865, Tombs' Report, dated April 7, 1865.

56. *Friend of India,* May 11, 1865.

was; not a Bhutia was seen"[57]. Thus the "Dewangiri affair", unfortunate in terms of loss of life and senseless destruction of property, was brought to a close. It was a retaliation for the "deepest disgrace we have suffered in Asia"[58].

The Tongsa Penlop, in reporting the loss of Dewangiri to Deb Raja, stated that he had lost 340 men including his elder brother and brother-in-law, and that he had inflicted "upon us a loss of 400 men". Information was received that the Bhutanese had sent a "third application" to Lhasa which was received "more favourably". The Lhasa authorities, assured that they would direct the Sath and Towang Rajas to aid them and that, if required, they would "eventually" send down some troops of their own. An unexplored diplomatic move was that "after the occupation of the Duars a letter was sent from the Deb Raja through the Paro Penlop" to the "Begum of Lucknow, now in Nepal, and one also to Jung Bahadur, requesting them to take up arms against us (British) and assist the Bhutias thereby". The Bhutanese also believed that a "large body of mutinous troops escaped in 1857 to Burma" and tried to establish liaison with them through the Sath Rajas' territory[59].

The lessons of the Bhutan campaign were not lost upon contemporary observers. The "brave but inexperienced hillmen" had taken up their position in "absolute contempt of an enemy". The Bhutanese, as the *Friend of India* commented, were "so confident in the strength of their stockade" that they did not even attempt to check the advance of "our troops". Even when "our men were able to thrust the muzzle of their rifles into the loopholes, their confidence appeared unabated". They showed themselves "ready to fight to the last; they did not fear death; they encountered its chances without a murmur". It "teaches us that there are positions which it is madness to attempt to hold even against the most inexperienced and undisciplined enemy" and "we should not take it for granted" that fortification, "adap-

57. Telegram from General Tombs to Adjutant General, No. 200, dated Kumrikatta through Gauhati, April 7, 1865.

58. *Friend of India*, Nov 16, 1865.

59. Communication from Asstt. Commr. Daling to Political Agent and Chief Civil Officer, Bhutan Political Proceedings, May 1865, No. 16. The Sath Rajas were a body of chiefs not necessarily seven in number and who were subordinate to the Towang Raja, a tributary to Lhasa.

to defend a hilly country from the people of the plains", are equally suitable as an "advance post for invaders from the low country"[60]. The description "invader" for the British force appears to be inadvertent in the context.

Cooch Behar played a notable role in this phase of the programme in Bhutan. Apart from providing commissariat facilities, troops of the Maharaja actively participated in the Duar War under Capt. Hedayet Ali. Mr. Ali endeared himself to Col. J. C. Haughton, Chief Civil Officer, by his devotion and was appointed an assistant Commissioner under him. The Chief Civil Officer recommended Capt. Ali "has shown so much ability in collecting information as to the revenue and conducting civil duties of the Duars", that "he felt much confidence in his conducting the duties (of Asstt. Commissioner) satisfactorily"[61]. The issue of granting marching "batta" (Allowance) to Cooch Behar troops participating in the Duar War led to an unsavoury correspondence between the Governments of Bengal and India. The two Governments held diametrically opposite views regarding the interpretation of the Anglo-Cooch Behar treaty of 1772 by which the Company's government had established its hold on the princely state of Cooch Behar. The Bengal Government's case was that under Article 8 of the Treaty the British Indian Government was bound to protect Cooch Behar and "in return for its protection half its revenue are paid to the Government". To the Viceroy-in-Council this was "misapprehension" of the said treaty. It was communicated that "the condition to pay half the revenue had nothing to do with Article 8, it was the price for the expulsion of Bhutias from Cooch Behar and the liberation of the Raja"[62]. Col. Haughton's contention that the troops were employed in a war of the British Government beyond the boundaries of the Cooch Behar and hence were entitled to marching batta was described as "erroneous". The pressure put upon the Bhutan Government "had respect to the grievances of Cooch Behar".

60. *Friend of India*, May 11, 1865, p. 542. The Bhutan Campaign and its Lessons.

61. From J. C. Haughton to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated Camp Falakata Feb. 25, 1865, para 5, Bhutan Political Proceedings, March, 1865, No. 166.

62. Bhutan Political Proceedings, March 1865, p. 258.

It was frankly stated that Cooch Behar was to derive "no territorial addition from recent acquisitions" but the indirect advantages she would gain "by the British occupation and protection of the Duars are immense and will amply repay any extra expenditure incurred on account of its own troops"[63]. Therefore, Cooch Behar state "shall be made to defray the expenses of its troops while employed on the present duty in the Duars". There might be reconsideration, "should the Raja object and show good cause why he should not be made to bear the expenses".

Immediately after the evacuation of Dewangiri, Tombs returned to his command at Gowalior[64]. Brig. General Tytler was appointed to the whole command with headquarters at Gauhati[65]. Before the onset of the rains the forces were distributed over twelve points[66] to sustain the blockade against Bhutan. Lawrence wrote to the Secretary of State "we must now rest until November next, and see what time and blockade will produce"[67]. Thus the second phase was a war of vengeance and, more important still, it was indecisive inasmuch as Bhutan was far from accepting the territorial losses she had sustained during the last 25 years as an accomplished fact. The Bhutanese chiefs demonstrated an unsuspected unity of purpose in resisting foreign invasion. To the extent that this phase was indecisive, the Duar War called for the application of a consistent policy to secure the declared objectives. The lack of it prompted a commentator to observe that after six months of fighting the forces "were told they were to blockade the frontier, till something should turn up"[68]. The plan of blockade received the blessings of the Secretary of State who wrote, "I cannot help thinking that the plan of blockading them, as you call it, by holding the passes is the best, if the report is

63. Bhutan Political Proceedings, March 1865, No. 258, para 3.

64. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

65. Bhutan Political Proceedings, April 1865, Index 151, No. 94, dated Umballa, April 7, 1865.

66. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 295. From east to west these were Tezpur, Kumrikatta, Rungea, Gauhati, Datma, Buxa, Balia, Patlakhwa, Chamurchi, Dalimkot, Jalpesh and Darjeeling.

67. Lawrence to Wood, Calcutta April 4, 1865, Microfilm Reel 2, N.A.I.

68. *Friend of India,* June 29, 1865, p. 742, Our Position in Bootan.

correct of their drawing so large a portion of their supplies through(?) the low country"[69].

It is on record that by April, 1865 the Mechi inhabitants of the Duars were threatened with scarcity and starvation due to the prolonged blockade. One representation from some Mechi villagers stated that they were assured of protection of life and property and just administration by the Proclamation circulated at the commencement of the Duar War. "But we regret to say that owing to the scarcity of rice our helpless families are brought to starve . . . The cause of the grievances arise from the war being still continued. The merchants who had hitherto supplied us with rice and cotton seeds venture not to come to our quarter now-a-days. The want of the former would put us to death and that of the latter will create great deal of harm for the collection of revenue for the ensuing year"[70]. The effect of the blockade on the Bhutanese people were discernible by the summer of 1865. This is what the records say : "The Bhutias have suffered considerably . . . They have been almost entirely cut off from the plains and their trade has been much curtailed. There are many articles of constant use among them, some of which habit has made necessaries of life of which they are entirely deficient. They have accordingly made overtures for peace more than once, but the basis on which they are willing to treat, viz., the surrender of the Bengal Duars, being inadmissible these overtures have come to nothing"[71].

The Third Act of the Campaign in Bhutan :

The chief concern of a consistent policy towards Bhutan in the summer of 1865 was to secure de jure recognition from the Bhutan Government of the cession of areas already under British military control including the Assam Duars resumed in 1841.

69. Wood to Lawrence, 16 May, 1865, From January to Dec. No. 1 to 59, Vol. 2, Microfilm, Reel 1, N.A.I.

70. Translation of an application from Ramsah Mech, Lucki Mech, Auson Mech and four others to Col. Haughton, dated Baisakh 9, 1272 B.S. Corresponding to April 20, 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, May 1865.

71. Papers relating to Bhutan, Presented to Parliament by Her Majesty's command, Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed, Feb. 8, 1866. Foreign Department Political, No. 68, dated Simla June 16, 1865.

Rennie thought that the "simplest way of bringing existing difficulties to a speedy and satisfactory issue, will be reducing the question to a matter of fact, by disregarding the idea of dealing with a central or practically responsible government and confining negotiations to local chiefs who virtually rule Bhutan, namely the Penlops of Paro and Tongso"[72]. An allowance could be paid to these chiefs for the Duars and they were to be left to settle accounts as they liked with the "nominal" Bhutanese Government. This view was in clear opposition to the official way of thinking. The Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, in a letter dated April 15, 1865, desired the British Indian government not to get . . . "implicated in the internal concerns of the country and, secondly, to support rather than weaken the central authority in Bhutan". He wrote . . . "there is some truth . . . in a doctrine that it is unwise to weaken the central power with whom we have to deal. If we do, they can no longer control their subordinate chiefs. We weakened the Emperor of China and we could not assist the Taipings and we have had to do it for him more or less. Now the Tongso Pillo (sic) seems to be master of the Rajas. Therefore, I should like to weaken him rather than the rajas"[73].

The Anglo-Indian press in Calcutta, as the *Friend of India,* emphasised that Tongsa Penlop would never "come in" and urged the Government to "make preparations for that march to Punakha which ought to have taken place of the useless capture of Dewangiri"[74]. It reminded the Viceroy that in the past he had a "reputation for rocky firmness and irresistible success" and appealed, "now is the time to apply to this miserable Bhutan expedition a really statesmanlike policy worthy of the most trusted lieutenant of Lord Dalhousie". It demanded that the "punishment of Bhutan should be complete and speedy than that it should seem to be cheap"[75]. The suitability of the Duars for the cultivation of tea opened up a new vista for "English capital and skill". It was noticed that the Dharma Raja had prevented the agriculturists from cultivating tea" lest the profitable trade

72. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.,* p. 382, fn.

73. Wood to Lawrence, From January to Dec. 1865, No. 1 to 59, Vol. 2, Microfilm Reel I, N.A.I.

74. *Friend of India,* June 29, 1865, p. 742.

75. *Ibid.*

with Tibet should be affected"[76]. The lime deposits and timber resources were virtually inexhaustible. Col. Haughton estimated that the revenue from the rice tracts alone would amount to six lakhs of rupees in a few years. These advantages could not be thrown away for the lack of a political settlement with Bhutan and, in the opinion of the *Friend of India,* there was no reason why "the beginning of the next year should not see the northern frontier of Bengal extended to the crest of those hills which are seen from the plains"[77]. Lawrence believed that "one expedition will settle the matter and bring the Bhuteas to their narrow-bones" and his Council was "unanimous" in favour of an expedition as it would be the most "economic settlement". On the same ground of economy the Viceroy did not favour annexation of Bhutan and wrote . . . "I am not for annexation if it were only because that it would be an expensive measure and perhaps entail an increase in the native army"[78].

The British-Indian Government now evolved a "consistent" policy with two facades. First, military preparedness for the winter (1865) campaigns was planned sufficiently ahead. Col. J. S. Paton, the Quarter-Master General, in a confidential note to the Government stated that there were two circumstances demanding attention. A treaty would have to be enforced at the seat of Government at Punakha and a force should march upon Tongsa to prevent the most powerful chief from coming to the rescue of the Bhutanese government. Therefore "a campaign against Bhutan should be conducted at the same time on two lines of operation with distinct objective points"[79]. It was recommended that operations against Punakha and Tongsa could be based respectively at Buxa and Dewangiri. It is significant that the draft of the treaty sought to be enforced upon Bhutan providing for the cession of eighteen Duars, freedom of trade and

76. *Friend of India,* June 13, 1865, p. 801.

77. *Friend of India,* June 13, 1865, p. 801.

78. Lawrence to Wood, From January to Dec. 1865, No. 1-74, Vol. 2, Microfilm, Reel 2, N.A.I. Letters dated April 28, May 3 and June 2, 1865.

79. From J. S. Paton to Secretary to the Government of India, Military Department, dated Simla, June 27, Bhutan Political Proceedings, July 1365, p. 16, No. 4394, dated July 7, 1865.

other provisions was forwarded by Eden to the Government of India in July, 1865[80].

Secondly, Cheeboo Lama gathered information that the chiefs of western Bhutan would be glad to bring matters to a peaceful issue if practicable[81]. One conclusion from Tongsa Penlop's defeat at Dewangiri was that "it must have strengthened the peace party in the Darbar led by the Paro Penlow"[82]. The Bhutan Darbar on its part was anxious to negotiate. It was reminded in unmistakable terms that the precondition for negotiation was that the Duars would not be restored. This was the purport of two communications from the Viceroy to the Deb Raja, dated 5 June and 19 Aug. 1865. In the latter the Viceroy said, "I now repeat that the Duars will not be restored" and "if you delay and the English troops advance on Punakha, the affairs will become for you much more difficult and the term which you now may have will then be made more stringent"[83].

The Deb Raja expressed surprise[84] as there would be nothing left to negotiate for. He wrote back, "you insist on releasing the prisoners, but you refuse to give up the Duars, and in consideration thereof you only promise to pay a paltry sum, i.e., where we used to get Rs. 10,000/- you give us rupees 1,000/- and 5 in place of rupees 100 and on dissenting from your proposals you desire to make war. You have also expressed a desire to make peace. I cannot understand how the peace can be made when you are unwilling to give up the Duars"[85].

These simplistic expression, devoid of diplomatic niceties, reveal that the "peace party" in Bhutan never misunderstood

80. The draft of a treaty from the Lieut. Governor to the Government of India forwarded by A. Eden, Bhutan Political Proceedings, July, 1865, p. 16, No. 4394 dated July 7, 1865.

81. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

82. *Friend of India,* April 13, 1865.

83. From Sir John Lawrence, Viceroy and Governor General of India to the Deb Raja of Bhutan, dated Simla Aug. 19, 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Jan. 1866, p. 5.

84. It is to be noticed that the Deb Raja who now led the peace party has been named as Chey Chitta and he was not holding the office during Mr. Eden's visit to Punakha. *Further Papers Relating to Bhutan (In Continuation of Parliamentary Paper* No. 47 of 1865), p. 32.

85. Translation of a letter from the Deb Raja, Bhutan to J. C. Haughton, Political Agent and Chief Civil Officer, dated Srawan 17, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Aug. 1865, Index 39, p. 15.

British intentions. But they were helpless. The Deb Raja wrote in another communication, "I have no men to make war. I understand that you speak of peace with the tongue but in heart you are inclined for war"[86]. And in respect of robberies and crime he repeated, "both the governments are equally to blame". The consistent element in British policy was that, after locating a peace party in Bhutan, pressure was brought to bear upon the government at Punakha for a political settlement. And afterwards as it became necessary to send a punitive expedition against a recalcitrant Tongsa Penlop it was cautiously explained that British forces were operating as the ally of the legitimate Bhutanese government.

In May, 1865, the Deb Raja sent down the Jungpens to Balla to open negotiations "so that there might be no fighting to take the lives of men and that I might retain the possession of my Duars and the jurisdiction of my territory"[87]. Col. Haughton declined to enter into negotiations on these terms[88]. His report prompted the Viceroy to address the communication of 5th June, 1865, to the Deb Raja. The latter was told that if he desired peace, the Government of India was ready to come "to the same terms as before". In case of refusal, troops would be sent "still further into your country and shall attack you and destroy your power. The longer you resist the worse will your condition be"[89].

Once again in July the Deb Raja addressed a letter to the Viceroy soliciting peace and hoping the Duars might still be restored. As before it elicited a flat refusal and a threat of British advance on Punakha[90].

The long blockade persistently maintained had completely

86. Translation of a letter from Deb Raja, Bhutan, to Col. Bruce, dated Aug. 21 (Bhadra 6), 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, Oct. 1865.

87. Translation of a letter from the Deb Raja, dated 15th Moon of Chait, Memo No. 689, dated Jalpaiguri May 17, 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, May 1865, Index 195.

88. Telegram from J. C. Haughton to Lieut, Governor of Bengal, dated Jalpaiguri through Titalya. May 16, 1865, *Ibid.*, May 1865, Index 212.

89. From the Viceroy to the Deb & Dharma Rajas of Bhutan, dated Simla, June 5, 1865, *Ibid.*, July 1865, p. 12.

90. From the Viceroy to the Deb Raja, dated Simla, Aug. 19, 1865, *Ibid.*, Jan. 1866, p. 5.

shut off the hills. All the strategic Duars in Bengal and Assam were in British hands. The peace party in Bhutan was making anxious overtures to come to a settlement. The cost of maintaining European and native troops all along the line from the tea gardens of Darjeeling to those of Darrang, more than two hundred miles east, was prohibitive. The Tongsa Penlop had withdrawn his shattered forces and probably a large number of his men had deserted to their homes. It was time to stabilise the gains already made. The restoration of Bhutan's hill territory in British hands, "might be made the basis of friendly intercourse with the country and the means of establishing a communication through it towards Tibet"[91]. The threat of a military occupation of Punakha and dictating terms there, though conveniently used to activate the peace party, might have embarrassing political repercussions. Tibetans were indifferent so long as the hill territory of Bhutan was left intact. Their feelings would be very different when British forces advanced to the watershed of the outer hills and the "distance between the all absorbing English and their frontier is reduced to a strip of barren hill territory"[92].

It was in this context that the Viceroy, after a meeting with the Lieutenant Governor at Bhagalpur[93], instructed Col. Bruce to offer peace to the Deb Raja, to promise twice the sum formerly promised and allow him two months to restore the guns abandoned in the Dewangiri rout. Aitchison wrote, "Lawrence, 'rich in saving common sense', fought for peace, not for prestige. Nothing was to be gained by the prosecution of a war with the Bhutanese at any time, least of all when India was overwhelmed in commercial and financial trouble"[94].

Negotiations began at Sinchula above Buxa between Col. Bruce and Bhutanese officers empowered to treat on behalf of the Dharma and Deb Raja "before any hostilities had taken place"[95]. The abstract of the proceedings at the conference which

91. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 380.
92. *The Friend of India,* July 13, 1865.
93. *The Friend of India,* Nov. 16, 1865.
94. *Rulers of India, Lord Lawrence,* by Sir Charles Aitchison, p. 132.
95. C. E. Buckland, *Bengal Under Lieutenant Governors,* Vol. I, p. 310. Charles Wood's despatch, dated Feb. 1, 1866.

began on the 4th Nov. show that the Dharma and Deb Rajas made a bid to retain at least "one Duar to furnish them with pan". Col. Bruce replied that not a single Duar could be given up but they would be able to obtain pan[96] in abundance from all the Duars. In the second day's proceedings (6th Nov.) Col. Bruce guaranteed protection to Bhutanese merchants all the way to Calcutta and stated that the Bhutan Government ought to reciprocate by protecting traders who entered Bhutan, especially as the Article of the treaty relating to free trade gave the Bhutanese the advantage of trading with a hundred million people.

The preliminary terms were to the effect that the Bhutan government must tender ample apology for the insult of the British mission under Eden, that they must surrender the treaty extorted from the envoy, and they must give up the guns abandoned at Dewangiri within two months. The final treaty known to the Bhutanese as the "Ten Article Treaty of Rawa Pani"[97] provides for the cession by the Bhutan government in perpetual sovereignty of the "whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Duars bordering on the district of Rangpur, Cooch Behar and Assam together with the taluks of Ambari Falakata and the hill territory on the left bank of the Tista up to such points as may be laid down by the British commissioner appointed for the purpose" . . . (Article II). The Bhutan Government agreed to surrender all British subjects as well as the subjects of the chiefs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar who were detained in Bhutan against their will and subscribed to the extradition of criminals (Articles III, VI and VII). In lieu of the abstraction of the entire revenue of the Duars the treaty provided for the payment of an annual subsidy of Rs. 25,000/-, rising progressively in three years to Rs. 50,000/- during the good conduct of the Bhutan government (Article IV). The Bhutan Government agreed to "refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes with or causes of complaint against the Rajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar and to abide by the decision of the British Government" . . . (Article VIII). The article providing for free trade prescribed : "No duties shall be levied on Bhutanese goods imported into

96. Green leaves chewed along with betelnut. It is a favourite inebriation with the Bhutanese.

97. Claude White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty-One Years on the North East Frontier,* p. 280.

British territories, nor shall the Bhutan Government levy any duties on British goods imported into or transported through the Bhutan territories" (Article IX). By a proclamation dated 4 July, 1866 the Duars ceded by the Treaty of Sinchula were attached to the Bengal Division of the Presidency of Fort William and were placed under the immediate control of the Lieutenant Governor.

In summing up the results of the Treaty an official document[98] recorded that the rights of the British Government to all the Bhutan Duars including those of Assam and taluk Ambari Falakata and the hill territory on the left bank of the Tista had been recognised. These territories were now ceded unconditionally for ever. Thus Bhutanese consent for the "resumption" of the Assam Duars in 1841 for which then "no written agreement had been made"[99], was obtained after twentyfive years, by the treaty of Sinchula. The capabilities of the Duars "are great and easy to be developed". The hill territory of about 450 sq. miles were fit for the cultivation of tea and other valuable products and contained the inexhaustible sal forests of the Tista.

However, these territorial acquisitions did not fully meet the expectations of the tea planters. The Anglo-Indian press became very vocal against the treaty and Lawrence wrote to the Secretary of State, "A great howl has been raised by the papers regarding the treaty. For what reason I cannot well say. I don't believe that even with the majority of the military men such a war is popular. There is neither honour nor profit to be gained. Possibly the planter interest may be angry as they perhaps hoped to have much land available in a good climate"[100].

It now became possible to cut off Bhutan from all direct contact with Sikkim by a readjustment of boundary. Still more important, the Sinchula Treaty raised new hopes for trade with Tibet through the Chumbi Valley insmuch as it had ensured free trade with and transit facilities through Bhutan. About the importance of the newly acquired mountainous country comprising

98. From Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal to the Secretary to the Government of India, dated Nov. 20, 1865, Bhutan Political Proceedings, April, 1866, p. 142, No. 6621.

99. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sunnads,* Vol. I, p. 143.

100. Lawrence to Wood, dated the 25th Nov. 1865, From Jan. to Dec. No. 1-74, Vol. 2, Microfilm Reel 2, N.A.I.

the modern subdivision of Kalimpong the *Friend of India* commented . . . "this will greatly extend the hill territory of Darjeeling, and will enable us to trade directly with Tibet without as in the north-west piercing the hills to a great distance"[101]. Surgeon Rennie expressed the importance of the Treaty for commercial intercourse with Tibet in the following words :

> "Though direct communication with Lhasa within a moderate period may not be practicable more extended commerce with Tibet than now exists is not necessarily precluded and it occurs to me that our present relations with Bhutan might be turned to useful account with reference thereto"[102].

Demonstration Against Tongsa :

The whole ethos of the treaty of Sinchula, as regards the alignment of forces within Bhutan, was that the British now emerged as the ally of the de jure authority. Formal agreement with the Dharma and Deb Raja's government, supported by the western chiefs, gave an aura of supposed legitimacy to British interference. No time was lost in making a pragmatic use of the new position. By a separate agreement the payment of subsidy to the Bhutan government had been made conditional on the restoration of two guns abandoned at Dewangiri within two months. The Tongsa Penlop did not hold himself responsible under the terms of the treaty and it was feared that he would recommence hostilities at the first opportunity. It now became a matter of policy to bolster up the Bhutanese government against the refractoriness of the eastern chief. A telegram from tthe Lieut. Governor to Col. Bruce at Buxa runs : "we must be prepared for his (Tongso Penlow's) refusal .. .Bear in mind that we should have to act as the ally of the Bhutan Government not as invaders and that the Tongsa Penlop stands alone"[103]. British officers at Dewangiri and Buxa were urged to "do nothing to countenance the idea that the Government will in any way recog-

101. *Friend of India,* April 26, 1866, p. 485. 'The Last of Mr. Beadon's Little War'.

102. D. F. Rennie, Surgeon, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

103. Telegram dated Nov. 21, 1865 from Lieut. Governor of Bengal to Col. H. Bruce at Buxa, Bhutan Political Proceedings, April 1866, p. 143.

nise or treat separately with the Tongsa Penlop"[104]. They were instructed to obtain all informations as to what was going on in the interior of Bhutan "especially at Tongso" and to pay well for any news of importance. Improvement of the road from the foot of the hills to Dewangiri was vigorously pushed on[105]. The Deb Raja's assurance that the guns would be given up and the Penlop was raising difficulties "for the look of the thing only"[106] apparently had no effect on British determination to punish the Tongsa Penlop if the guns were not restored within the stipulated time. On 3rd Feb. 1866, the Government of India decided on a military demonstration against Tongsa though the Bhutan government had "made no request for assistance". It was argued that the Bhutanese government had tried to persuade the Penlop without success and under the circumstances military movement against Tongsa "would not constitute infraction of the Treaty"[107]. Thereafter a British force under Col. Richardson marched from Rydang and, reinforced by a contingent from Dewangiri, took Salikha and pushed on to Khegoompa, "an important position as being the junction of the Tongso and Tassgong roads". On the 23rd Feb. 1866 the guns were delivered and the forces were withdrawn.

Contemporary critics regarded the treaty of Sinchula as too liberal. The clause which provided for the payment of annual subsidy was particularly subjected to scathing attack. The *Friend of India* wrote "Truly we have reasons to congraluate ourselves on a war beginning with our envoy's disgrace and treaty ending with the doubling of our tribute"[108] and "we seem to have bought back guns lost in the battle". It was argued that Bhutan had ample resources and only needed an able administration to make her prosperous and ensure permanent peace on the frontier. The testimony of no less an authority than Sir J. D. Hooker was cited, describing in *The Times* the agricultural products in the magni-

104. Telegram from A. Eden, Secretary to the Government of Bengal to Lt. Grey and Col. Agnew, Dewangiri and Buxa, *Ibid.*, p. 166, Index 254.

105. Telegram from Lieut. Governor to Col. Agnew, Dewangiri via Gauhati, dated Dec. 2, 1865, *Ibid.*, p. 148, Index 210.

106. Telegram from Col. Agnew, Buxa, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, *Ibid.*, p. 168, No. 261, dated January 7, 1866.

107. Extract from the Proceedings of the Government of India in the Foreign Deptt. (Political) No. 101 under date Feb. 3, 1866.

108. *The Friend of India,* Nov. 16, 1865.

ficent valleys of Bhutan, her forest resources and abundance of cattle, pony, and sheep. "With half dozen of such men (as Dr. Campbell) in Bhutan"', the explorer wrote, "with the frontier open on the north and Assam to supply tea, rice, sugar, tobacco etc. in the South" the country "would raise a splendid revenue in a few years"[109].

The official view about the subsidy was best stated in a despatch from the Secretary of State, Sir Charles Wood, dated 1 Feb. 1866[110]. In this document the question of subsidy was linked up with the idea of "permanent peace" on the frontier. Appreciating the Treaty as marking "(our) sense of misconduct of the Bhutia rulers in the most palpable and lasting manner", the Secretary of State wrote, "the existence of strong government in a neighbouring state and the prosperity of their subjects are among the best securities for the permanent peace of our frontier. To deprive the government of a contiguous country of the means of enforcing its authority over its chiefs and functionaries and of compelling them to execute the engagement which it has entered into for the maintenance of peace and security of our frontier can in no case be sound policy. In this view it would not be advisable to impair resources of the Bhutan state to the extent that must have resulted from the abstraction of the entire revenue of the duars"[111].

While it would appear that the ideas about "permanent peace" on the frontier, as stated in this document a century ago, have ostensibly become a tradition, there can be no two opinions about the palpable and lasting advantages secured by the treaty of Sinchula. Lawrence wrote to Lord de Grey, who succeeded Wood, "We certainly (whatever may be said to the contrary) punished the Bhutan government very severely, and have a strong material guarantee, in the money allowance, for their future good behaviour. Had we gone to Punakha and there dictated terms we could not have done more, unless we had annexed the whole country, a measure which in no way would have been expedient. A campaign in such a country as Bhutan would have proved a

109. Quoted in the *Friend of India*, Feb. 8, 1866.
110. C. E. Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 309.
111. C. E. Buckland, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

very costly and troublesome affair"[112]. British subsidy decisively influenced the internal tribal politics of Bhutan. Ironically, it was a quarrel over the share of the subsidy that set the star of Ugen Wangchuk, the Tongsa Penlop, on the ascendant. This ushered in a memorable epoch in Bhutan's history at the turn of the century.

112. Lawrence to Lord de Grey, 5 March, 1866, Letters to the Secretary of State Sir Charles Wood, Earl de Grey and Ripon and Lord Cranborne, 1866, No. 1-60, Vol. 3, Microfilm Reel 2, N.A.I.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

Never in the course of the Duar War was the policy of going "deep into the country" favoured. The plans for an advance upon Punakha in the wake of the fiasco at Dewangiri was entertained as a measure of retaliation and did not visualise a military occupation of the interior. The Secretary of State was "averse" to it. He repeatedly discouraged an expedition in order "to avoid being implicated in the internal concerns of the country which may lead to annexation". He recalled that "Napoleon's advance to Russia and Berlin completed his conquest" but when he came to Spain mere occupation of the capital proved futile. He was "puzzled" to decide between the alternatives of holding Punakha or abandoning it. The former "leads to annexation or permanent interference. The latter would show weakness and lead to further resistance". In his view, going up to Punakha would have sense only if the authority of Deb and Dharma "was really the moving power", and if the Viceroy felt sure that he "could bring them to reason by going there". Once the Duars and the hill posts on the lower range of the hills were secured before the rains set in (1865) "no more annexation" was intended. Lawrence found the Duar War a costly affair and the "defensive systems expensive and demoralising." The difficulties were enhanced by the "extraordinary insalubrity" of the country at the foot of the hills and the "impenetrable character" of the hills. Owing to their great steepness and the "absence of roads or even paths" not more than "two men could move abreast". The Viceroy wrote, "the country is most difficult of access and everything has to be imported from long distance". As a measure of economy he sanctioned an expedition to Punakha which along with Mansfield he believed would quickly bring the Bhutanese to terms. Even then he wrote, "Don't think that I am fond of these expeditions. The reverse is really the case. On such occasions I always feel more or less like a man with a rope round his neck ready to be strung up in the event of failure". Once the Bhutan government was "humbled down", there was no "single advantage" in continuing the war. The expedition to Punakha, which never came off, was intended as a threat to the

Bhutanese and, as the Governor General said, did not "pledge ourselves to annex the country".

Thus Bhutan proper escaped annextion in 1865. The cost of the Duar War, the chapter of accidents where bows and arrows drove out a well equipped modern army, the unhealthy climate and the impenetrable hills all combined to halt the advance of the British army which was no longer needed when a peace party in Bhutan opened negotiations.

The Duar War shaped the policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Bhutan. The mutual obligation of the British and Bhutan Governments to ensure "perpetual peace and friendship" (Clause II of the Sinchula Treaty, 1865) really prescribed the limits of a forward policy which had been urged on for decades by men like Jenkins, Eden and Beadon. Non-interference in the internal affairs of Bhutan was declared in set terms by a revision of the Sinchula Treaty nearly half a century later (1910). However, the money allowances given in lieu of the Duars placed a powerful lever in the hands of the British which could be "turned to good conduct". It could be withheld on political grounds as happened in 1880, 1885 and 1889. Stipulations "in furtherance of trade" could be attached before resumption of payment. The provision for subsidy further vitiated the tribal politics of Bhutan till one man emerged supreme and the country torn by civil strife was promised a new era of internal stability and peace.

The Treaty of Sinchula took the first pragmatic step of controlling Bhutan's relations with foreign countries though, as in the case of non-interference in her internal affairs, the policy was spelt out by a revision of the treaty in 1910. Clause 8 of the Sinchula treaty obliged the Bhutan Government to "refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes with, or causes of complaint against the Rajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar and to abide by the decision of the British Government . . ." Curiously, Bhutan's relations with Tibet remained undefined at Sinchula and were found embarrassing when it was reported in 1885-86 that Chinese and Tibetan officials had come up to Paro to arbitrate in the internal disputes of Bhutan. Obviously in 1865 there was not much information ready at hand about the real nature of Tibet's connection with Bhutan. A decade later (1876) Britain forced upon China the Chefoo convention, formally securing facilities from the Tsungli Yamen (Chinese

Foreign Office) for explorations in Tibet. This was disowned by the Tibetan government whose suspicions had been aroused by clandestine activities of native agents. Incidentally, this was "an illustrative guide to the extent of Chinese power in Tibet".

The unpublished correspondence between the Viceroy and the Secretary of State in 1865-66 reveal British anxiety to emerge as a friendly ally of a de facto central government in Bhutan. The futility of negotiations with Bhutanese chiefs on the frontier was recognised and as a strategy abandoned. The last demonstration of strength against the Tongsa Penlop in February 1866, which was an epilogue to the Duar War, was adroitly planned. It was seen in Bhutan that the British forces were operating as the ally of the Bhutan government against a refractory chief.

The idea to ensure the hold of a friendly central authority within Bhutan was found conducive to plans for future unrestricted intercourse between India and Tibet. The Great Trigonometrical Survey of India had already embarked on its venture of exploring Tibet. It trained and despatched native agents into Tibet. Pandit A (Nain Sing) equipped with compass, sextant and other instruments, joined a Kashmiri merchants' caravan in 1865 in western Tibet. The Pandit visited Lhasa, Ganden and Sera (1866) and his explorations yielded rich and valuable results. Soon he was followed by Pandit B and No. 9. In addition to scientific observations these adventurers collected information about the commerce of Tibet, her mineral resources and methods of gold-digging. Nain Sing set out on his final and "most important journey" from Leh in 1893. Disguised as a Lama he crossed the vast Tibetan plateau to Lhasa and thence made his way down into Assam. After his return he gave an "excellent sketch" of Tibet's trade with China, Mongolia, Szechuan, Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal, Ladak, and Kashmir. In 1870s there were talks of introducing "Darjeeling tea into Tibet" and European planters entertained high hopes that they could "supplant the China article both in quality and price". The Bengal Administration Report for 1873-74 noted that "English woollen and broadcloth are still much sought after . . . notwithstanding the policy of exclusiveness which Chinese influence dictated and imposed upon Tibet". The Report was quoting from Walker's Cyclopaedia that "it is our option whether Central Asia should be supplied with goods from Russia or England". In other words

the Central Asian "triangle" was not a mere diplomatic configuration or political concept. The economic overtones are too evident. Free trade with Sikkim (1861) and Bhutan (1865) were supposed to be spadeworks for the realisation of the vision of Warren Hastings a century earlier. The period of friendly co-operation which the treaty of Sinchula (1865) ushered in needs to be viewed in this broader context.

The desire to "insure the necessary quiet and a sense of protection along the frontier" added force to the idea of bolstering up the de facto central authority in Bhutan. Since tthe conquest of Assam (1826) frontier officials tried every means to open regular communication with such an authority. Very often the border chiefs suppressed the letters addressed to the Deb and Dharma Rajas. Pemberton (1838) and Eden (1864) found the Deb Raja a puppet in the hands of the Penlops. For the first time the shocks of the Duar War prompted the Paro Penlop and the western chiefs to organise a pressure group which has been unambiguously described as the "peace party". The Deb Raja aligned himself with them in favour of peace. It is interesting that all reports on Bhutan beginning from Bogle to that of Pemberton mark out the western chiefs and the Deb Raja as the chief traders of Bhutan with the plains. They had the biggest stake in raising the blockade put into force in the summer of 1865. Here was the de facto authority of Bhutan with a stance and posture, albeit submissive, of its own and capable of negotiating across the table. The subsidy sanctioned in lieu of the Duars bound them to ensure the tranquillity of the border now running along the lower range of hills overlooking the Duars for nearly 200 miles. Dr. Rennie's apprehension that in Bhutan government was a "misnomer" and that it was better to confine negotiations to local chiefs seems to have never been entertained either by the Secretary of State or the Viceroy during the Duar War. In later times, when internal civil strife had run yet another full cycle, Lord Curzon remarked that "it was a most unwise thing to support or guarantee one of the Penlows (even the ablest) against either of the Rajas. If he (Tongso Penlow) is the strongest man he will support himself".

Thus commercial ambitions and reasons for the security of the frontier combined to confirm as policy what expediency dic-

tated in 1864-'65. The gamut of modern India's relations with Bhutan crystallised during the Duar War.

The real snag of the new policy towards Bhutan lay in that it was based on force and lacked vision. The best means to stabilise the frontier lay in winning the goodwill of the Bhutanese people whom the recent war had made more suspicious and jealous. On record the subsidy gave an economic and political leverage and was intended to be so. Ideas of co-operation with a backward hill state for economic and social progress were anathema in the context. The "idionsyncracy" of the people involved in the drama were "quite at variance" with what was necessary to meet the situation.

Nearly 2000 sq. miles of land were secured in the Western Duars by the Treaty of Sinchula. These lands witnessed a phenomenal development during the next few decades. There occurred what has been described in later settlement reports as the "tea boom" and the "land boom". The first tea garden in the Western Duars was opened in 1876 at Gazaldobe followed by gardens at Fulbari and Bagrakote. Thirteen leases were granted in 1876. A new type of tea bush, known as the "Assam-China hybrid", was soon introduced and was found to have greater merits than the "China type of bush". In Darjeeling district tea industry was started on a "commercial basis" in 1856. In 1866 Dr. Rennie was citing the case of the Lepchas in Darjeeling Terai falling victims to what he calls "tea culture speculation. Their lands were bought up from their headmen and they were suddenly turned adrift to find new homes and distasteful employments where they could. Tea plantations revolutionised their primitive state of society. The author's expectations that "similar causes of discontent" would be anticipated and checked in the western Duars were not fulfilled. Within thirty years of the first British settlement (1871) a wave of land speculation swept over the region. Non-resident capitalists of every description bought up lands right and left for the cultivation of tea. Earlier hopes of preventing middlemen from coming in proved illusory. The worst affected were the tribe of the Mechis and Garos inhabiting the lower elevation of the hills. Mr. Grunning, the Deputy Commissioner, was quoted as saying :

> "It is no use trying to prevent middlemen coming in as long as jotedars are allowed to transfer their jotes without restric-

tion. Mechis are being deprived of their land everywhere and speculators find them an easy prey".

The inauguration of the British Raj in the Bengal Duars and the adjoining hill territory was no unmixed blessing.

GLOSSARY

Amban — The title of two Manchu representatives at Lhasa.

Bhot — Bhota, Bhotta or Bhotadesha i.e., Tibet in Sanskrit.

Bon — The ancient pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet.

Chakla — A large division of a country ; a local division varying in extent and sub-division introduced by the Mughals and each under a separate superintendent of finance.

Chu — Tibetan for water or river.

Chorten — Stupa or Pagoda ; a relic-holding shrine.

Chukanidar — In the Western Duars under Bhutan the Chukanidars were a class of under-tenants of the 'jotedars'.

Cowries — Sea shells used as medium of exchange.

The Dharma Raja — The head of state and the supreme hierarch in Bhutan.

The Deb Raja — The head of the secular administration in Bhutan.

The Drukpa — A Tibetan Buddhist sect founded in the 12th century of the Christian era. It spread to Bhutan and became the predominant sect there.

Dorje — The ritualistic instrument called Vajra (Sanskrit) or Thunderbolt.

Dzong — The district headquarter (fort/monastery) ; the administrative unit at district level.

Dzongpon — Officer in charge of a district (dzong).

Desi — A ministerial title in Tibet.

Duar — Dvar (Sanskrit) or door ; the term is used in describing the mountain passes leading to Bhutan. In the plural form the term Duars is used to embrace the entire strip of flat lands extending along the foot of the Bhutan mountains in Bengal and Assam. The Duars tract varies in breadth from ten to twenty miles while the length is more than two hundred miles.

Gelugpa — The reformed Buddhist sect of Tibet known as the Yellow Hats. It was founded by Tsong Khapa in the 14th century and established its spiritual as well as temporal supremacy with Mongol help in the 17th century ; the Dalai Lama is the head of the Gelugpas.

Gylong — Also spelt as Gelong ; an ordained monk ; in Bhutan the elder or more venerated gylongs were members of the Dharma Raja's Council.

Ganden Phodrang — The traditional Tibetan government with the Dalai Lama at its head and designated from the famous monastery, Ganden.

Incarnation — Tulku in Tibetan spelt as sprulku. According to the politico-religious theory obtaining in Tibet and Tibetan speaking countries a grand Lama manifests himself after his death in an infant who succeeds him and is accepted as the incarnation of the deceased hierarch.

Izara — Long-term lease of land.

Jotedar — A landholder or farmer.

Kagyudpa — A Tibetan sect founded in the 11th century of the Christian era.

Kir-ma-pa — A sub-sect of the Kagyudpa.

Khenpo — The abbot of a monastery.

Katham — A local Bhutanese official and landholder in the Western Duars.

Kuchang — A subordinate Bhutanese official under the orders of the dzongpon.

Kaji or Kazi — A local revenue official in the Assam Duars ; in the Nepalese usage the Kazi is one of the highest civil administrators concerned also with the management of revenue and sometimes captained a team of the army.

Lhakhang — The temple ; the sanctam sanctorum in the monastery ; the temple-room in a household.

Lo-pon — The great preceptor ; in Bhutan the term is used in describing Padmasambhava.

Lenchen — Ministers under the Deb Raja.

La — A mountain pass.

Muchleka or Moochulka — A bond ; a deed.

Mahal or Mehal — A division of a district or an estate which may be separately assessed with the public revenue ; the whole property of the revenue-payers in the mehal being held hypothecated to government for the sum assessed upon it.

Mandal — The headman of a village who sometimes acts as an agent for letting out lands and receiving rents of the villagers.

Monpa — The people of Mon ; Mon Yul due south of Yarlung Valley is beyond the northern borders of Bhutan ; the language of the Monpas resembles more the language spoken in Bhutan than that spoken in Lhasa.

Nazr — A present or offering from an inferior to a superior ; a fee paid to the state or its representative on succeeding to office or property.

Narayani coin — The coins issued by the rulers of Cooch Behar and had a very wide circulation in Assam, North Bengal and Bhutan.

The Nyingmapa — The oldest sect in Tibet described as "unreformed" and containing elements of the ancient Bon.

Om Mani Padme Hun — These six mystic syllables are ever present on the lips of the Himalayan Buddhists. They symbolise the Dharma and are thanks-giving to Avalokitesvara (Spyan-rasgzigs) for the precious gift of human life.

Penlop — Governor of a division.

Rin-poche — Generally spelt by contemporary European visitors as Rimboche. An incarnation or Tulku is usually called Rin-poche. Ratna (gem) in Sanskrit as in "Gem of Learning" (Panchen Rinpoche).

Shabdung — A title of the Dharma Raja.

Sajwals — A class of petty revenue officials in the Assam Duars.

Subah — Title of Bhutanese officers under the Penlops who were in charge of the Duars and the mountain passes leading to Bhutan.

Terai — The forest-clad foot-hills of the Himalayas.

Tehsildar — A native officer collecting revenue from a given tract under a zemindar (landlord) or European Collector.

Tipa or Thipa — A senior Lama (not incarnate) who looked after Dalai Lama's temporal estate.

Zimpe — Councillor.

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APPENDIX 1

Articles of the Treaty Between the Honourable East India Company and Dharendranarayan Raja of Cooch Behar (1773)

'Dharendranarayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, having represented to the Honourable the President and Council of Calcutta the present distressed state of the country, owing to its being harassed by the neighbouring independent Rajas, who are in league to depose him, the Honourable the President and Council, from a love of justice and desire of assisting the distressed, have agreed to send a force, consisting of four companies of Sepoys, and a field-piece for the protection of the said Raja and his country against his enemies, and the following conditions are mutually agreed on :—

'1st—That the said Raja will immediately pay into the hands of the Collector of Rangpore Rs. 50,000 to defray the expenses of the force sent to assist him.

'2nd—That if more than Rs. 50,000 are expended, the Raja make it good to the Honourable the English East India Company, but in case any part of it remains unexpended that it be delivered back.

'3rd—That the Raja will acknowledge subjection to the will of the English upon his country being cleared of his enemies and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the province of Bengal*.

'4th—That the Raja further agrees to make over to the English East India Company one half of the annual revenue of Cooch Behar for ever.

'5th—That the other moiety shall remain to the Raja and his heirs for ever provided he is firm in his allegiance to the Honourable United East India Company.

'6th—That in order to ascertain the value of the Cooch Behar country, the Raja will deliver a fair Hastabud (revenue statement) of his district into the hands of such person as the

*The right of annexation was waived by Government, vide Chaudhuri, H. N. *Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement*, p. 245.

Honourable the President and Council of Calcutta shall think proper to depute for the purpose, upon which valuation the annual Malguzari (assessment) which the Raja is to pay, shall be established.

'7th—That the amount of Malguzari settled by such person as the Honourable the East India Company shall depute, shall be perpetual.

'8th—That the Honourable East India Company shall always assist the Raja with a force when he has occasion for it, for the defence of the country, the Raja bearing the expense.

'9th—That this treaty shall remain in force for the space of two years, or till such time as advices may be received from the Court of Directors empowering the President and Council to ratify the same for ever.

'This treaty signed, sealed, and concluded, by the Honourable the President and Council at Fort William, the 5th day of April 1773, on the one part, and by Dharendranarayan Raja of Cooch Behar, at Behar Fort, the 6th Magh 1179, Bengal Style, on the other part.'

APPENDIX 2

"Articles of a Treaty between the Honourable East India Company and the Deva Raja or Raja of Bhutan.

"1. That, the Honourable Company, wholly from the consideration for distress to which the Bhutias represent themselves to be reduced, and from the desire of living in peace with their neighbours, will relinquish the lands which belonged to Deva Raja before the commencement of the war with the Raja of Cooch Behar, namely, to the eastward of the lands of Chichakhata and Paglahat, and to the westward of the lands of Kyranti, Maraghat and Luckeepore.

"2. That, for the possession of the Chichakhata province, the Deva Raja shall pay an annual tribute of five Tangan horses to the Honourable Company, which was the acknowledgment paid to the Cooch Behar Raja.

"3. That, the Deva Raja shall deliver up Dhairjendra Narayan Raja of Cooch Behar, together with his brother, the Dewan Deo, who is confined with him.

"4. That, the Bhutias, being merchants, shall have the same privileges of trade as formerly, without the payment of duties, and their caravan shall be allowed to go to Rungpore annually.

"5. That, the Deva Raja shall never cause incursions to be made into the country, nor in any respect whatever, molest the ryots, that have come under the Honourable Company's subjection.

"6. That, if any ryot or inhabitant whatever, shall desert from the Honourable Company's territories, the Deva Raja shall cause them to be delivered up immediately upon application being made to him.

"7. That, in case the Bhutias, or any one under the Government of Deva Raja, shall have any demands upon, or disputes with any of the inhabitants of these or any part of the Company's territories, they shall prosecute them by an application to the Magistrate who shall reside here for the administration of justice.

"8. That, whatever Sannyasis are considered by the English as an enemy, the Deva Raja will not allow to take shelter in any part of the districts now given up, nor permit them to enter into the Honourable Company's territories, or through any part of his ; and if the Bhutias shall not of themselves be able to drive them out, they shall give information to the Resident on the part of the English in Cooch Behar and they shall not consider the English troops pursuing the Sannyasis into these districts as any breach of this treaty.

"9. That, in case the Honourable Company shall have occasion for cutting timbers from any part of the woods under the Hills, they shall do it duty-free, and the people they send shall be protected.

"10. That, there shall be a mutual release of prisoners.

"This treaty to be signed by the Honourable President, and Council of Bengal, and the Honourable Company's seal to be affixed on the one part, and to be signed and sealed by the Deva Raja on the other part."

Signed and ratified at Fort William, the 25th of April, 1774.

(Signed) Warren Hastings
William Andersey
P. M. Daires
J. Lawrel
Henry Goodwin
H. Graham
George Vansitart

(A true copy)
(Signed) J. Auriol,
Assistant Secretary.

APPENDIX 3

Proclamation Regarding the Annexation of the Bengal Duars

12th November, 1864

For many years past outrages have been committed by subjects of the Bhootan Government within British territory, and in the territories of the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar. In these outrages property has been plundered and destroyed, lives have been taken, and many innocent persons have been carried into and are still held in captivity.

The British Government, ever sincerely desirous of maintaining friendly relations with neighbouring States, and specially mindful of the obligations imposed on it by the Treaty of 1774 has endeavoured from time to time by conciliatory remonstrance to induce the Government of Bhootan to punish the perpetrators of these crimes, to restore the plundered property, and to liberate the captives. But such remonstrances have never been successful, and, even when followed by serious warnings, have failed to produce any satisfactory result. The British Government have been frequently deceived by vague assurances and promises for the future, but no property has ever been restored, no captive liberated, no offender punished, and the outrages have continued.

In 1863 the Government of India, being averse to the adoption of extreme measures for the protection of its subjects and dependent allies, despatched a special mission to the Bhootan Court charged with proposals of a conciliatory character, but instructed to demand the surrender of all captives, the restoration of plundered property, and security for the future peace of the frontier.

This pacific overture was insolently rejected by the Government of Bhootan. Not only were restitution for the past and security for the future refused, but the British Envoy was insulted in open Durbar, and compelled, as the only means of ensuring the safe return of the mission, to sign a document which the Government of India could only instantly repudiate.

For this insult the Governor-General in Council determined to withhold for ever the annual payments previously made to the Bhootan Government on account of the revenues of the Assam Doars and Ambaree Fallacottah, which had long been in the occupation of the British Government and annexed those districts permanently to British territory. At the same time, still anxious to avoid an open rupture, the Governor-General in Council addressed a letter to the Deb and Dhurma Rajahs, formally demanding that all captives detained in Bhootan against their will should be released, and that all property carried off during the last five years should be restored.

To this demand the Government of Bhootan has returned an evasive reply, from which can be gathered no hope that the just requisitions of the Government of India will ever be complied with or that the security of the frontier can be provided for otherwise than by depriving the Government of Bhootan and its subjects of the means and opportunity of future aggression.

The Governor-General in Council has therefore reluctantly resolved to occupy permanently and annex to British territory the Bengal Doars of Bhootan, and so much of the Hill territory, including the forts of Dallingkot, Pasakha and Dewangiri, as may be necessary to command the passes, and to prevent hostile or predatory incursions of Bhootanese into the Darjeeling District or into the plains below. A Military Force amply sufficient to occupy this tract and to overcome all resistance, has

been assembled on the frontier, and will now proceed to carry out this resolve.

All chiefs, zemindars, Munduls, Ryots and other inhabitants of the tract in question are hereby required to submit to the authority of the British Government, to remain quietly in their homes, and to render assistance to the British troops and to the Commissioner who is charged with the administration of the tract. Protection of life and property and a guarantee of all private rights is offered to those who do not resist, and strict justice will be done to all. The lands will be moderately assessed, and all oppression and extortion will be absolutely prohibited.

The future boundary between the territories of the Queen of England and those of Bhootan will be surveyed and marked off, and the authority of the Government of Bhootan within this boundary will cease for ever.

By order of the Governor-General in Council.
(Sd.) H. M. Durand, Colonel
Secy. to the Government
of India.

Fort William,
The 12th November, 1864.

APPENDIX 4

The Treaty Concluded at Sinchula on the 11th Day of November, 1865.

Treaty between His Excellency the Right Honourable Sir John Lawrence, G.C.B., K.S.I., Viceroy and Governor-General of Her Britannic Majesty's possessions in the East Indies, and their Highnesses the Dhurm and Deb Rajahs of Bhootan concluded on the one part by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Bruce, C.B., by virtue of full powers to that effect vested in him by the Viceroy and Governor-General, and on the other part by Samdojey Deb Jimpe and Themseyrensey Donai according to full powers conferred on them by the Dhurm and Deb Rajahs.

Article I

There shall henceforth be perpetual peace and friendship

between the British Government and the Government of Bhootan.

Article II

Whereas in consequence of repeated aggressions of the Bhootan Government and of the refusal of that Government to afford satisfaction for those aggressions, and of their insulting treatment of the officers sent by His Excellency the Governor-General in Council for the purpose of procuring an amicable adjustment of differences existing between the two states the British Government has been compelled to seize by an armed force the whole of the Doars and certain Hill Posts protecting the passes into Bhootan, and whereas the Bhootan Government has now expressed its regret for past misconduct and a desire for the establishment of friendly relations with the British Government, it is hereby agreed that the whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Doars, bordering on the districts of Rungpoor, Cooch Behar, and Assam, together with the Talook of Ambaree Fallacottah and the Hill territory on the left bank of the Teesta up to such points as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose is ceded by the Bhutan Government to the British Government for ever.

Article III

The Bhootan Government hereby agree to surrender all British subjects, as well as subjects of the Chiefs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar who are now detained in Bhootan against their will, and to place no impediment in the way of the return of all or any of such persons into British territory.

Article IV

In consideration of the cession by the Bhootan Government of the territories specified in Article II of this Treaty, and of the said Government having expressed its regret for past misconduct and having hereby engaged for the future to restrain all evil disposed persons from committing crimes within British territory or the territories of the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar and to give prompt and full redress for all such crimes which may be committed in defiance of their commands, the British Government agree to make an annual allowance to the

Government of Bhootan of a sum not exceeding fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 50,000) to be paid to officers not below the rank of Jungpen, who shall be deputed by the Government of Bhootan to receive the same. And it is further hereby agreed that the payments shall be made as specified below :—

On the fulfilment by the Bhootan Government of the conditions of this Treaty twenty five thousand rupees (Rupees 25,000).

On the 10th January following the 1st payment, thirty five thousand rupees (Rupees 35,000).

On the 10th January following forty-five thousand rupees (Rupees 45,000).

On every succeeding 10th January fifty thousand rupees (Rupees 50,000).

Article V

The British Government will hold itself at liberty at any time to suspend the payment of this compensation money either in whole or in part in the event of misconduct on the part of the Bhootan Government or its failure to check the aggression of its subjects or to comply with the provisions of this Treaty.

Article VI

The British Government hereby agree on demand being duly made in writing by the Bhootan Government to surrender under the provisions of Act VII of 1854 of which a copy shall be furnished to the Bhootan Government, all Bhootanese subjects accused of any of the following crimes who may take refuge in British dominions. The crimes are murder, attempting to murder, rape, kidnapping, great personal violence, maiming, dacoity, thuggee, robbery or burglary, cattle stealing, breaking and entering a dwelling house and stealing therein, arson, setting fire to a village, house or town, forgery or uttering forged documents, counterfeiting current coin, knowingly uttering base or counterfeit coin, perjury, embezzlement by public officers or other persons and being an accessory to any of the above offences.

Article VII

The Bhootan Government hereby agree on requisition be-

ing duly made by, or by the authority of, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal to surrender any British subjects accused of any of the crimes specified in the above Article who may take refuge in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Bhootan Government, and also any Bhutanese subjects who after committing any of the above crimes in British territory shall flee into Bhootan, on such evidence of their guilt being produced as shall satisfy the Local Court of the district in which the offence may have been committed.

Article VIII

The Bhootan Government hereby agree to refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes with, or causes of complaint against the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, and to abide by the decision of the British Government, and the British Government hereby engage to enquire into and settle all such disputes and complaints in such manner as justice may require, and to insist on the observance of the decision by the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar.

Article IX

There shall be free trade and commerce between the two Governments. No duties shall be levied on Bhootanese goods imported into British Territories, nor shall the Bhootan Government levy any duties on British goods imported into, or transported through Bhootan territories. Bhootanese subjects residing in British territories shall have equal justice with British subjects and British subjects residing in Bhootan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Bhootan Government.

Article X

The present Treaty of Ten Articles having been concluded at Sinchula on the 11th day of November 1865, corresponding with Bhootea year Shim Lung 24th day of the 9th Month, and signed and sealed by Lieutenant-Colonel Herbert Bruce, C.B., and Samdojey Deb Jimpey and Themseyrensey Donai, the ratifications of the same by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General or His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council and by their Highnesses the Dhurm and Deb

Rajahs shall be mutually delivered within thirty days from this date.

(Sd) H. Bruce, Lieut.-Col.
Chief Civil and Poltl. Officer.
(Sd) In Debnagri
(Sd) In Bhootea Language

This Treaty was ratified on the 29th November 1865 in Calcutta by me.

25th January 1866. (Sd) John Lawrence
Governor-General

25th January 1866. (Sd) W. Muir.
Secy. to the Govt. of India.

APPENDIX 5

PROCLAMATION REGARDING ANNEXATION OF THE DUARS

4th July, 1866

Whereas in the Proclamation issued on the 12th November 1864, His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in Council announced his resolution of occupying permanently and annexing to British territory the Bengal Doars of Bhootan and so much of the hill territory, including the forts of Dalimkote and Dewangiree, as might be necessary to command the passes and to prevent hostile or predatory incursions of Bhootanese into the Darjeeling District, or into the plains below.

And whereas, in pursuance of that resolution, the British Government, under Article II of a treaty concluded on the 11th day of November 1865, has obtained from the Government of Bhootan for ever the cession of the whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Doars bordering on the districts of Rungpoor, Cooch Behar, and Assam, together with the Talook of Ambaree Fallacottah and the Hill territory on the left bank of the Teesta, up to such point as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose.

It is hereby declared that the territory ceded by the Bhoo-

tan Government as aforesaid is annexed to the territories of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen of England.

It is further declared that the ceded territory is attached to the Bengal Division of the Presidency of Fort William, and that it will accordingly be under the immediate control of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, but that it shall not be subjected to the general regulations.

By order of the Governor-General in Council

Simla, (Sd) W. Muir,

The 4th July, 1866. Secretary to the Government of India.

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