

# PROBLEM OF THE HILL TRIBES NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

1822-42

## Vol. I

*A critical analysis of the problems and policies of the British Government towards the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier from 1822 to 1842 based on original sources—both published and unpublished.*

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TO MY MOTHER



## PREFACE

The problem of the Hill Tribes in the North-East Frontier or Assam was indeed a challenge to the British Government. A correct appraisal of the problem in its early phase is attempted in this volume. It would be far from the truth to say that the authorities at the Fort William followed throughout a conciliatory policy towards these frontier tribes. Nor did they aim at the annexation of the tribal areas from the very beginning and, thereby, saddled themselves with the responsibilities of guarding an extensive frontier. Since these tribes differed widely in language, race, customs and usages policy varied from tribe to tribe, from time to time. Most of these, no doubt, came under effective control, others remained semi-independent, while a few were not only left entirely independent but were paid the *posa* or blackmail. What were the factors and forces at work in moulding the British policy towards these tribes—these are analysed and examined in this volume. Incidentally, it throws light on the attitude and activities of the neighbouring powers, particularly the Court of Ava, which had much to do in the mutual relation of the tribes and with the British Government. The control of the tribal areas is interwoven with the defence of the North-East Frontier. Adequate attention has to be paid, therefore, to the genesis and development of the local corps in which some of the border tribes were enrolled. For a clear appreciation of the narrative, the introduction provides besides the historical background, geographical distribution of the tribes, their political and social institutions, religious beliefs, commercial pursuits and industrial activities.

In discussing the problem in the present volume I have confined myself only to those tribes which came in contact with the British from 1822 to 1842—from the introduction of the Non-Regulated system to the annexation of the Bhutan *duars*. Even during this early period, there are obvious difficulties for a writer in dealing with problems of a sensitive area. I have however relied entirely on original sources mostly unpublished official documents. Every endeavour has also been made to

present facts, as objectively as possible, and it is for the reader to judge whether I have succeeded. I shall consider my labour amply rewarded if this book be of any use to scholars, administrators and general public alike.

Prof. A. Sarmah read the typescript and Prof. S. K. Barpujari saw the book through the press; I am grateful to both of them. I must also thank for their kind assistance staffs of the Library and Records Department, Commonwealth Relations Office, London, National Archives of India, New Delhi, West Bengal State Archives, Calcutta, and the Keeper of Records, Government of Assam, Shillong.

I am obliged to Shri B. N. Dutta Barua, proprietor, Lawyer's Book Stall, Gauhati, for undertaking publication of this book and to Messrs Nabajiban Press, Calcutta, for having printed it at a short time.

*University of Gauhati*  
*March : 1970*

H. K. B. P.

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED

- B. J. P. —Bengal Judicial Proceedings.  
B. P. C. —Bengal Political Consultations.  
B. R. P. —Bengal Revenue Proceedings.  
B. S. P. C. —Bengal Secret and Political Consultations.  
C. D. —Despatches to India and Bengal.  
I. P. C. (F. P. P.) —India Political Consultation (*also* Foreign  
Political Proceedings).  
J. L. B. —Judicial letters from Bengal.  
J. A. S. B. —Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal.  
P. L. I. B. —Political letters from India and Bengal.  
R. J. I. B. —Revenue and Judicial letters from India and  
Bengal.
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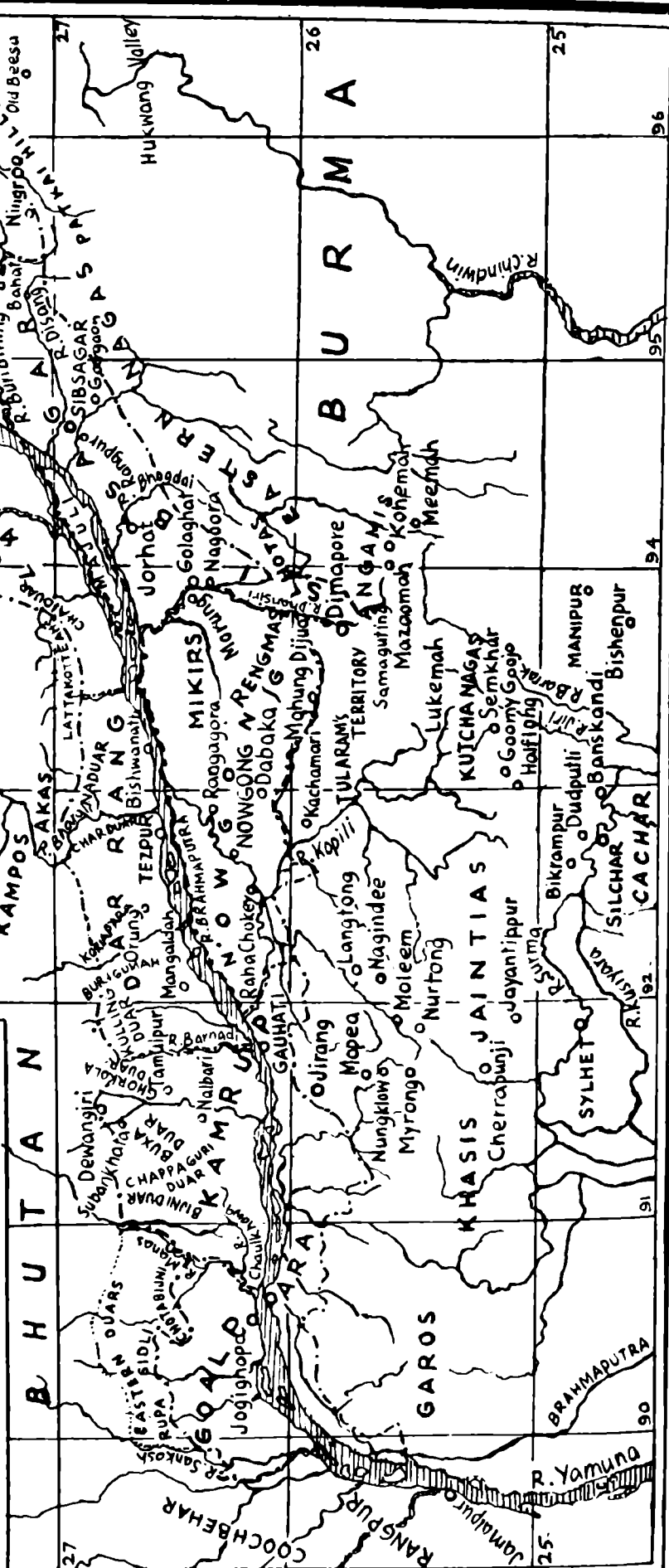


# MAP OF ASSAM

1842



## SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBES



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

On the north-east corner of the Republic of India lies the long alluvial valley of the Brahmaputra or Assam proper stretching for about four hundred and fifty miles and of a breadth varying from twenty to sixty miles. On its north for over one hundred miles it is bounded by the territory of Bhutan inhabited by the semi-Mongloid tribe of the same name. With the exception of a narrow strip of land, twenty to thirty miles at the foothills, known as the *duar*, and the central plateaus, the whole country is covered with the offshoots of the Eastern Himalayas. The southern slope of this mountain chain, roughly from 92° 40' to 95° 30' E, constituted the home of the Akas, the Mijis, the Duflas or Dophlas, and the Abors. Hessemeyer believes that the Akas or the Ankas hailed from the north of the Irrawadi valley, which is borne out by the similarity between their language and the language of the tribes bordering Manipur.<sup>1</sup> Though numerically strong, the Akas were divided into two main clans—the Hazarikhawas or 'eaters at a thousand hearths' and the Kappachors or the 'thieves who lurk amid cotton plant'. They had frequent intercourse with the Mijis, another powerful tribe in the north. Composed of many clans, the Duflas were broadly divided into two groups—the Dufla proper or those who inhabited the inner ranges, and the Latakatteahs who lived in the foothills bordering the plains. The latter were represented as refugees who had been worsted by the Abors in the rear or driven out by their kinsmen in a war or as a punishment for crimes.<sup>2</sup> The Abors who called

<sup>1</sup> Hessemeyer, C. H., *The Hill Tribes of the Northern Frontier of Assam*. J. A. S. B. vol. XXXVII, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup> I. P. C. 1839, 5 June, No. 84, Vetch to Jenkins 10 April: For details see Michell, J.; *Report on the North-East Frontier of India*, p. 255 ff.

themselves Padams were the most numerous and powerful tribe on the north-east. On either side of the river Dihong different clans had their settlements; the right bank was occupied by the Pashi and Meyongs, and the left by Paddo, Siboo, Maybo and Gooliwar Abors.<sup>3</sup> The Hill Miris had their settlement in the south; while the Bor-Abors, an independent and warlike tribe, occupied the hills east of the river Dihong. Between the Duflas and the Hill Miris, in an extensive valley, there lived a peaceful tribe, namely, the Tenae or the Anka Miris.

On the extreme east, the Eastern Himalayas sweep round the valley of the Brahmaputra. The Mishmis who inhabited these hills were divided into two main groups—(i) the Chulikatas or the Idus and (ii) the Tains or the Digarus and the Mezoos. The former cropped their front hair on the forehead; the latter let their hair grow and tied it up in a knot, secured on the top with a pin. The Khamtis in and around Sadiya originally hailed from the Borkhamti country high up the Irrawadi in the latitudes 27° 28' N. They belonged to the Shan stock and were described by M' Cosh as 'a tall, fair and handsome race considerably advanced in civilization'.<sup>4</sup> They were among the few tribes in the North-East Frontier who could read and write their language as well as the Burmese.

The Patkai Hills which form the natural boundary between Assam and Burma rise in successive and parallel ranges from the plains to a height of six thousand and five hundred feet. The Singphos who lived on this side of the Patkais were called by the Burmese Krkhyen, Kakhyen or Kakos whose original home formerly located in the east of the Irrawadi extending to the confines of Yunan. Hannay divides this tribe into five classes—Tesan, Mirip, Lophae, Lutong and Myrung.<sup>5</sup> The Singphos who immigrated into Assam were mainly of the Tesan group and they were sub-divided into three classes—Tenghai, Meyho and Nimbrong, living in not less than a dozen of Gaums or cantonments. Their new settlements bear the names of their

<sup>3</sup> Mackenzie, A., *A History of the Relations of the Government etc.* P. 34.

<sup>4</sup> M. Cosh, J., *Topography*, Pp. 145-6; Gordon, P. R. T., *The Khamtis*, J. R. A. S., 1845, Pp. 157-8. For the Mishmis see Michell, J.; *Op. cit* P. 86 ff.

<sup>5</sup> Hannay, S. F., *Sketch of the Singphos*, P. 7.



respective chiefs, viz. Bessa, Duffa, Lattora, Wakeyat. The admixture of the Singphos and the Assamese brought forth the Doaneahs who formed useful auxiliaries in warfare in the far eastern frontier.

The irregular chain of mountains which runs from the Patkais westward is known as the Assam Range, and its various parts are named after the tribes that inhabit them—the Garo, the Khasi, the Jaintia and the Naga Hills. Numerous streams descend down from these hills, and increasing in volume they empty themselves on the Brahmaputra on the north. Brodie divides the Nagas in the east of the river Dikhow into two categories—the Abor or independent and the Bori or dependent. The former lived in the interior of the hills and rarely came down to the plains; the latter occupied the hills bordering the plains and had frequent contact with the inhabitants of the lowlands, and their different clans—Tablungias, Jaktoongias, Moolongs, Changnois, Jabaka, Banfera, Kaloongs, Paniduarias, Borduarias and Namsangias—were designated after the names of the *duars* by which they frequented the plains.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, the Nagas between the rivers Dikhow and Dayang were classified into several groups—Namsangias, Dupdarias, Assyringias, Hatighorias and the Lhotas; the last one consisted of the Paniphatias and the Torphatias or Dayangias.

The Mikirs 'a quiet, harmless and hard-working race' occupied the isolated block of hills on the west of the river Dhansiri, and on their south lived the Gasingas or the Rengma Nagas. The latter, hitherto, a powerful tribe was weakened and scattered by the repeated inroads of their neighbours, namely, the Lhotas on the other side of the Dhansiri.

Of all the Nagas, the Angamis were the most virile and numerous tribe who inhabited the hills bounded by the river Dayang on the east and the Barail range on the south. They were broadly divided into two categories—the Eastern Angamis consisting of Chakrima, Kezema and the Manipur Nagas and the Western Angamis of Viswema, Kohima, Khonoma and Chekroma group of villages. Hutton considers the Khonomas—village Khonoma, Sachima, Mezoma, Kirufema, Jotsema and Kingwe-

<sup>6</sup> Brodie to Jenkins, 15 September, 1841, *vide Selection of papers regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and Burma*, Pp. 286-8.

mena—as the Angami *par excellence*. In spite of their clannish rivalries, they were the most powerful, and as such most feared, and no Angami enjoyed such prestige and levied such widespread tribute as the Khonomas.<sup>7</sup>

The Barail range which emerges from the south-east border of Jayantia Hills takes a turn in the north-east and merges into the main axis of the Naga Hills. The hills on the south of the above range and west of the river Mahur were occupied by the Kutcha Nagas—a name given by the Kacharis for their marauding raids sparing neither sex nor age. From their similarity in language, customs and usages, it is believed that they came out from the same stock as the Nagas of North Cachar. The aggressions and exactions of their neighbours in the north had enfeebled and impoverished this tribe; and Beremah, their stronghold, was, hitherto, a great emporium of trade of the Nagas.<sup>8</sup>

On the west of the river Kapili there lies the territory of Jayantia or Jynteeah. It consisted of three divisions—(i) lowlands in the north, (ii) central hills bounded by Cachar in the east and Khasi States on the west and (iii) a fertile and well-cultivated tract from the foothills to the river Surama on the south. Of the several vassals who acknowledged the authority of the Raja of Jayantia, the chief of Gobha, particularly Nurtang, appeared to have been the most influential, without whose consent the Raja could not carry out any measure of importance. Westward, there existed as many as thirty Khasi States of varying sizes. Of these, the most powerful was the ruler of Khyrem who exercised an authority 'by far more despotic' having under his control about seventy villages and three thousand armed followers. The Raja of Myllem who had under him twenty eight villages was a vassal of Khyrem. Of the remaining chiefs mention may be made of the Rajas of Cherra, Nungklow, Nuspung, Muriou and Maram.<sup>9</sup>

The Garos of Garrows occupied the territory bounded by the Brahmaputra on the north and west, Mymensingh and Sylhet on the south and the Khasi States on the east. Over each of

<sup>7</sup> Hutton, J. H., *The Angami Nagas*, Pp. 14-15.

<sup>8</sup> Mackenzie, A; *Op. cit.*, see Report of Butler P. 86 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Pemberton, R., *Eastern Frontier of British India*, D.H.A.S., P. 286 ff.

the clans into which the tribe was divided, there were one or more chiefs (Nokma or Luskars), some hereditary, but not all of the same status. The central hills, about 130 miles in length and 30 miles in breadth, were occupied by the independent Garos; while the adjacent estates—Howraghat, Mechpara, Karaibari, Kalumalupara, Susang and Sherpur—were held by the choudhuris or zamindars; some of whom were allied with the Garos by birth and marriage. Under the Mughals, the zamindars, vested with Military ranks, had the duties of repelling the attacks of their neighbouring mountaineers. They paid nominal tributes of elephant and Agarwood to the Faujdar at Rangamati; but in their internal management, they were left entirely unfettered. This might have been originated from 'the wild and uninhabited state of the country' and partly from the necessity of earning 'the good will of chiefs possessing local influence' in a far off frontier.<sup>10</sup>

Theoretically, the government of Bhutan was a monarchy with the Deb Raja at its head; although the spiritual authority was vested in another chief—the Dharma Raja who was supposed to be the 'Budh himself clothed in human form'.<sup>11</sup> The Deb was chosen from the gentry of the realm and normally held office for a term of three years. He was aided in his duties by a council of six, 'though he seldom preside at its deliberations.' In eastern and western divisions of Bhutan there were two governors—Tongso and Paro Pilos who could sit in the councils and whose views were consulted on all questions of importance. Each Pilo had under him six officers of rank—the Zoompoons or the Subhas. There were in addition Zinkoffs who served as the official channel of communication between the Pilos and the neighbouring governments. 'The form of Government in itself' Pemberton says :<sup>12</sup>

'if fairly administered quite sufficient to produce far more favourable results to the people than are now perceptible; but as the removal of officers occupying the most responsible situations are so frequent; and they receive no fixed salaries every successor

<sup>10</sup> For further details, see Hamilton, W.; *The Eastern India Gezetter*; Elliot, G.; *Observations on the inhabitants of Garo Hills*; B. J. P. 1815; 25 April, No. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Pemberton, R.; *Report on Bootan*, Pp. 52-53.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, P. 57.

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 sametime, the incentive to speculative industry exists in every grade.'

The territory on the east of Bhutan, inhabited by the Kampos or the Monpas, was held by chiefs known as the Sath Rajas who were feudatories of the Towang Raja who was himself a vassal of the authority at Lhasa. Gordon believes that this designation was used by all the hill chiefs bordering upon the plains of Assam from the Dufla hills to Cooch Bihar.<sup>13</sup> Whatever might be their origin, the chiefs were subjected to constant change and removable from office either periodically or at the pleasure of their liege lord.<sup>14</sup> On the south, the hills were occupied by the chiefs of Rupraegaon and Shergaon who declared themselves as independent and distinct from the chiefs of the north ; in all probability, subject to the nominal control of the Raja of Towang, they had little or no connection with the authorities at Tibet.

Robinson says : 'The Dophlas maintained among themselves an oligarchical form of government and acknowledged the authority from two to three, to thirty to forty in each clan.'<sup>15</sup> The Akas, the Khamtis and the Singphos, on the other hand, were ruled by chiefs of their own who had unlimited authority over their respective clans. The Mishmis, particularly the Chulikatas, too had their hereditary chief, but the authority of the latter was not absolute. Merely the head of a confederacy of chiefs, the Raja of Jayantia could not carry out any measure of importance without the concurrence of other chiefs. Likewise, the power of the Khasi chiefs was checked by an aristocracy of 'widely extended character bordering upon democracy.' When, in 1826, Scott visited the hills in connection with succession

<sup>13</sup> Mills, A. J. M. ; *The Report on Assam*, 1854 ; see Gordon to Jenkins, 29 June, 1853.

<sup>14</sup> F. P. P. 1840, 13 July, No. 113. Of these, Sturt, Sub-Assistant, Darrang, mentions that Gelong ruled for three years ; Zompon, Gergen, Khultulah, Garbeng, Bercha and Lamzalam in ruled from one to three years.

<sup>15</sup> Robinson, W. ; *Notes on the Dophlas and the Peculiarities of their language*, see *J. A. S. B.* vol. XX P. 128.

question at Nungklow, he found that over three hundred people who were entitled to vote had assembled.<sup>16</sup> Hamilton writes, 'All disputes amongst the Garos and even questions of war and peace had to be decided not by their chiefs but by the assembly of the people, the *Jingma Changga*.'<sup>17</sup> The Abors too, had Gaums appointed by their respective clans, but they 'acknowledge no other authority but that of the *Raj* or the people generally, who made the laws of the council assembled in the *Morang* where every one has an equal vote.'<sup>18</sup> Butler thinks that the Naga chiefs 'were leaders of public opinion.'

'The Government of every Naga tribe' he added, 'is a purely democratical one, and whenever anything of public importance had to be undertaken all the chiefs met together in solemn conclave as to one single chief exercising absolute control over his people, the thing is unheard of.'<sup>19</sup>

This might be true of the Angamis, but some of the tribes, the Eastern Nagas in particular, had chiefs, some hereditary, who wielded considerable power in their respective clans. Brodie found in his tour in 1841, that the Changnoi chief exercised a hegemony over the Nagas between the rivers Dikhow and Buridihing.<sup>20</sup> With his intimate knowledge of the affairs of these tribes, Holroyd P. A. Sibsager, gives a true representation of actual facts when he says : 'Each clan is ruled by its council and no important measure concerning the welfare of the clan undertaken without the consent of the elders. The President was called Khanbao and the deputies Sandikee and Khonsaie ;

<sup>16</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829 ; 26 June ; Scott to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, 30 May. Speaking of this assembly Adam White writes : 'A circle having been formed and the various members of the assembly arranged according to their rank. The Raja proceeded to explain the object of the meeting and requested the different orators to explain their sentiments . . . . I was struck with astonishment at the order and decorum which characterized the debates ; no shout or exultation or indelicate attempt (was made) to put down the orator of the opposition party, on the contrary every speaker was fairly heard out.'

<sup>17</sup> Hamilton, F. ; *An account of Assam*, P. 91.

<sup>18</sup> Wilcox ; *Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the neighbouring Countries etc. Asiatick Research* vol. XVII, P. 401.

<sup>19</sup> Mackenzie A. ; *Op. cit.*, see Butler's Account on the Nagas, P. 86.

<sup>20</sup> *Selections of papers etc.* Pp. 256-75 ; Brodie to Jenkins, 9 April, 1842.

all consultation was held in *Morung*, and no operation undertaken till it had been carried out by the council.<sup>21</sup>

The tribes were always at feud with one another. If an injury was done by one to another of the same clan or by one to another clan or tribe, it was incumbent on the injured to avenge the wrong-doer. The Singpho 'could not ever abandon without dishonour the application of *Lex Talionis* to one who had murdered his relative imagining that the soul of the murdered will torment him until his manes are appeased by the death of the enemies. That the anger of the deity would be roused should an opportunity of retaliation be neglected.'<sup>22</sup> Amongst the Garos, Hamilton writes : 'Relations of the person killed, are, by custom, held bound to demand blood for blood, and ought put to death either the murderer or one of his kindred or at least one of his slaves.'<sup>23</sup> To satisfy the wrath of an injured at times demanded the death not merely of the murderer, but the members of his whole family, and 'the feud also descends as a heirloom on the children'. It was not a rare occasion, therefore, to see clan against clan, family against family, as if miniature warfare was the order of the day.

As to the mode of warfare, most of the tribes avoided pitched battles in larger numbers and resorted to surprises and ambuscades. The Khamtis and the Singphos advanced at night towards the enemy's position. They would halt and listen, and in the event of imminent danger from any quarter they threw themselves on the ground covering their bodies in the defensive armour. On approach of the target of attack they would rise up and rush at the door of the stockade killing everyone indiscriminately—men, women and children. The Nagas attacked their enemy's villages in the dead of night setting fire

<sup>21</sup> Mills ; *Report on Assam, 1854* ; see *Appendix M. P. CXIII.*

<sup>22</sup> Butler, J. ; *A Sketch of Assam, P. 84.*

<sup>23</sup> Hamilton, F. ; *Op. cit. P. 91.*

'When a quarrel arises,' writes Thomas Sisson, 'the weaker party flees to a distant hill to elude the vengeance of his more powerful antagonist ; both parties immediately plant a tree bearing a sour fruit called *chatakor* (?), and make a solemn vow that they will avail themselves of the earliest opportunity of eating their adversaries head with the juice of the fruit.' B.J.P., 1815 ; 25 April No. 17 ; Sisson to Bayley, 15 February.

their dwellings and massacring all the inhabitants : 'When an enemy is caught unprepared, they rushed upon them with utmost ferocity, tearing off the scalp of all those who became victims and carry home these trophies of their triumph.'<sup>24</sup> The preservation of their manpower, Robinson explains, was the main objective in such a mode of warfare ; in cases of tribes capable of sending larger number of men, they met the enemy face to face and fought with 'desperate ferocity' till the end. On the north, Dalton writes, while the Miris and the Abors carried on nocturnal surprise attacks, the Tanae 'march openly to attack their enemy and make war only on men, and their revenge does not extend beyond the simple attainment of their object in taking up arms.'<sup>25</sup>

The weapons of the Khamtis and the Singphos consisted mainly of short and heavy *daos*, a long cross bow and arrows ; occasionally the latter used matchlocks of Tibetan or Chinese manufacture. For defensive armour, they used a head-dress of buffalo hide and a shield of 4' long and 18" wide. Like the Singphos, the Eastern Nagas used common bows and arrows, *dao* and *Phor* or shield made of buffalo or bear skin ; but the Angamis never used bows and arrows ; they had their battle axe and *Jathee* or spear, usually adorned with the coloured hair, besides a shield of buffalo hide or bambo work covered with tiger or other skin. The Khasis and the Jayantias armed themselves with bows and arrows, a long naked sword and shield which they occasionally used also as a protection against rain. The arms of the Abors and the Mishmis consisted of *daos*, long spear, long straight sword, bows and arrows ; some of these were poisoned. They wore helmets of cane ornamented with coloured hair of the yak to produce a warlike appearance. The Duflas had long swords of Tibetan manufacture, a dagger worn on the girdle, and occasionally bows and arrows with barbed iron points. The Bhutias armed themselves with matchlocks, *daos*, bows and arrows besides a helmet of thin iron plate and a circular shield of buffalo hide for defence. The Akas used neither shield nor helmets, but light spear, narrow but long swords and bows and arrows.

At the commanding positions of their hills, the Bhutias

<sup>24</sup> Robinson, W. ; *Descriptive Account of Assam*, P. 391 ff.

<sup>25</sup> F. P. P. 1845 ; 9 May, No. 138.

built forts of stones with thick walls and round them they put spikes of bamboos. These provided protection against stones from catapults of bows and arrows but not against fire arms. The Singphos, and the Nagas were skilled in erecting strong stockades well punjied on every side to render difficult the entry of the enemy into their position or approach of the hills. In the loopholes of the breast work, the Singphos, occasionally, fixed muskets wherefrom they fired at the advancing enemy. The stockades of the Akas, usually of 10 to 12 feet high, consisted double rows of bamboos, and the space in the middle was filled with stones and earth to a height about 4'. Piles of stones were also kept behind the stockades which they hurled at the enemy on latter's approach. The Nagas and several other tribes placed *punjis* on the ground to retard the advance or stop the pursuit of any enemy. The Khasi insurgents in 1829, planted on the road sharp bamboo *punjis*, and difficult passes were barricaded with trees.<sup>26</sup>

No motive was so strong amongst these mountaineers as the preservation of their lands and forests—whether old or newly acquired. Any encroachment on their cherished rights was followed by stubborn resistance; and in fact, most of the uprisings against the authorities in the plains arose on this ground. As to the ownership of the land, customs varied from tribe to tribe, but the general tendency was communal ownership, particularly in areas where shifting cultivation prevailed. The Khamti chief was considered the lord of the soil, but he could have only a share of the produce, the rest was divided amongst other members of the community according to the number of hands who had helped the cultivation.<sup>27</sup> Amongst the Padams, all offerings to the Gaum, as well as fines, forfeitures and esc- heats were utilized for the benefit of the community as a whole.<sup>28</sup> Their *Morungs* served not only as the communal centres of all adult males in a village, but also the recruiting ground for any emergency or for works of public utility. At Membo, Father Krick found :

<sup>26</sup> White, A ; *A Memoir of Late David Scott* ; see footnote, P. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Cooper, T.T. ; *New Routes for Commerce ; The Mishmi Hills* ; see Elwin, V. ; *Indias North-East Frontier*, P. 370.

<sup>28</sup> *Captain Dalton's visit to Membo* ; see Elwin, V. ; *Op. cit.* P. 262.



Every evening, all men gather in spacious council room to discuss the topics of the day, which means (1) to inform one another of what has been seen or heard; (2) to discuss the political questions set forth by one of the chiefs and (3) to settle what the village will do on the next day, for it is understood that no one is free to dispose of his time as he thinks fit; his daily work is cut out, discussed and officially decreed by the majority of the council. Hence every evening, between 10 and 11 o'clock boys are sent about the village, shouting at the top of the voice. 'Tomorrow a tiger hunt; Tomorrow fishing, Tomorrow, field labour : Tomorrow, *genna*'.<sup>29</sup>

The tribal society was broadly divided into two classes—freemen and slaves, and intermarriage between the two, was of rare occurrence. Amongst the Padams, 'The law of the master is not the law of the slaves'; but the treatment that was meted out to the slaves was, ordinarily, humane. The Singphos, for instance, treated their slaves as members of the family; 'they eat together, work together and sleep together, and to an outsider there is nothing to show their social inferiority.'<sup>30</sup> Polygamy was common amongst the Hill Miris, the Mishmis, the Duflas and the Nagas; polyandry also prevailed amongst the Bhutias and the northern tribes of Tibetan extraction. The Abors held in high esteem their womenfolk who were not subjected to the whole burden of the field as was the case with most of these frontier tribes. On the Singpho wives devolved, Hannay writes, 'Not only the whole of the household duties of cooking, cleaning the grain from the husk, spinning, weaving, dying etc. but the more laborious outdoor work of drawing water, planting out, reaping the crops and even the labour of cutting and bringing the firewood.'<sup>31</sup>

The impact of Hinduism was felt, though superficially, amongst the Akas, the Miris and the Jayantias; but Buddhism was deeply rooted amongst the Bhutias, the Monpas and the Khamtis. The Eastern Nagas, Robinson says, 'Appear to acknowledge a divine power to be the Maker of the world and the dispenser of all events.'<sup>32</sup> The Duflas, the Mishmis and the

<sup>29</sup> Krick, N. M.; *An Account of an Expedition amongst the Abors*; J.A.S.B. vol. IX, 1913, P. 119.

<sup>30</sup> Gray, E. J.; *Diary of a Journey to the Borkhamti Country, 1892-3*; see Elwin, V.; *Op. cit.* P. 422.

<sup>31</sup> Hannay, S. F.; *Sketch of the Singphos, Tract 266 Pp.* 11-12.

<sup>32</sup> Robinson, W.; *Op. cit.* P. 395 ff.

Hill Miris had also the notions of a supreme being, but 'Him they never worship'. They inhabited a region of lofty mountains, roaring rivers, deep valleys and dense forests. In their belief, therefore, 'If a stone rolls from the mountain, if a leaf drops from a tree, it must be a spirit on a stroll; if winds blow through the forests, the gods were indulging some healthy exercise, if winds shake the trees and howl through the valley, the *deos* or the spirits were quarrelling.'<sup>33</sup> At their temples, the Akas worshipped *Fuxa* (jungle god), *Feiram* (war god), *Silo* (household god), and made annual sacrifices of *mithun*, she-goat, pigs to propitiate the spirit of waters on the bank of the river Bharali.<sup>34</sup> To their supreme deity *saljung*, the Garos offered sacrifices of he-goats, pigs and fowls.<sup>35</sup> The Abors, the Mishmis and the Duflas invoked the Genee or spirits who resided in inaccessible hills and dense forests. Famines, sickness and misfortunes were supposed to occur, according to these superstitious tribes, on the working of some unknown and invisible agencies. On such occasions, their priests consult auspices by the breaking of eggs or on examination of the entrails of chickens.<sup>36</sup> Amongst the Mishmis and Singphos, each clan had its Sorcerer who was invariably called if something untoward happened in the village. Not unoften the latter appeared in queer garments and pretended to possess supernatural powers. The Garos, on the other hand, considered witchcraft as a necessary evil.<sup>37</sup> But these mountaineers conceived that the soul of the deceased would not rest in peace unless a scalp was burnt along

<sup>33</sup> Krick. N. M.; *Op. cit.* P. 120.

<sup>34</sup> Macgregor, C. R.; *Notes on the Akas and Akaland, Progs. A.S.B.*, 1884, P. 198 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Hamilton, F., *Op. cit.* P. 95.

Likewise, the Singphos, though some of them were Buddhists, worshipped *Ningchees* or *Ning Deota*, the god of elements, and propitiated *Nhats* or malignant spirits--*Munhat* (spirit above), *Ganhat* (spirit below) and the household *Nhat*. Of the three deities acknowledged by the Angamis and the Rengmas *Zanghuthu*, *Hyeong* and *Dherengana*, first one was considered to be the most powerful whom they sacrificed cow and bullocks. F.P.P., 1840. August, No. 93, see Grange to Jenkins, 19 April.

<sup>36</sup> Robinson. W.; *Notes on the Dophlas etc. J. A. S. B.* vol. XX, P. 126 ff.

<sup>37</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 7 September, No. 95; Davidson to Jenkins, 22 July.

with his dead body.<sup>38</sup> No Naga youth was also tattooed or distinguished as brave unless he had one or more heads to his credit whether acquired as trophies in a war or by treacherous murders.<sup>39</sup> Whatever might be the arguments of the apologists, this inhuman rite took away heavy toll of human lives. 'A fairly safe estimate' Peal writes, 'Judging by the skulls of the *Morang*s would give about 12,000 murders, in about 40 years, in an area roughly 20 miles square'.<sup>40</sup>

In their highlands and river valleys, the Bhutias cultivated barley and wheat; and in the lower ranges mustard, pulses, maize, sugarcane and fruits of various kinds. Comparatively yield was poor on account of the sterility of the soil and the primitive method of cultivation. The Bhutias had to depend, therefore, on the lowlands for their requirement of grains and other food-stuff. By extensive *jumming*, the Dufilas and the Akas raised rice, wheat besides red pepper, ginger and vegetables. Neither cotton nor hemp thrived beyond the first range of mountains bordering Assam; therefore, the Akas and their neighbours in the east had to rely on the plains for their requirement of cloth, both silk and cotton. Father Krick found, in 1853, the granaries of the Abors well stocked with rice, yams and several other products.<sup>41</sup> The mainstay of the Khamtis and the Singphos was agriculture, but their agricultural economy depended mainly on the labour of their slaves. Although the Nagas practised wet cultivation where practicable, generally they raised by *jumming*, rice, Indian corn, tobacco, chillies and vegetables. Cotton also flourished in hills up to two thousand feet, particularly in the valley of the Dhansiri occupied by the Lhotas and the Rengmas.

<sup>38</sup> Hamilton. W.; *The Eastern India Gazetteer*, 1828, P. 567; also B. J. P., 1815; 25 April, No. 17.

If a chief of common rank dies, Hamilton says: 'The head of one of his slaves should be burned with him; but if he be a chief of great dignity a large body of his slaves sally out from the hill and seize a Hindoo whose head they cut off and burn along with the body of the chieftain.'

<sup>39</sup> Mills, J. P.; *The Lhota Nagas*, P. 104ff; Hutton, J. W. *The Angami Nagas* Pp. 156-8. Smith, W. S.; *The Ao Naga Tribes of Assam*, Pp. 70-73, 121-24.

<sup>40</sup> Peal, S. E.; *Fading Histories*, J. A. S. B. vol. LXIII, Part III, P. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Krick, N. M.; *Op. cit.* P. 119.

As to manufactures, with exception of spear heads, *daos*, hoes and a few articles of this nature, these tribes were incapable of producing quality implements or utensils of their daily use. Even amongst the advanced Padams, Krick remarks, 'the worker in an iron can be called neither a blacksmith nor a farrier; his anvil is a stone, a bamboo serves as a substitute for the bellows, and the work is as wretched as the tools.'<sup>42</sup> The genius of some of these hillmen, however, was revealed in their commercial traffic with the peoples of the north and the south. In spite of extreme difficulties of inter communication, the Mishmis formed as the intermediaries between the Assamese on the one hand and the Chinese on the other. 'The Kampos on the west,' Pemberton says, 'brought down coloured blankets, gold dusts, silver, rock salt, musks and even chinese silk, and exchanged for lac, silk, cotton, dried fruit and tobacco.'<sup>43</sup> The Abor economy was linked up with the Miris; and they took from the latter salt, cloth and other requirements from Assam in exchange of salt, *daos*, cooking utensils and slaves; some of these formed the imports of Tibet.

The Nagas were 'keen barterers.' They exchanged huge loads of cotton at Golaghat, Nagora and Kacharihat for salt, rice, *daos*, cattle, poultry and dried fish. 'Naga hills have in consequence,' writes Robinson, 'been always accessible to the people of the plains; while the Nagas have on their part, been permitted to the markets on the frontier.'<sup>44</sup> The Bori Nagas were so much jealous of profits arising out of their intercourse with the Assamese that they always stood opposed to the entry of the Abors into the plains; and this was one of the most important causes of their internecine strife with their neighbours in the south. Trade had, in fact, so strong a hold amongst the Garos, the Khasis and the Eastern Nagas, that the blockade of the *duars* on the occasion of aggressions was speedily followed by surrender of offenders.

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Pemberton, R.; *Report on Bootan*, P. 77 ff.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, W.; *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, P. 384 ff.

The valley of the Brahmaputra was ruled, before the advent of the British, by the Ahoms, an offshoot of the great shan stock of South-East Asia. In the early decades of the thirteenth century, Sukapha, the founder of the kingdom, crossed the Patkais and carved out a principality of his own in the south-east corner of the present district of Sibsagar by reducing to submission the Morans, the Borahis and the Nagas, the original inhabitants of the region. Suhungmung *alias* the Dihingia Raja, the sixth king, (1447-1535) annexed the territory of the Chutias in the east and extended the limits of his kingdom up to the river Kapili by expelling the Kacharis from the valley of the Dhansiri to Maibang. He reduced to submission several Naga chiefs in the south and brought under his control the Bhuyas, the ruling chiefs on the north. The emergence of the Koches in early sixteenth century as their political rival on the west called to a halt the forward policy of the Ahoms. But the most formidable enemy which challenged the authority of the Ahoms were the Mughals. In 1614, the latter annexed the eastern division of the Koch kingdom, known as Koch Hajo, driving its ruler Balinarayan to take asylum at the Ahom court. When Pratap Singha (1603-1641), the Ahom monarch took up the cause of the refugee prince and formally reinstated him as the ruler of Darrang, hostilities commenced with the Mughals. After initial reverses the Ahoms drove back the Mughal army as far as the river Manah. Several zamindars and chiefs, including those in Naduar in the south, hastened to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Ahom monarch. For effective supervision of Western or Lower Assam, the office of the Barphukan or viceroy was created with headquarters at Gauhati. On the renewal of hostilities, in 1836-37, the Ahoms suffered heavy losses, and the newly conquered territory again passed under the control of the Mughals. In 1662, the latter under Nawab Mirjumala advanced to Gorgaon, the capital of the Ahom kingdom, and forced its ruler Jayadhawj Singha (1648-63) to cede Lower Assam to the Mughals. King Godadhar Singha (1681-96), finally expelled the Mughal army in 1682, reoccupied Gauhati and extended the boundary as far as the river Manah.

The policy of the Ahom rulers towards the frontier tribes varied from time to time according to the exigencies of the political situation and mainly on the strength and weakness of

the ruling chiefs. In its early phase, the 'proud conquerors' followed a policy of slow but steady penetration occasionally attended with revolting cruelties. To terrorise the Nagas, Sukapha is said to have 'caused many of them killed and roasted and compelled their relatives to eat their flesh.'<sup>45</sup> Whenever an opportunity presented itself, the rulers of the lowlands never failed to assert their sovereign rights on the neighbouring hill-men. Suchingpha *alias* Nariya Raja (1644-48) sent an expedition against the Nagas who had committed aggressions on the Nagas of Khamjang.<sup>46</sup> On an appeal for aid by the Banfera Nagas against the Khunbao of the village Bansang, Suklenmung (1539-1552), deputed the Borgohain who had reduced the chief and produced him before the Ahom Monarch.<sup>47</sup> To keep the border tribes in check, frontier officials designated as Salal Gohain, Marangi Khowa Gohain and Sadiya Khowa Gohain were stationed at Sala, Marung and Sadiya.

The period of the Mughal wars demanded active help and co-operation, at any rate, neutrality of the neighbouring chiefs and border tribes; and, naturally, the aggressive policy of the earlier years had to be replaced by one of conciliation. Pratap Singha secured the support of the Jayantia king by allowing his subjects trading rights in the plains and even won over the Kachari chief who had defied the authority of the Ahom monarch at that precise moment.<sup>48</sup> To conciliate the Nagas, he granted them certain areas bordering their hills, known as *khats*, to supply their requirement of grain and other necessaries on condition of their homage and payment of a nominal tribute consisting of red hair, salt, livestock etc.<sup>49</sup> The Dufilas were allowed about

<sup>45</sup> Gait, E. A.; *A History of Assam*, P. 77; Barua, G.; *Ahom Buranji*, P. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Barua, G.; *Op. cit.* Pp. 134-39.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, Pp. 81-82; D. H. A. S.; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, P. 39.

<sup>48</sup> Barua, G.; *Op. cit.* Pp. 95-96; D. H. A. S.; *Kachari Buranji*, Pp. 21-25; Mahanta Sukumar, *Assam Buranji*, Pp. 49-53.

<sup>49</sup> Sardar Amin, Harakanta : *Assam Buranji*, P. 41; I. P. C., 1841; 25 October, No. 74.

Brodie reports : 'Under the Assam Government, it was usual for most of the chiefs to come down once a year and render a kind of submission to the king : Slaves, elephants' teeth, spears, shafts, cotton etc. were presented by the Nagas, and in their turn received presents of various kinds on their dismissal.'

this time by Momai Tamuli Barbaruah, an officer of rank of the same monarch, the right of levying *posa* in specified areas north of Darrang under which Assamese *pykes*, known as the *Bohoteahs*, were bound to serve these hillmen with their requirement of personal service and produce.<sup>50</sup> The right of *posa* appears to have been conceded to the Hazarikhawas, the most powerful of the Akas, as well as to the Abors and the Miris on the north.

The Bhutias were not slow to take advantage of the Mughal wars to infiltrate into the lowlands in the south. After the reoccupation of Lower Assam, the Barphukan of Gauhati had no other alternative but to allow the government of Bhutan to continue in their possession of the *duars*<sup>51</sup> in the north of Kamrup subject to the payment of annual tribute of musks, gold-dusts, yak-tails, blankets etc. The Sath Rajas and other chiefs in the east were, however, repulsed and compelled to enter into an agreement by which they were allowed to occupy the 'Seven passes and half of the seven districts' or in other words, the *duars* adjoining their hills.<sup>52</sup> These chiefs, according to official reports, had full jurisdiction over these *duars* for eight months in the year, and during remaining four months passed under the control of the Ahom Government.

The conciliatory policy of granting these rights might be a 'mutual compromise between conscious weakness and barbarian cunning' and the levying of the *posa* differed little from the Maratha *chouth* or the payment of the denegeld. The rights so granted, it must be remembered, were not permanent but

<sup>50</sup> Sadar Amin, Harakanta, *Op. cit.* P. 40; Tamuli Phukan, K.; *Assam Buranji*, P. 32; Barua, Gunaviram; *Assam Buranji*, P. 107; B. S. P. C., 1826; 14 July, No. 3; Scott to Swinton.

The *posa* was enjoyed by these hillmen, according to some official reports, long before the advent of the Ahoms into Assam. On the stoppage of this right by the Ahom Government, presumably after the occupation of Darrang, the Duffas in concert with the Latakateahs had been carrying on incursions into the bordering areas. Momai Tamuli Borbarua, under orders of king Pratap Singha, effected a settlement of the disputes by which the Duffas were allowed to collect the *posa* from the *khel* of the *Bohoteahs* in the north of Darrang—I.P.C., 1837; 15 May, No. 10; Jenkins to Macnaghten, 24 April.

<sup>51</sup> Pemberton, R.; *Report on Bootan*, P. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Wade, J. P.; *An Account of Assam*, P. 225 ff.

usufructuary rights resumable at the pleasure of the government. The beneficiaries were required apart from obeisance and the payment of tribute, to render services such as guarding the passes and, occasionally, as auxiliaries. Whatever might be the nature of the arrangement, the restrictions under the system proved extremely galling to the hillmen who considered the lowlands as their sole preserve. The *posa* or other rights could not ensure the security of the border areas for which the presence of a strong hand was always needed. Thus, under the weak successors of Pratap Singha repeated acts of aggression had been committed by the Duflas, the Miris and the Nagas demanding the despatch of retaliatory expeditions.<sup>53</sup> A strong force had to be sent out even by Gadadhar Singha against the Miris who had killed as many as two hundred men and burnt to death the whole family and other inmates of the house of the Sadiyakhowa.<sup>54</sup> The valiant king reduced the Nagas on the west of the Dikhow to submission and compelled the Sath Rajas to come to terms when the latter withheld payment of tribute in the Koriapara *duar*.<sup>55</sup> Worthy son of his worthy father, Rudra Singha made the recalcitrant Jayantia chief his vassal and subdued the Duflas compelling them to contribute six hundred men to the Ahom army.<sup>56</sup>

From the middle of the eighteenth century the Ahom monarchy was on the decline. The throne was occupied by a number of weak but unscrupulous rulers whose only ambition was the preservation of their own lives and powers regardless of the interests of the State. The court became the hot-bed of intrigue and conspiracies, and this was followed by political assassinations and insurrections. The Moamoria rebellion which broke out in 1769, as a protest against religious intolerance of the royal family soon developed into a scramble for power. In 1778, the rebels occupied the capital, seized the reins of government and drove the reigning King Gaurinath Singha to flee to Gauhati. In response to latter's frantic appeals for aid, in 1782,

<sup>53</sup> Barua, G.; *Op. cit.* Pp. 153-4; 218-21; Mahanta, Sukumar : *Assam Buranji*, P. 124.

<sup>54</sup> Bhuyan, S. K.; *Tungkhungia Buranji*, Pp. 24-25. Barua G.; *Op. cit.* P. 267.

<sup>55</sup> Naobaicha Phukan, P.; *Assam Buranji*, Tract 78; D.H.A.S. 3-5, see Devi, L.; *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, P. 206.

<sup>56</sup> Wade, J. P.; *Op. cit.* Pp. 126-28.



Lord Cornwallis despatched under Captain Welsh six companies of British troops ; and the latter, towards the close of the year, routed the rebels, reoccupied the capital and reinstated Gaurinath on the throne. But in pursuance of his policy of non-intervention Sir John Shore, who succeeded Cornwallis as the Governor-General, recalled the troops under Welsh and Assam was allowed to relapse into her former anarchy and confusion.

The internal dissensions and growing imbecility of the Ahom rulers afforded the neighbouring tribes opportunities to fish in the troubled waters. During this period of stresses and strains, the Bhutias not only carried away a large number of Assamese as captives, but made further advances into the plains despite occasional remonstrances from the frontier officials.<sup>57</sup> Against the Dufla raiders, Raja Gaurinath himself marched at the head of an army, and several thousand of them, according to chronicles, were seized and punished ; but the oppressions and exactions of the Duflas remained unabated which had resulted in wholesale depopulation of the areas north of Darrang.<sup>58</sup> During the reigns of Kamaleswar (1795-1811) and Chandrakanta (1811-1818), the successors of Gaurinath, the Moamarias augmented their strength to such an extent, and Sarbananda, their chief, had become so much powerful that Purnananda Buragohain, the Prime Minister, had to acknowledge the latter's authority over the entire territory east of the river Buridihing and to honour him with the title of the Barsenapati.<sup>59</sup> On account of their affinity in race and language, the rulers of Gargaon allowed the Khamtis to settle on the bank of the river Tengapani. With a fresh exodus from their original home, the newcomers, before long, extended their limits and under the very nose of the Sadiyakhowa exercised considerable influence over the non-Khamtis and even reduced many of them to the position of slaves.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the Singphos had their settlements on lowlands on this side of the Patkais which were, formerly, under the jurisdiction of Deka Barua, an officer

<sup>57</sup> Bhuyan, S. K. ; *Tungkhungia Buranji*, Pp. 179-81, 186-87.

<sup>58</sup> Robinson, W. ; *Notes on the Dophlas etc.*, J.A.S.B. vol. XX, 1851., P. 126 ff.

<sup>59</sup> Hannay, S. F. ; *A Short Account of the Moamaria Sect. etc.*, J. A. S. B., 1838, P. 675 ff. ; Robinson, W. ; *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, Pp. 328-29.

<sup>60</sup> Bhuyan, S. K. ; *Op. cit.* P. 120.

of rank, with headquarters at Namsangmukh. During the period of insurrections the Singphos occupied all the lands up to the Buridihing and they became so much formidable that Raja Chandrakanta had to acquiesce in the rule of their chiefs Gakeen Too and Duffa Gaum over areas east of Namrup. To put a stop to their further encroachments, the Buragohain constructed a fort at Dighalaghat on the Buridihing; but he had also to placate the Beesa Gaum, then chief of Hukwang, by offering him Rangili, an Assamese damsel, whom the latter made over to his liege lord, namely, the King of Ava.<sup>61</sup>

In spite of the enemies within and without, the Ahom monarchy showed no sign of revival of its vitality and strength. Under Chandrakanta the court was divided into two hostile camps : the King and the members of his family on one hand, Purnanda Buragohain and his followers on the other. The royalist being unable to oust the domineering Buragohain from power had not the least hesitation in inviting foreign aid and succeeded in persuading the Burmese monarch to send a force into Assam. Thus began a period of Burmese intervention and domination in the affairs of Assam during which plunder, devastation, murder and desecration was the order of the day. Joining hands with the invaders, the Khamtis carried on their incursions far and wide, 'took forcible occupation of the country, ejected the reigning chieftain, the Sadiya Khowa Gohain, and the Khamti chief, usurping his name and jurisdiction reduced his subjects to dependence and slavery.'<sup>62</sup> The Singphos descended down on the plains and carried on their ravages with fire and sword as far as the capital, plundering the temples, laying waste the country and carrying off the inhabitants into slavery. The Bhutias, the Duffas, the Khasis, besides others, took full advantage of the anarchical times, and some of them were active collaborators of the Burmese marauders. Even the policy of appeasement of late followed by the Ahom rulers could not avert the holocaust which came in the wake of foreign invasions. But for the timely arrival of the British as its saviour, perhaps, the valley of the Brahmaputra would have been converted into a Burmese province or parcelled out amongst the hillmen of the north and the south.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, Pp. 150 and 207.; I.P.C. 1844; 23 March, No. 90; see statement of Niramai Deka Phukan and Radhanath Barbarua.

<sup>62</sup> M. Cosh, J.; *Topography*, P. 145.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PROBLEM IN ITS BEGINNING

Eversince the establishment of its *de facto* authority in the Presidency of Bengal, in 1765, the East India Company came in contact with semi-independent chiefs and tribes in the North-East Frontier. The three estates of Karaibari, Mechpara and Kalumalupara in the eastern part of Rangpur passed under the direct control of the authorities at the Fort William, but the chaudhuries or the zamindars were left undisturbed in their internal managements. For the collection of revenue, although a sezwal occupied the place of the Mughal Foujdar at Rangmati, actual collections continued to be made by the zamindars and their retainers. In lieu of former tribute of elephants and Agarwood, they were made to pay contributions of cotton—the staple produce of the neighbouring hills.

In 1794, these estates were made *Istimrary* mahals or lands paying rent in perpetuity.<sup>1</sup> The assessments were, however, made not on *mal* (land), but on *syrat* (duties) levied on all articles bought and sold in the lowlands. On the Garos in the south the duties fell rather heavily; for they had to resort to the hiats and markets in the plains for sale of their cotton and for purchase of commodities they required. The exaction of the zaminders not unoften compelled these hillmen to enter into the villages and to make forcible demands of grain, livestock and other necessaries. When such acts of plunder became too frequent, the villagers had no alternative but to purchase forbearance of these hillmen either by payment of *matharakha* or black mail, or deserted the village *en masse*.<sup>2</sup>

The Garos, like several other tribes, lived in a state of constant warfare in their hills. They rendered the border areas wholly

<sup>1</sup> B. J. P., 1815; 25 April, No. 17; see the translation of the *Kabuliat* entered into by Dharma Narayan, the zaminder of Karaibari estate.

<sup>2</sup> B. J. P., 1816; 16 February, No. 15; Scott to Bayley, 16 January.

insecure by their frequent raids for the purpose of procuring human skulls which they needed for funeral ceremonies.<sup>3</sup> The zaminders were required, as in Mughal times, to be constantly vigilant against the Garos and to repel their attacks on the border villages; for which every one of them was allowed to maintain an armed force of his own of sufficient strength. The Garos could offer but feeble resistance with their bows and arrows against the zaminders when the latter could call to their aid British fire arms.<sup>4</sup> The zaminders were thus emboldened not only to make oppressive demands at the hats and markets but also to pursue a policy of slow but steady penetration into the interior of the hills. In 1795, the zaminders of Mechpara and Karaibari on grounds of provocation invaded the hills and succeeded in reducing several chiefs and forcing them to pay tribute.<sup>5</sup> Animated by a spirit of revenge combined with 'a natural anxiety to throw off the yoke of subjection' the Garos carried on retaliatory raids which had resulted in bloodshed and rapine even in the heart of the estates of the zaminders. Campbell, the Magistrate of Rangpur, reports that in September 1807, as many as four outrages occurred in Karaibari during an interval of few days.

'In the first of these fifteen persons were killed and the *cutchaary* of the Farmer was plundered; in the second, a second *cutchaary* was plundered and burnt and two people were killed and two wounded; in the third several huts were plundered and burnt and seven people killed and one wounded; and in the last, several huts were plundered and burnt and three persons were massacred . . . . .'<sup>6</sup>

To supervise the affairs of these mountaineers, Thomas Sisson, the Joint Magistrate, Rangpur, in a lengthy report on 15

<sup>3</sup> B. J. P., 1815; 25 April, No. 17; Sisson to Bayley; Hamilton, W.; *The Eastern Indian Gazetter*, P. 567.

<sup>4</sup> Hamilton, F.; *An Account of Assam*, P. 83.

<sup>5</sup> B. J. P., 1815, 25 April, No. 17; Hamilton, F.; *Op. cit.* P. 86.

Hamilton writes: 'The most exorbitant exactions have been made on every Garo who comes to company's territory to exchange his commodities and the chiefs who possesses lands that were accessible have been either driven entirely from them or they have been rendered not only tributary but mere ciphers.'

<sup>6</sup> B. J. P., 1815, 25 April, No. 17.

February, 1815, recommended the appointment of a native of rank who was to be aided in his duties by a deputy or two and a local corps to be raised for the purpose consisting of the Hajangs, the Meches and the Rajbanshies. He also suggested that an experienced officer be deputed to collect information necessary for the formulation of a scheme for the security and peace of that frontier.<sup>7</sup> Maxwell, the Joint Magistrate of Mymansing, was accordingly directed by the Government of Bengal to carry on the proposed investigation; but on his transfer on a new assignment to Dinajpur, the task fell on David Scott, the Magistrate of Rangpur.<sup>8</sup> Shortly afterwards, the Garos raided the Mechpara estate, burnt and plundered the *Kutchary*, wounded the zamindar and killed his servants besides several ryots. Being greatly alarmed, the authorities in Calcutta advised Scott to proceed hurriedly to the place of occurrence.<sup>9</sup> They were convinced that these acts of ferocity and rapine had been occasioned by the thirst for revenge for the excesses of the zamindars and partly by the barbarous habits of an utterly backward tribe. Scott was, therefore, instructed not only to adopt such measures as might be necessary, including closure of the hats, for the suppression of the outrages, but also to avail the opportunity 'to acquire necessary information for the establishment of a general system calculated to secure permanent tranquility and to promote the gradual civilization of the Garrow Mountaineers.'<sup>10</sup>

Scott found, on his arrival, that the zamindars had already brought under their control considerable areas on the borders to a state of dependence. In addition, they made several chiefs in the interior their tribute paying vassals. Besides these, there existed the independent or *Bemalwa* Garos. Since trouble arose mainly from the latter two groups, Scott proposed that the tributary Garos should be separated from the zamindars compensating those who could substantiate their claims. The tract so separated should be brought under direct management of the Government, and the chiefs of the aforesaid areas should be made to pay a nominal tribute or *nuzzaranah* as acknowledgement of

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> B. J. P., 1816; 16 February, No. 15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*; No. 16; Scott to Bayley, 31 January.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 18.

British authority. Engagements were to be entered into with the Garos to maintain peace and order in return for permission to trade in the frontier hats which were to be brought under the control of the Government. No duties were to be levied, therein, except upon the independent Garos whenever the latter frequented them.<sup>11</sup>

Concurring in these views, the Governor-General in Council accorded their approval to the measures recommended by Scott. These might be extended with benefit, if was felt, to other areas occupied by these tribes in the frontier. Difficulty, however, arose from the fact that some of these tracts formed part of the permanently settled areas and were considered to lie within the operation of the general Laws and Regulations. Such a system being wholly inapplicable to the backward and secluded life of these tribes, Scott laid before the Government of Bengal a special plan adaptable to their peculiar customs and prejudices which was later embodied in Regulation X of 1822.<sup>12</sup> Its preamble says :

'The condition of the Garrow Mountaineers and of the other rude tribes of the frontier, has for sometime past, attracted much of the attention of the Governor-General in Council, and the circumstances which have conduced to check the progress of civilization amongst them have been fully investigated and ascertained. With a view, therefore, to promote the desirable object of reclaiming these tribes to habits of civilized life, it seems necessary that a special plan for the administration of justice, of a kind peculiar to their customs and prejudices, should be arranged and concerted with the headman ; and that measure should at the sametime be taken for freeing them from any dependence of the zamindars of the British provinces, compensation being, of course, made to the latter for any just pecuniary claims they may have over them.'

Accordingly, the territory comprising the thanas of Gowalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari had been separated from the jurisdiction of the district of Rangpur. The administration of civil and criminal justice, collection of revenue and every other branch of the government of these areas were entrusted to an officer appointed by the Governor-General in Council with the title of Civil Commissioner for the north-east part of Rangpur. The latter was to exercise the functions of a Magistrate and to have

\* <sup>11</sup> Aitchison : *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads* vol. XII, P. 73.

<sup>12</sup> Clark. R. ; *Bengal Regulations*, Pp. 653-63.

criminal jurisdiction in the trial and sentences of persons charged with offences to the extent of a Civil Judge. In exercise of his duties, he had, ordinarily, to conform to the spirit of existing Regulations subject to the restrictions and modifications hereafter provided and to such other amendments as may from time to time be issued by the Governor-General in Council.<sup>13</sup>

A beginning was thus made of a new form of administration commonly known as the Non-Regulated System. Herein, the powers of a Collector, Magistrate and Judge were concentrated in the same hands subject however to the supervision of a superior authority. With an intensely centralized and all powerful executive the system characterised by a simple and direct procedure was well-intentioned and had the wholesome effect of bringing the authorities well within the reach of the people. The success of the scheme however depended on the extent of personal contacts, continuity of policies and mainly on the character, vision and promptitude of the man at the helm of affairs.

To hold the responsibilities of this newly created office there could hardly have been a better choice than David Scott.\* As the Commissioner of Cooch Bihar and Joint Magistrate of Rangpur already he had functioned as the channel of communication on behalf of the British Government for all business of a political nature with Assam, Bhutan and other independent States and Chieftains on the north-east frontier of Bengal. The negotiations in which Scott was subsequently employed with some of the tribes and the intimate knowledge which in consequence acquired of them eminently fitted him for the new office. After assumption of the duties as the Civil Commissioner, North-East Rangpur, Scott entered into engagements with over one hundred Garo chiefs who occupied the hills on the west of the river Someswari. The latter bound themselves in acknowledgement

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

\* In nominating Scott, the Government observed : 'The zeal and intelligence displayed by Mr. Scott in the execution of the measure which we have from time to time deemed it advisable to adopt for the protection of the Rangpore frontier and for the gradual civilization of the Garrow Mountaineers, naturally, rendered us desirous of availing ourselves of the talents and local experience of that valuable officer in carrying into effect the more defined and extensive arrangement in contemplation.' See Personal Records, vol. 19, Pp. 27-61.

of British authority for punctual payment of tribute, to report criminal cases to the police, to assist in their apprehension, investigation, and to endeavour to suppress the murder of human beings for their skulls. Subject to the fulfilment of these terms, the chiefs would receive presents from the officers of the Government.<sup>14</sup>

To have personal contact with these unsophisticated tribes Scott used to hold his *kutchary* at Singimari, where he built a house of his own. To introduce civilization amongst the Garos, he proposed to set up a school at that location wherein instruction was to be imparted to the boys in their own language through the Bengali script in which necessary literature was available. He recommended that Mr. Harley, an Apothecary to the European establishment at Chunar, should be appointed a schoolmaster on a salary of rupees two hundreds per month and the expenses, both recurring and non-recurring, should be defrayed from the surplus collections derivable from the Garo hats.<sup>15</sup> Agreeing with the Agent as to the lasting benefits which the scheme would produce, the Governor-General in Council approved the measure. Scott did not lay much stress on reading and writing as on instruction of the boys in agricultural and such arts as might be of practical advantage in their backward state. The intelligent ones, amongst them, might with advantage be instructed in medicine which was then practised in the hills only by the priests in whom they had implicit confidence. It was generally believed, as in case of other superstitious races, that diseases arise from the malignant influence of the deities, and that cure could only be effected by propitiating the particular god whom the priest declared to be the individual offended. Scott proposed to extend instruction in use in medicine to the priests as well, and to gain their goodwill and co-operation in the dissemination of the improved practice of medicine by making them, if need be, some compensation for discarding methods of their own.<sup>16</sup>

Towards the close of 1823, the political situation in the

<sup>14</sup> Aitchison : *Op. cit.* ; also A.S., Letters to the Government, vol. 18, letter No. 92, Jenkins to Dalrymple, 30 June, 1852.

<sup>15</sup> F. P. P., 1846 ; 14 March, No. 48 : see Scott to Shakespeare, 5 June, 1826.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* ; see Shakespear to Scott ; 12 October, 1826. also the extract of a letter from Scott to the Bishop of Calcutta.



North-East Frontier became extremely disquieting. The Burmese had occupied Assam, overran Manipur and assumed a threatening attitude to the British Government. The vulnerability of the eastern frontier of Bengal forced the authorities in Calcutta to abandon the policy of non-intervention which had been their watchword since the days of Sir John Shore. Vested with the authorities of the Political Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier of Bengal, in addition to his duties as the Civil Commissioner of Rangpur, Scott directed his attention to support and encourage the frontier chiefs and tribes to resist and shake off the Burmese yoke. In return for an annual tribute of Rs. 10,000, British suzerainty was extended forthwith to the petty State of Cachar, lest it should afford the invading forces a base of operation.<sup>17</sup> In his treaty with the Agent to the Governor-General, on 10 March, 1824, Ram Singh, Raja of Jayantia, acknowledged the authority of British Government. He made no promise of tribute, but undertook 'to assist with all his forces and to afford every facility in his power' in the event of the Hon'ble Company engaged in a war to the eastward of the river Brahmaputra.<sup>18</sup>

On the declaration of war against Ava on 5 March, 1824, British troops moved from Goalpara both by land and water under Lieutenant Colonel George MacMoraine and Colonel Richards. Scott hurriedly marched from Sylhet to Nowgong through the territory of Jayantia.<sup>19</sup> On advance of the British forces, the Burmese retreated; Raha, Nowgong and Kaliabor fell in rapid succession. But the advancing columns rolled back with the advent of the rains which had enabled the Burmese to reoccupy their lost possessions. Fearing that his lines of communication with Sylhet would also be cut off at any moment, Scott sought to find out an alternative route through the Khasi States. The first part of such a route would pass through the territory of Dewan Singh, the chief of Cherra, and the rest would fall in the principality of Myllem, a feudatory of the powerful chief of Khyrem. In exchange of a tract of land near Pandua, Dewan Singh readily agreed to provide the

<sup>17</sup> Aitchison : *Op. cit.* P. 117.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid* Pp. 118-19.

<sup>19</sup> Wilson ; *Documents*, Pp. 34-45.

passage ; but negotiations with Myllem and Khyrem bore no fruit.<sup>20</sup> Chatter Singh, the chief of Nungklow, who held the lowlands of Borduar, however, agreed to afford the route through his possessions.<sup>21</sup> The Agent to the Governor-General was, thus, greatly relieved of his anxiety ; but the chief of Nungklow incurred the displeasure and even enmity of his neighbouring chiefs who looked upon the entry of the outsiders into the hills with jealousy and suspicion.

On the renewal of hostilities after the rains, the Burmese once again beat a hasty retreat. They had abandoned Nowgong, Kaliabor, Jorhat, and entrenched themselves at Rangpur, the capital of the former government. Lack of reinforcement and division in their own camp enfeebled the Burmese so much that they had no alternative but to make overtures for peace. Under the terms of the capitulation of Rangpur, 31 January, 1825, Sham Phukan, the Burmese chief, surrendered with his followers on condition that they would not be handed over to the King of Ava on the restoration of peace.<sup>22</sup> Boglee Phukan, the Burmese commander, with bulk of his army also agreed to retire from Assam by a direct route committing no aggression on the way and carrying off none of the inhabitants into slavery.<sup>23</sup> The valley of the Brahmaputra, thus, passed under the control of the British Government.

The Military occupation of Upper Assam brought the officer commanding the British troops in immediate and direct contact with the Moamarias, the Khamtis and the Singphos. The Barsenapati, the Moamaria or the Muttock chief, with his tact and diplomacy, so successfully resisted the invaders and afforded protection to his subjects that the inhabitants of the surrounding region found Muttock an asylum from the marauding raids of the Mauns and their followers.<sup>24</sup> On the otherhand, the Khamtis, particularly the Singphos, identified their interests with the Burmese and carried on their ravages as far as Jorhat, laying waste the country and carrying off thousands of Assamese into

<sup>20</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829 ; 30 May, No. 2 : Scott to Swinton, 30 May.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Wilson ; *Op. cit.*, Nos. 90-92.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Hannay, S. F. ; *A Short Account of Moamora Sect etc.*, J. A. S. B. 1838, P. 671 ff ; *Asiatick Research*, 1828, vol. XVI, Pp. 333-34.

slavery.<sup>25</sup> The anarchical condition caused by the depredation of the Singphos, inevitably, demanded continued operation of the British forces even after Burmese evacuation of Rangpur. Colonel Richards had to send out, almost every day, detachments against the marauders, yet the latter never ceased to infest the whole country eastward of Rangpur.<sup>26</sup> In early March, 1825, intelligence arrived that the Singphos, numbering about 7500, having plundered and burnt several villages in the north, had assembled and erected a stockade at the mouth of the Noadihing, and in concert with Boglee Phukan they were about to fall upon the Moamarias and the Khamtis. Finding himself helpless, the Sadiyakhwa Gohain made frantic appeals for speedy aid : otherwise, he feared that the whole country would be laid waste.<sup>27</sup>

Scott was faced with several problems. He must offer protection to all those brought under British control. He must resist any attempt that might be made by Boglee Phukan and his party to dislodge British occupation forces during the continuance of the war with Ava. He was convinced, at the same time, of the paramount importance of bringing the Singphos under the sphere of British influence, by conciliation or otherwise, in order to liberate the Assamese captives in their possession and to neutralise their opposition in case of any future operation against the Burmese. He, therefore, considered it essential that the British forces should make further advance towards the frontier, and that the strategic outposts at Borhat, Dighalaghat and Sadiya must be well guarded ; failing this Scott wanted to arm the contingents of the frontier chiefs.<sup>28</sup> Since those posts were far in advance of the base of operations, the second alternative found favour with Colonel Richards, the officer commanding the troops.<sup>29</sup> The latter had already detached a party of sepoy to the north and, on 10 March, he directed Lieutenant Neufville of the 42nd Native Infantry, to proceed up the Brahmaputra with

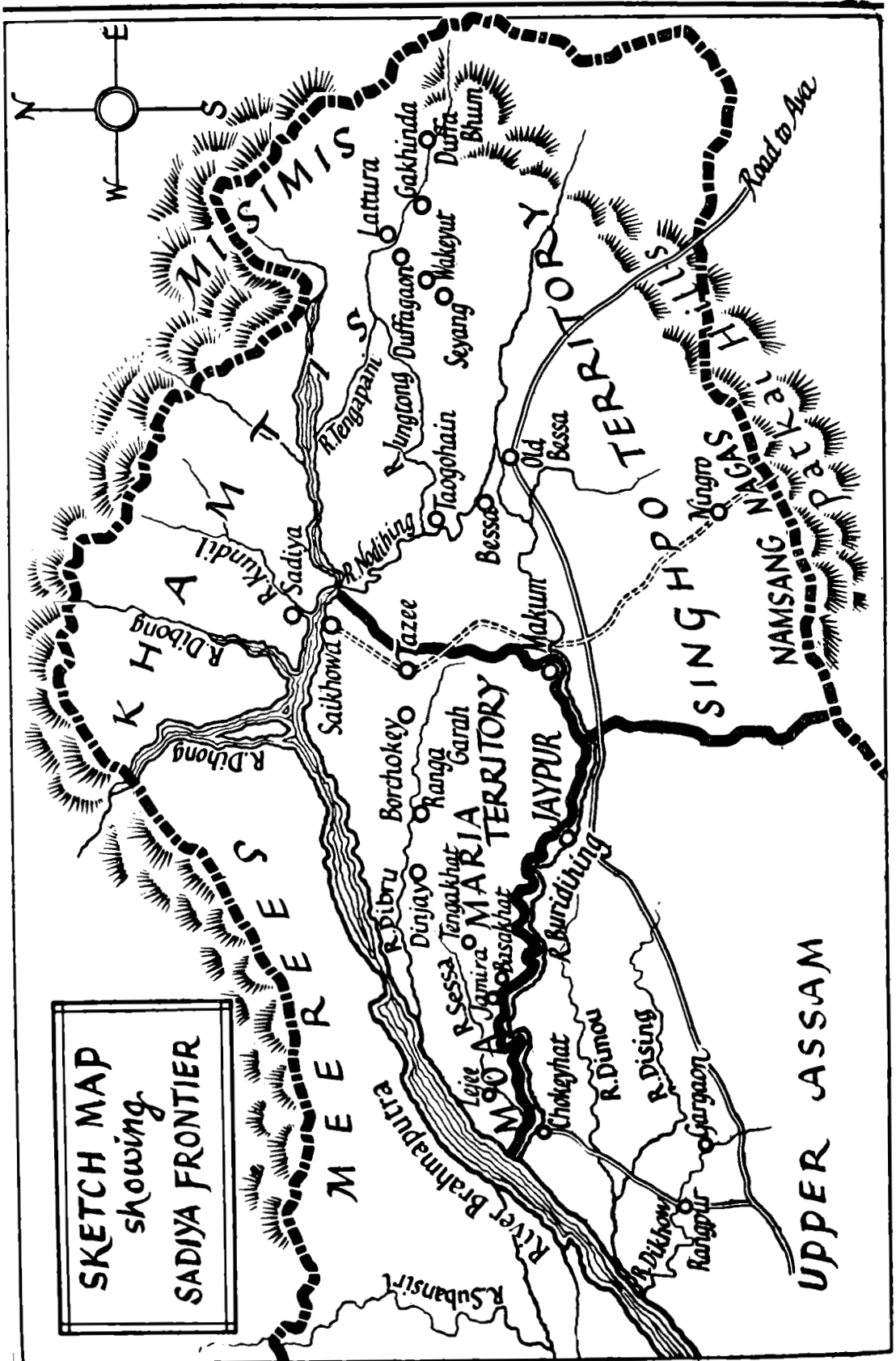
<sup>25</sup> M. Cosh. J. ; *Topography*, P. 145 ; B. S. P. C. ; 1826, 17 March, No. 25.

<sup>26</sup> Wilson ; *Op. cit.* No. 93 ; B. S. P. C. ; 1825. Nos. 21-24. Also Michell, G. ; *Report of the North-East Frontier of India*. P. 140 ff

<sup>27</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825 ; 15 April, No. 13.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid* ; No. 12 ; Scott to Richards, 9 March.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid* ; Richards to Scott, 11 March.



SKETCH MAP showing SADIYA FRONTIER

UPPER ASSAM

a detachment to the succour of the Khamti chief and to pursue Boglee Phukan, should the latter act in collusion with the Singphos. For the purpose of arming the militiamen of the Moamaria and the Khamti chiefs, Neufville was further advised to provide them with muskets, but under no circumstances he was to advance into the territory of the Singphos.<sup>30</sup>

On 2 April, accompanied by Lieutenant Kerr, Neufville arrived at the mouth of the Noadihing. He noticed *enroute* the whole territory on the north thoroughly ravaged by plunder and devastation, but found no trace of the enemy as far as Sadiya.<sup>31</sup> To his utter surprise, on 4 April, there had arrived at his camp deputies on behalf of Tao Gohain, a brother of the Sadiyakhowa, and several Singpho chiefs, including the Beesa Gaum with overtures for a settlement, expressing their readiness not only to render all assistance to expel the Burmese beyond the frontier but also to act on the offensive against all others of their own tribe should they refuse to join them against the enemy.<sup>32</sup>

It was indeed paradoxical on the part of these predatory tribes that immediately on the arrival of the officer commanding the British troops they should be prepared to come to terms and to act in concert against the Burmese with whom they had, hitherto, acted as collaborators and had partaken of their plunder. The reasons were not far to seek. During the period of invasions, the Singphos had no option but to plunder or to be plundered; in fact, many of them suffered, like the Assamese, in the hands of the Burmese.<sup>33</sup> After the expulsion of the invaders there

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, No. 13 C.

<sup>31</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825; 20 May, No. 26.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*; Neufville to Martin, 5 and 13 April.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*; Neufville to Scott, 18 May.

As a matter of fact, in the beginning, their relation with the Assamese was quite friendly. On the failure of the Ahom rulers to protect their remote subjects many of the latter voluntarily came under the direct authority of Gakeen Too, the predecessor of the Duffa Gaum. 'It is not, therefore', as Hannay tells us, 'until the Burmese invasions we hear of those forays which in the course of a very few years nearly depopulated the eastern districts. Then every chief far and near who could command a few men made a dash at the populous part of the valley until the Assamese had been so heart-broken and helpless that it was not uncommon for one singpho to drive twenty Assamese before him.' Hannay, S. F.; *Sketch of the Singphos*, Pp. 42-43.

remained only a small minority attached to their cause, while the majority appeared to be hostile or at least neutral. Scattered into a number of distinct and independent chieftainships and held together by no common authority or by any bond of union, the Singphos were divided into two hostile camps under the Beesa and Daffa Gaums.<sup>34</sup> The proposed alliance presented the contending parties opportunities for satisfaction of their personal vendetta. Since there was hardly any possibility of a combined or simultaneous movement of the Singphos, it was obvious to the Agent that no serious difficulty would be encountered either in reducing them or expelling the recalcitrant ones to the other side of the hills.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly in his letter on 8 April, 1825, Scott directed Newville that (i) every encouragement be given to those chiefs who might be desirous of entering into an engagement upon the basis of releasing all Assamese captives taken since the capitulation of Rangpur ;

(ii) as security for fulfilment of the terms they might be required to give as hostages one or two persons of consequence from each clan ;

(iii) that occasional presents be offered to the chiefs and other persons who might prove to be useful ;

(iv) that endeavours be made to obtain necessary information as to the nature of the government and political connection of the Singphos, the Khamtis and other tribes in that quarter ;

(v) that annual stipends be granted to some of the influential chiefs under the pretence of employing them to defend the passes of the Patkails and to endeavour by such means to carry into effect some arrangement for the prevention of depredation in the lowlands.<sup>36</sup>

As a measure of additional security to their peaceful behaviour Scott also wanted to settle some tribal chiefs in the plains east of Rangpur which were then in vast wastes, and wherein the authority of the Government could be effectively enforced. These measures received the approval of the Governor-General in Council on 20 May, 1825.

The response was not discouraging. In early May, messen-

<sup>34</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825 ; 20 May, No. 25.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid* ; Nos. 23-24.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*.

gers on behalf of several chief approached Neufville soliciting his aid against the Burmese under Boglee Phukan. For fear of losing his head in the hands of his imperious Majesty, the discredited general was then actively engaged at Beesa in collecting men and procuring supplies to renew the offensive.<sup>37</sup> At Gakenda, a few miles off Beesa, there had assembled another party numbering over hundred. Intelligence also reached that a Burmese force under three Magaung chiefs had entrenched themselves at a village twenty five miles south of Noadihingmukh.<sup>39</sup> To dislodge them, accompanied by Lieutenant Kerr and Ensign Bogle, Neufville took to boat on 2 May, and met the enemy on the next morning. The latter being heavily charged fled in utter confusion leaving nine dead and several wounded.<sup>40</sup> Being repulsed and, perhaps with the apprehension that British troops might follow them up, the chiefs addressed a letter to the Agent which runs as follows :

‘Our objection is to preserve to ourself the possession which we have heretofore occupied. The boundaries which were fixed by Sukapha have not been overstepped by either nation from that to the present time. We entreat you for the sake of our wives and children who are sorely terrified not to invade our possessions.’<sup>41</sup>

It was obvious to the Agent that there could be no settlement with the Singphos nor any prospect of peace so long the Burmese were at large to carry on their intrigues with these frontier tribes. Scott made it clear in his reply to the chiefs his determination to pursue them until they were expelled beyond the hills. He wrote :

‘Being engaged in war with your sovereign the King of Ava, we shall fix such limits to the kingdom of Assam and our other conquests as may suit our own convenience without regard to any arrangement that may have subsisted when your country was independent of the Burmese Government. . . . .’

‘Considering this, you will do well to look to your concern

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, No. 28. Michell, J ; *Op. cit*, P. 144.

<sup>38</sup> B. S. P. C. ; 1825, 10 June, No. 26-27.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, No. 22.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, No. 24, see translation of a letter from the Moongkong chiefs.

beyond the hill leaving the affairs of the Singphos and other tribes drinking the waters of the Lohit to be regulated by those to whom God has now destined to rule them.<sup>42</sup>

Accordingly, after temporary cessation of hostilities for a few days owing to bad weather, Neufville's party continued its progress, dragging canoes against the rapids of the Noadihing, and confronted the Burmese, on 9 May, at a point opposite to Duffagaon.<sup>43</sup> As soon as Kerr brought his men to the assault and began firing, the enemy abandoned the post and assembled at Beesagaon. On 11 May, while Neufville was pursuing the Burmese, an attempt was made to entice him into a trap. He was informed by Beesa Gaum that on the arrival of the fugitives from Duffagaon, the Burmese had left their country carrying with them his people and property ; and, therefore, it was needless for Neufville to take the whole detachment over there since he could offer them neither supply nor any assistance.<sup>44</sup> Through a number of Assamese deserters Neufville learnt on the next morning that the Burmese had not only concentrated themselves at Beesa, but were preparing for a bold offensive in combination with the Gaum. Being pressed in the front and in the rear, the enemy deserted leaving their arms and several hundred captives behind. For want of provisions, the party under Boglee Phukan could not cross the hills ; many of them deserted and swelled the ranks of their opponents. Without hope of aid from any quarter and apprehending that the Magaung chiefs might seize and deliver him up to the Burmese monarch, the Phukan took to flight to Hukwang. On 1 July, Scott was happy to report to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, the final expulsion of the Burmese from this side of the frontier.<sup>45</sup>

The operations resulted, so far, in the liberation of over three thousand Assamese.<sup>46</sup> On the approach of the advancing British party, the captives lost no time in effecting their escape carrying with them the plunder and property of their masters. It was too much to expect of the Singphos that they would release those who were still at their disposal ; for it must be remembered that

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825 ; 2 September, No. 17.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 16 ; 23 September, No. 9.

<sup>46</sup> B. S. P. C. ; 1825 ; 2 September, No. 19.



the slaves constituted their main prop. The value of each, according to age and sex, varied from rupees twenty to eighty; and each chief was supposed to possess forty to sixty slaves. Without these 'their possession in the lowlands would be as valueless as those of their original hills.' No wonder, therefore, that they would make every endeavour to retain them in their possession or to obviate the risk of losing them by a speedy sale to their kinsmen on the other side of the Pakkais. Neufville had every reason to suspect that after the expiry of the harvesting season the Singphos would emigrate with their slaves across the hills, and thus defeat the very object of his recent operations.<sup>47</sup> In the middle of June, 1825, he called upon the Barsenapati and the Sadiyakhwa Gohain, who had actively aided earlier operations, to assemble their followers for 'a general and sweeping descent' upon the Singphos before it was too late.<sup>48</sup>

Towards the close of July, Neufville was joined by the allies at Seyang, near Namrup.<sup>49</sup> They aimed at striking the enemy from Beesa to Luffabari which gave them a commanding position to the whole country occupied by the Singphos including the hill passes through which they might despatch their captives.<sup>50</sup> The time was highly opportune. The slaves had just been brought from their places of concealment to work in the fields. On 27 July, a party under the Barsenapati succeeded in rescuing one hundred slaves from the paddy fields near Namrup.<sup>51</sup> Betraying their neighbours, several chiefs attempted at conciliation, although they had innumerable slaves in their possession. Neufville was intelligent enough to see through their designs and quick to frustrate their attempt at evasion.<sup>52</sup> The Gaum of Wakeyat who had been materially aiding the expedition was found to have two hundred slaves ready for despatch beyond the hills. When he was attacked the Gaum effected his escape; as many as eighty slaves were rescued, the rest were kept concealed in jungles with the object of carrying

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*; Neufville to Scott, 25 June.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, No. 23; Scott to Swinton, 2 August.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*.

them at the earliest opportunity.<sup>53</sup> A surprise attack at Lattora resulted in the liberation of another batch of captives. Considering their position hopeless the Singphos attempted at forming a confederacy, and messengers were sent out to the chiefs on either side of the Patkais as well as to the disaffected Khamtis. Rumours were also afloat that the Burmese authorities in recognition of the services rendered to the Mogaung chiefs by the Beesa Gaum had conferred on that chief the title of a Raja with a golden umbrella and had assured him full support that might be necessary to fight with the English.<sup>54</sup> Disbelieving these as entirely baseless, Neufville directed Lieutenant Kerr to bring his reserves from Sadiya and himself made a rapid march with the auxiliaries upon Beesa. The result was decisive. Not only the Beesa Gaum, but several other chiefs made their unconditional submission, all surrendering their arms and slaves numbering about 1400.<sup>55</sup> Beesa's change in mind might have been occasioned by the repeated reverses of the Burmese monarch on whom he counted much, and particularly by the threatening attitude since assumed by his enemy, namely, the Duffa Gaum. Beesa was allowed by Neufville, on his representation, to shift his residence to a new location near Borhat where he resided under the Ahom Government. It was believed, this would detach that chief from his connection with the Burmese and their satellites besides bringing him in direct touch with the Government. With the advent of rains and increase in difficulties of transport and scarcity of provisions, Neufville retired to Sadiya.<sup>56</sup>

The energy, ability and intrepidity of Neufville thus succeeded in restoring peace in the frontier towards the close of 1825. The terror inspired by the Singphos was gradually removed and confidence restored in the minds of the people to repair back to their villages. On 5 May, 1826, sixteen Singpho chiefs

<sup>53</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825, 23 September, No. 10, Scott to Swinton, 4 August.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, No. 11; Neufville to Scott, 7 August.

<sup>55</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825; 30 September, No. 15. Neufville to Scott, 27 August.

<sup>56</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825; 7 July, No. 22; Neufville to Scott, 13 September.

entered into an agreement with Scott, the provisions of which stood as follows :<sup>57</sup>

'Assam being now under the sway of the British government, we and our dependent Singphos, who were subjects of the Assam State, acknowledge subjection to that government. We agree not to side with the Burmese or any other king to commit any aggression whatever, but we will obey the orders of the British government.'

'Whenever a British Force may march to Assam to protect it from foreign aggression, we will supply that Force with grain etc., make repair roads for them, and execute every order that may be issued to us. We should on our doing so be protected by that Force.'

'If we abide by the terms of this agreement, no tribute shall be paid by us ; but if any Assam paecks of their own accord reside in our villages, the tax on such paecks will be paid to the British government.'

'We will set at large or cause to be liberated any Assam people whom we may seize, and they shall have the option to reside wherever they please.'

'If any of the Singphos rob any of the Assam people residing in our country, we will apprehend the former and surrender them to the British government ; but if we fail to do so, we will make good the loss thus sustained by the latter.'

'We will govern and protect the Singphos under us heretofore and adjust their differences ; and if any boundary dispute occur among us, we will not take up arms without the knowledge of the British government.'

'We will adhere to the terms of this Agreement and never depart from them. This Agreement shall be binding upon our brothers, sons, nephews, and relatives, in such a way as the Agent to the Governor-General may deem proper. We have executed this Agreement in presence of many.'

Several Singpho chiefs, however, continued to be hostile. Of these, the wrath of the Duffa Gaum was considerably increased when he learnt that Neufville had wooed his arch-enemy, the Beesa Gaum. Lattora, another influential chief, penetrated into the hills with the object of re-emerging at a favourable opportunity. The prospect of settlement with some of the Khamti chiefs was also extremely bleak, if a demand was made on them to surrender the Assamese slaves as the price of British friendship. It was, therefore, obvious to Scott that

<sup>57</sup> Aitchison ; *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, etc. Vol. XII, Pp. 119-20.

there could be no permanent peace in that frontier until the submission of the refractory chiefs. He issued a proclamation demanding their surrender within a period of two months under pain of confiscation of property and expulsion from the lowlands.<sup>58</sup> To enquire into their movements and to ascertain whether the signatories of the treaty executed their terms faithfully, an Intelligence Department was set up at Sadiya under the Cheering Baruah, an officer of rank of the former government. The latter had also the duty of supplying information as regards Asamese captives on the other side of the Buridihing. Vested with 'some degree of authority over the rest', the Beesa Gaum was made the channel of official communication with the British Government. His duties consisted mainly in furnishing information to the authorities of anything that might occur in the vicinity of the frontier calculated to excite agitation and apprehension.<sup>59</sup>

Agreements were made, on 13 May, with the chiefs of the Khamtis and the Moamarias.<sup>60</sup> The Barsenapati undertook to furnish 140 fighting men and an equal number of *pykes* or labourers. The Sadiyakhowa agreed to supply 40 fighting men, 20 *pykes* and 10 boat-men. In view of their unfriendly relations in the past with the rulers of Upper Assam, Scott felt it inexpedient to place them under the Ahom monarch if raised after the termination of the war with Ava. He recommended that these chiefs should be brought directly under the control of the Government through an European officer stationed in or near-about Sadiya. Such an officer, he brought home to the authorities in Calcutta, was indispensable with reference to the remote position of the post, conflicting interests of the frontier chiefs and for organising and increasing the military strength in that quarter.<sup>61</sup>

In consideration of his very successful and distinguished career, Scott recommended that Neufville should be permanently posted at Sadiya to deal with the friendly chiefs and border tribes of the frontier. Pending approval of the Govern-

<sup>58</sup> B. S. P. C., 1826 ; 14 July, No. 9 ; Scott to Swinton, 12 June.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> Aitchison : *Op. cit.* Pp. 121-22.

<sup>61</sup> B. S. P. C., 1826 ; 14 July, No. 9.

ment, he placed Lieutenant Bedingfield in civil charge of Sadiya in addition to his normal duties as officer commanding that post.<sup>62</sup> He was instructed to act in concert with the Cheering Barua in his dealings with the tribal chiefs. No revenue was to be levied on the Barsenapati and the Sadiyakhowa nor to make full demands of the *pykes* claimed until their agricultural labour might so far advance as to admit of their absence. As to the conduct of these chiefs themselves towards their dependents, it was desirable, Scott added, that without entirely abandoning all appearance of control over them, he was to interfere with their internal affairs only in cases where serious injustice might appear to have been practised. With respect to the emancipation of Assamese slaves, he was authorised to employ the auxiliaries on the receipt of information from the Cheering Barua with or without a party of the detachment for their release ; but such a measure should not be resorted to unless there was a prospect of very considerable number of slaves being emancipated.<sup>63</sup>

Ill health compelled Bedingfield and his successor Burlton to quit Sadiya within a year and half. The civil duties of the frontier, inevitably, fell on Captain Neufville who had been authorised, in the meantime, by the Governor-General in Council to perform the duties of a political nature in addition to his military duties. Neufville's intimate knowledge of and deep insight into the affairs of the frontier tribes dictated him that in relation with these races the British Government must be guided by the fundamental principle—that of guaranteeing the chiefs their time-honoured rights and privileges without relieving them, at the sametime, of the homage and subserviency to the Paramount Power.<sup>65</sup> No attempt should be made to introduce any portion of English Law into a society where no law, but that of the jungle existed. In conformity with their agreements, the chiefs of the Moamarias, the Khamtis and the Singphos were, accordingly, allowed to decide upon cases of civil law and administration of justice in their respective jurisdiction according to their former usages. They were authorized to try cases

<sup>62</sup> *Ibta.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825 ; 20 May, No. 28.

<sup>65</sup> B. S. P. C., 1828 ; 7 November, No. 8 ; Neufville to Scott, 23 December, 1827.

and award punishment of theft to the extent of rupees fifty, and also original cases not amounting to capital felony by the Assamese laws ; but cases of felony punishable by death or loss of limb, as also of piracies, robberies, arson should be referred to a higher court or *panchayat* at Sadiya comprising the Political Agent, one of the three Gohains and the chief in whose territory the crime might have been committed. The proceedings were to be submitted to the latter chief and sentence carried into effect under his authority.<sup>66</sup> This reference to his supreme power and the execution of criminal law would retain a legalised and effective form, and at the same time preserve the appearance of respect for the due exercise of royal privileges. The chief was, besides, vested with the power of veto, provided it was exercised under the advice of the Political Agent. On account of their extremely limited knowledge on the affairs of these frontier tribes, the Governor-General in Council could not but accord their approval to the measures recommended by Neufville except the suggestion that 'in the management of these rude tribes to vest a large share of responsibility in the hands of the natural chief and to direct our efforts principally to the maintenance of peace between the different communities and the experiment of a few and simple conditions of such engagements as is indispensably necessary to impose on them.'<sup>67</sup>

The death of Chatter Singh, the Raja of Nungklow, in early 1826, and the subsequent dispute over succession between Rajen and Terrut Singh, the nephew and brother of the late chief, afforded Scott the golden opportunity to extend British influence into the Khasi Hills.<sup>68</sup> He immediately intimated to the members of the ruling family that the British Government would grant the investiture of the lowland of Borduar to that chief whose authority would be acknowledged both in the hills and below, and who would grant facilities of communication through his territory and would come under the suzerainty of Government upon terms similar to those granted to the Raja of Jayantia.<sup>69</sup> The council of chiefs which was attended by the Agent, on invitation, set aside the pretensions of Rajen, then a boy of four.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829 ; 26 June, No. 2 ; Scott to Swinton 30 May.

<sup>69</sup> B. S. P. C., 1827 ; 2 March, No. 20 ; Scott to Swinton, 13 January.

and the succession passed on to Terrut Singh. Scott's terms were, later, debated with much spirit and animation for two days and closed, at the end, in favour of the British Government.† Under the engagement on 30, November, 1826, Terrut Singh *alias* Dhulla Raja, agreed to come under the protection of the British Government, to provide a free passage for troops through his territory, to furnish materials for the construction of the road and to serve with his force in the event of war as far as Kaliabar.<sup>70</sup> Like his predecessor, Terrut earned the good will of the British Government, but at the cost of enmity of his neighbours. The latter's indignation was heightened on the subsequent improvements on the road, the construction of a post and a convalescent camp at Nungklow; for these developments, they rightly construed as prelude to the establishment of British authority in their hills.\*

At the treaty of Yandabo, 26 February, 1826, His Majesty the King of Ava formally renounced, amongst others, his claim over the territories of Assam, Cachar and Jayantia. The authorities at the Fort William were then confronted with two major problems—the settlement of the newly-conquered territory of Assam together with the frontier areas and the defence of the North-East Frontier of Bengal. To conciliate the ex-official aristocracy, Scott urged the Government of Bengal to make over Upper Assam to a scion of the former ruling family, but he recommended the annexation of Lower Assam forthwith. As to the territories occupied by the Moamarias, the Khamtis and

† At the end of the first day, Adam White writes : 'As it grew dark, the debate not being closed, Scott grew rather impatient, and as he had won't do with Garrows, ordered bottles of rum to be sent up the hill in the hope of putting an end to it. The liquor was returned with a message saying that they would not drink spirits until they had come to a determination upon the point at issue.' See White. A : *A Memoir of Late David Scott*, P. 35.

<sup>70</sup> B.S.P.C., 1829 ; No. 2. Aitchison ; *Op. cit.* Pp. 122-23.

\* Hardly the treaty was made, when the inhabitants of Lungbree, a neighbouring village, took up the cause of Rajen Singh and challenged the authority of Terrut, asserting at the same time, their right to infringe the treaty. B. S. P. C. 1829 ; 26 June, No. 2.

the Singphos, the Agent reiterated his earlier view—to retain these under the direct control of the British Government through an officer posted in or nearabout Sadiya. On 7 March, 1828, the Governor-General in Council, finally resolved on permanent annexation of Lower Assam as far as Bishwanath. Pending further investigation they deferred their decision as to Upper Assam whether it should be retained or restored to an Ahom Prince. With respect to the territories held by the Moamarias, the Khamtis and the Singphos, the Governor-General in Council concurred in the view of the Agent that these should be brought under the direct control of the Government. Since the affairs on these areas had, in the meantime, been so settled and well organised they felt it unnecessary to have an officer permanently stationed at Sadiya. Nevertheless, they agreed to invest Captain Neufville with the command of the Assam Light Infantry and the political duties of the frontier under the designation of Political Agent, Upper Assam, carrying an allowance for the additional duties of rupees six hundred per month.<sup>71</sup>

It may be mentioned in this connection, that since 1823, the defence of the North-East-Frontier had been entrusted to the Rangpur Light Infantry (R.L.I.), formerly known as the 'Cuttock Legion'. This regiment was reinforced on the outbreak of the war with Burma with seven companies of 23rd Bengal Native Infantry, the Dinajpur Local Infantry and the Champaran Light Infantry. On the restoration of peace, after the treaty of Yandabo, when there appeared no danger of immediate hostilities with Ava, on account of its heavy expenses, the Governor-General in Council on the recommendation of the Agent decided on 7 March, 1828, to withdraw the Regulars from Assam to Jamalpur wherefrom it could be called in any emergency. To perform ordinary duties and the suppression of internal disturbances, the R. L. I. was strengthened by addition of two companies of the Gurkhas.<sup>72</sup> It took the designation of Assam Light Infantry (A.L.I.) with a numerical strength of about one thousand besides a Brigade of Artillery. A cantonment was made at Bishwanath, 200 miles east of Gauhati. To guard the frontier nearabout Sadiya, two companies of the A. L. I. were posted

<sup>71</sup> B. S. P. C., 1826 ; July 14, No. 2 : 1828, March 7, No. 8.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*



therein with a couple of gun-boats each carrying a twelve pound cannonade managed by Indian Gollandaz.<sup>73</sup>

The Burmese war made it obvious to the local authorities that the climate of the eastern frontier of Bengal was so inhospitable to the Hindustanees and so destructive to the commissariat cattle as to render successful operations extremely difficult against an enemy adept in jungle warfare and subject to similar disadvantages. Therefore, attempts had been made from the very beginning to create a native militia for the defence of the frontier. 'If they were disciplined,' Bedingfield remarked, 'I see no reason why they should not be more than a match for any tribe they may be required to contend with.'<sup>74</sup> In 1825, when a proposal of this nature was made by Scott before the nobles at Rangpur, the latter evinced much enthusiasm; several sons of the grandees were immediately brought forward for the purpose of being drilled as corps of cadets with the object of acting as officers of the militia.<sup>75</sup> The remnant of the shams or the Burmese under Sham Phukan, since settled at Singimari, were enrolled as corps of irregulars who were frequently employed in earlier expeditions against the Garos, the Bhutias and the insurgent Khasis.<sup>76</sup> The contingents supplied by the chiefs of the Khamtis and the Moamarias were armed and regularly trained under officers of the regiment. On this militia, numbering about five hundred, commanded by their respective chiefs, mainly fell for several years the duties of repelling the attacks of the predatory tribes in the frontier.<sup>77</sup> It has been rightly remarked: 'The rôle of the British party at Sadiya seems to have been to display the military might of the Company by bluff rather than action.'<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Pemberton. R.; *Eastern Frontier of British India*, Pp. 71, 76 and 77.

<sup>74</sup> B. S. P. C., 1826; No. 14; Bedingfield to Scott, 26 June.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*; Scott to Swinton, 14 May.

<sup>76</sup> B. S. P. C., 1825; 20 May, Nos. 17-19.

<sup>77</sup> Aitchison; *Op. cit.* Pp. 119-22.

<sup>78</sup> Leach. E. R.; *Cultural Change with special reference to the hill tribes of Assam* etc, P. 409.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REACTION

The political uncertainties of the North-East Frontier even after the treaty of Yandabo, 1826, had forced Scott to conciliate the frontier chiefs and tribes by conceding to them the rights and privileges which they enjoyed under the Ahom Government. Subject to the payment of a nominal tribute, the Deb and Dharma Rajas of Bhutan were, accordingly, allowed the narrow strips of land adjoining their hills, commonly known as the *duars*. Of these, Bijni, Chapakhamar, Chapaguri, Buxa and Ghorkola lie in the district of Kamrup and Kalling and Buriguma in Darrang. 'These Doars' in the words of Pemberton :<sup>1</sup>

'form the most valuable portion of the Bhootan territory ; through them, and from them, are procured, either directly or indirectly, almost every article of consumption or luxury ; the priests and the higher classes of the laity subsist almost exclusively upon their produce. The silks of China and the woollens of Tibet, are purchased in barter for the cotton, rice and other products of the plains.'

In spite of this, 'the engagement by which Scott surrendered these valuable possessions was of a somewhat complicated nature and well calculated to produce the misunderstanding that arose at a very early date between the two governments.'<sup>2</sup> The tribute was payable in kind, consisting mainly of gold-dust, yak-tails, poneys, blankets, musks, daggers etc. amounting approximately to Rs. 4785.<sup>3</sup> The sezwal, who received the tribute from the Bhutias, were reported to have frequently changed the articles on transit by substituting others of less value. Such articles being sold by auction at the sadar stations seldom realised the value at which they were appraised by the Bhutan

<sup>1</sup> Pemberton, R. ; *Report on Bootan*. P. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Eden, A. ; *Political Mission to Bootan*, P. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Pemberton, R. ; *Op. cit.* see *Appendix*, Pp. 100 and 101.

government;<sup>4</sup> consequently each year's tribute fell short of the fixed amount, and the revenue fell in arrears. Dispute also arose with respect to the ill defined boundaries of the two governments. The Bhutias were alleged to have been made, during the period of civil wars and invasions, extensive encroachments upon the fertile plains. Above all, the *duars* continued to be the rendezvous of the criminals, robbers and runaways; the latter had been carrying on acts of aggressions attended with murder and abduction of British subjects not infrequently at the connivance of local Bhutia authorities who paid little or no heed to the demands of the British officials for the seizure and surrender of the criminals.<sup>5</sup>

Trouble began with the Bhutan government on 22 October 1828, when Dumpa Raja, the chief of Buriguma, entering into the village Batakuchi of the pargana of Chatgari in north Kamrup seized several persons who were said to have been refugees from his jurisdiction, and along with them the individual who provided them with shelter. To enquire into the circumstances, a police officer accompanied by some sepoy proceeded to the spot. Dumpa Raja made a treacherous attack on the party, killed the officer and several sepoy and carried off a large number of men and women into captivity. Scott referred the matter to the Government of Bengal and demanded of the Bhutia authorities immediate surrender of the captives and the offenders. When the latter took no notice of it, Scott annexed the *duar* and posted, therein, a detachment who, later, effected the release of the captives.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Matthie, P. A. Darrang, considered the whole system as a 'mockery', for the 'trash' they sent was scarcely saleable. The Deb Raja, on the otherhand, complained to the Agent: 'you are probably not aware of the reason of arrears . . . . It was customary when we first came to collect our revenue to present you with a piebald horse and afterwards with others, but without any reference to the value of them, as also of gold, knives, musk and chooris (yak-tails). Your people sell these articles at such a very low price that we must necessarily fall into arrears . . . . You must know that the Rajah gave up these Dooars for *Pan Tamool* (pan and bettelnut) for the Dharm Rajah.' See Eden, A.; *Political Mission to Bootan*, Pp. 10-11.

<sup>5</sup> P. L. I. B., 1837, 16 January, No. 3 : See Pemberton, R.; *Op. cit.*, Pp. 14 and 96.

<sup>6</sup> Pemberton, R.; *Op. cit.*, Pp. 16-17.

While the situation in the Bhutan frontier was causing considerable anxiety, on the morning of 7 April, 1829, a message reached Captain White, the Principal Assistant, Gauhati, that the Khasis under Terrut Singh had burnt down the convalescent bungalow at Nungklow, set free the convicts employed in the construction of roads and massacred several men including Captains Bedingfield and Burlton who had been there for recovery of their health.<sup>7</sup> On 4 April, it was added, that the Raja of Nungklow having seized some *Omlahs* including Mahadhar Baruah, the revenue collector of Borduar, severely reprimanded them for aiding the English in establishing their authority in the hills.<sup>8</sup> Terrut threatened them with dire consequences should they fail to produce before him the Englishmen who were then at the convalescent camp. Bedingfield, on being informed, promptly agreed to come out; and, on his arrival, he was questioned if the English meant to stay in the hills and were determined on war. In his inability to make a satisfactory reply, Bedingfield was surrounded by the rebels; they tied him up and hacked him to pieces.<sup>9</sup> For the whole night Burlton defended himself against the attacks of the enemy, and on day break he determined to make his way to Gauhati. Firing gallantly and keeping at bay a number of the enemies, Burlton and his followers successfully came down about twenty miles, when suddenly a heavy downpour came and it rendered his muskets useless and scattered the followers in the midst of jungles. Forlorn in hope and thoroughly exhausted, Burlton fell down, whereupon the insurgents took him off and killed him at a distance along with several *Omlahs*.<sup>10</sup>

On the same day, White sent an urgent communique to Jamalpur for reinforcement, and himself advanced towards Nungklow to the succour of Scott who had left that post three days before with a small guard of sixteen sepoys.<sup>11</sup> He was accompanied by a detachment under the command of Lieutenant Vetch. Arriving at Ranigaon, on the following day, White made

<sup>7</sup> B.S.P.C., 1829; 25 April, Nos. 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*; also Pemberton, R.; *The Eastern Frontier of British India*, Pp. 232-33.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

a surprise attack on Jeerah then held by a relative of Terrut. The village was burnt to the ground and its granary completely destroyed.<sup>12</sup> At Gauhati, in the meanwhile, rumours were afloat that the Agent to the Governor-General had also perished along with other victims ; that the Khasis had already descended down upon plains and advanced as far as Beltola, 7 miles off Gauhati ; and that they had made common cause with the Assamese to drive all the foreigners from the province. The inhabitants of the town, particularly the outsiders, were so panic-stricken that many had gone without any sleep at night, while several *Omlahs* had taken to boats.<sup>13</sup> When these tidings reached White through an urgent message of Severs, an English Writer, the latter hurried back to Gauhati which was then in an absolutely defenceless state with cash over a lakh and half at the Treasury. At Beltola, on his return, he found not the insurgent Khasis, but a number of the Garos who had assembled there in connection with a minor dispute. Nor did he notice any disaffection on the part of the Assamese inhabitants in and nearabout Gauhati. The suspicion of the *Omlahs*, White surmised, was occasioned by the fact that no Assamese was killed at Nungklow.<sup>14</sup>

Alexander Mackenzie, on the authority of Pemberton, has traced the origin of the massacre to the irresponsible statement of a Bengalee *chaprassi*.<sup>15</sup> In a dispute with some Khasis the latter had threatened them with severe consequences, and that they would be subjected soon to the same taxation as was levied on the Assamese on the plains. In analysing the causes Scott also remarked : 'No provocation whatever was given to Terrut Singh or his followers by any of the gentlemen or people residing at Nungklow, but that ( they ) become the victims of cold blooded and insensate murder for reasons it is not easy to comprehend.'<sup>16</sup> It is rather difficult to believe that the conflagration which had lasted in these hills for several years and in which the leading chiefs took active part could have originated in a single solitary cause as conceived by Mackenzie or that the Agent to the Governor-General was entirely ignorant of the circumstances

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* ; Severs to White, 9 April.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Pemberton, R. ; *The Eastern Frontier of British India*, P. 232.

<sup>16</sup> B.S.P.C., 1829 ; 26 June, No. 2 ; Scott 30 May.

leading to the disaster. A critical study of the official documents would reveal that the massacre at Nungklow was the beginning of an anti-British movement for which forces were at work for a long time.

Under the former government, several Khasi chiefs, like the Bhutias, held the lowlands in the north, commonly known as the Naduar or nine *duars*, subject to their homage, good conduct and payment of a nominal tribute mostly in kind.<sup>17</sup> On account of the constant intercourse between the peoples of the hills and the plains a process of assimilation had begun in the border areas which is borne out by the fact that several chiefs had actually been converted into Hinduism. Succession passes according to the traditional custom of the Khasis to the nephews of the sister's side whereas in case of a Hindu to the sons of the deceased. On account of conversion, inheritance passed in cases of the chiefs of Luki, Chaygaon, Boko and Bholagaon to their respective heirs of the direct line; the collateral branches, for no fault of theirs, had no alternative but to retire back into the hills.<sup>18</sup> Some chiefs lost their possessions in the plains on account of their complicity with the Burmese invaders. With the rest Scott entered into a settlement, in 1825, for a fixed demand in money.<sup>19</sup> Early assessments were light; remissions had also been granted in cases of hardships. Yet an assessment based on no correct data coupled with universal scarcity of the circulating medium in a region where barter was the only medium

<sup>17</sup> I.P.C., 1835; 24 November, No. 17; Chandmanik to Lister 14 October; B.P.C., 1831; 11 February, No. 28; Scott 17 January.

As to the tribute payable by these chiefs Scott reported: 'although no regular annual rent in money was levied under the Assam Government, they were liable to perform service to the State with the whole of their *pykes*, and they had besides been invariably obliged to pay a fine to Barphukan to obtain the investiture of the Estate from ten to twenty thousand rupees.'

<sup>18</sup> Not infrequently they descended down and committed aggression on the lowlands and if favoured by the ryots, occasionally, took possession of the estates altogether as had happened, in 1823, in Lukiduar. As compensation for exclusion from succession, Scott proposed, in October, 1826, to grant to such chiefs, rent free lands to the extent of 200 *puras*. B.P.C., 1826; 25 October, Nos. 19-20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*; also B.R.C., 1835; 8 December, No. 21; Lister to Macnaghten, 19 October.

of exchange resulted in wholesale arrears. Not only the collectors were replaced, one after another, but some of the *duars* made *khas*<sup>20</sup>. Within a few years of the annexation of Lower Assam, inevitably, the Khasis found that they were deprived of the *duars*, the main source of their supplies. Independent in bearing, exclusive in spirit, jealous of their honour, the proud mountaineers determined to resist the English who had encroached upon their prescriptive rights.

The initiative was taken by Burmanik, chief of Myllem. In August 1828, descending upon the plains of Demorua, a few miles off Gauhati, he levied contributions, seized the collections made by the revenue officers and publicly declared that in the ensuing winter he would occupy the lowlands.<sup>21</sup> Scott accepted the challenge. In a strong note to Burmanik, he demanded within a specified date a heavy compensation in default of which he was threatened with drastic measures. Scott's ultimatum served only to unite the disaffected Khasis under Burmanik against their common enemy, namely, the English.<sup>22</sup>

True to his engagement, Terrut provided all facilities to Scott for completion of the lines of communication through the hills which had earned for him a *kekoradola*, a royal palanquin, as a mark of high honour of the British Government.<sup>23</sup> Soon, misunderstanding arose between them over the terms of the agreement.<sup>24</sup> The Raja of Nungklow felt, like others, the

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*; Vide Appendix I.

<sup>21</sup> B. S. P. C., 1828; 5 September, Nos. 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*; Scott to Burmanik, 20 August.

<sup>23</sup> B. S. P. C., 1827; 13 September, No. 16.

<sup>24</sup> That there was a great deal of misunderstanding as to the exact nature of the agreement with Scott is evident from the dialogue between Terrut and Mahadhar Baruah, the Superintendent of Borduar. 'Barroowah' said Terrut, 'Mr. Scott formerly made friendship with me saying your enemy is Company's enemy, and that he would relinquish the Borduar revenue, both in money and in *pykes*. He has not done it, and he has the wish to give troops to my enemy, the Ranee Rajah. . .' At the Faujdari Court, Cherrapunji, Hates, the Khasi interpreter, an eye-witness of the massacre, also made a similar statement. The terms were in all probability misrepresented by interested parties to hasten up the agreement. B. S. P. C., 1829; 26 June No. 2; see deposition of Mahadhar Baruah on 17 May; B. P. C., 1833; 6 June, No. 109; deposition of Hates, 15 September, 1829.

utmost difficulty in discharging the amount of revenue, the payment of which he considered as a grievance. The agreement with the English, he argued, gave him unrestricted privileges over the lowlands without payment of any revenue whatever. Towards the close of 1828, when Boloram Singh, the chief of Rani, threatened to attack him in retaliation for an earlier atrocity, Terrut appealed for military aid to Scott; the latter not only refused, but advised the chief to effect a settlement by making reparations for his earlier misdeeds. Thereupon, Teerut collected his own men and marched against his enemy; but he was repulsed by the timely arrival of a detachment from Gauhati. At this rebuff, Terrut felt that he was no longer bound by the treaty. With grim determination to drive the English out of the hills, he joined hands with the chief of Myllem and began the war by the massacre of the Englishmen and their followers at Nungklow.

Immediately after the incident, Terrut Singh repaired to Moflung where he had a prolonged discussion with Burmanik as to the plan of operations.<sup>25</sup> Nothing short of expulsion of the English seems to have been the ultimate objective, after the attainment of which their plans envisaged political combination of the most extended nature; 'having selected the most intelligent prisoners amongst those released at Nungklow, he (Terrut) had sent them off with letters to Chandra Kunt, the Bhots, the Singphos . . . . exciting them to throw off the yoke of the English.'<sup>26</sup> The immediate objective was to cut off the lines of communication so as to prevent supplies and reinforcement from reaching Scott at Cherrapunji. It was planned that Burmanik would guard the passes in the north. Terrut would effect a combination with Makunda Singh, the Raja of Mosmy, at the

<sup>25</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829; 25 April, No. 13.

<sup>26</sup> The message that was sent to Ex-Rajah Chandrakanta runs as follows: 'The country of the Rajah have taken possession of by the English. We have been greatly annoyed. We have now killed the English gentlemen here. Should the Rajah now rise and assist us we can with the Garrow people descend (from) the hills.' To counteract this, a few prisoners carrying letters to Chandrakanta were arrested on their way to Upper Assam and the Ex-Raja was also summoned to Gauhati with object of sending him to Gowalpara. B. S. P. C., 1829, 25 April, No. 9; 26 June, No. 2.



village of Mumlo with view to intimidating the people of Cherra then friendly with the British ; for that would enable them to expel or mop up the small party under Scott.

The position of the English at Gauhati was, indeed, far from being secure ; for only a few weeks before, the Regular troops had been withdrawn from Assam and the defence of the whole line of frontier then rested with the scattered and limited number of detachments of the A. L. I. In Upper Assam, the introduction of the British rule and the consequent unemployment of the ex-official aristocracy had, in the meantime, produced amongst them great dissatisfaction and intense resentment against the new rulers. Although, White ruled out the possibility of any uprising on the part of the Assamese in general, he had grave doubts as to the conduct of the men in rank who were likely to bless, if not actually participate, in any scheme calculated to restore their former ascendancy. In these circumstances, White could expect little aid from the Political Agent, Upper Assam ; for troops must always be in readiness in that quarter to meet any emergency. The situation in the Bhutan frontier continued to be disquieting ; while the Garos on the west joining hands with the Khasis had, at this precise moment, assumed hostilities and Captain Davidson, officer in-charge of Goalpara, called for immediate reinforcement.<sup>27</sup> The arrival of a detachment from Bishwanath under Captain Urquhart relieved White to some extent ; but this was considered inadequate unless the Sylhet Light Infantry (S. L. I.) moved up against the insurgents. This was also rendered extremely difficult for communication had already been made impassable by destroying bridges, obstructing the roads and raising palisades.<sup>28</sup>

On the receipt of an urgent message from the Agent, on 13 April, Captain Lister, the Commandant of the S.L.I., hastened with a detachment to Mumlo and succeeded in dislodging Terrut before he could occupy that place.<sup>29</sup> But for the timely arrival of Lister, who covered the distance of four marches in a single day without any halt, the communications with Scott would have

<sup>27</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829 ; 1 May, No. 42 ; White, 18 April ; 8 May, No. 9 ; White, 24 April.

<sup>28</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829 ; 25 April, No. 13 ; Scott 14 April.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

been completely cut off. Mumlo was put to flames and Terrut had to flee for his life. Dewan Singh, the Cherra Raja, who had been wavering for sometime, volunteered his services. Kala Raja of Osimille and Singh Manik of Khyrem followed suit. On 23 April, Scott left Cherra and joined the detachment under Lister who had in the meantime reduced the village of Lykunso, held by Kullup Singh, a feudatory of Teerut. On 24th, Scott took possession of the villages of Burmanik, while Lister followed up his successes by occupying Lungbree, Myrong and Nongkrem.<sup>30</sup> The insurgents could offer but feeble resistance to the advancing parties under Scott who pushed their way through burning villages and, in early May, reached Nungklow. Myllem also fell on 20 May, when Lister inflicted a severe defeat on Burmanik in the neighbourhood of his own village.<sup>31</sup>

The terror inspired by the detachments and repeated reverses of their own chiefs left no alternative for the insurgents but to submit to the British authority. A reward of rupees one thousand was declared for the apprehension of Terrut Singh who was then lurking nearabout with a few stragglers. Vetch, since arrived at Nungklow, was posted at Myrong with a party of the A.L.I., while Mirza Bunda Ali, the superintendent of the Garo Hills, was stationed at Nungklow with a detachment of the sebundis and shams. Myllem was placed in-charge of the Lingdows, the hereditary priests of the Khasis. After these arrangements, Lister was directed to return to his headquarters leaving sufficient parties at Myllem and Mosmy to keep the lines of communication with Sylhet undisturbed and to prevent Burmanik from collecting any force in his territory.<sup>32</sup>

While these measures were in progress, intelligence arrived that Terrut had taken refuge at Muriau wherein he was joined by Zuber Singh, the chief of Ramray, at the head of one hundred fifty men. On 9 June, accompanied by Bunda Ali and a party of the shams, Vetch marched against the enemy ; and after stiff resistance, the latter dispersed and the villagers surrendered. The chief of Ramray, who held the lowland of Patan, on his

<sup>30</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829 ; 1 May, No. 41 ; 15 May, No. 9 ; 22 May, No. 7 ;

<sup>31</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829, No. 6, Scott, 21 May.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

return, seized twenty Assamese porters on their way to Nungklow, and, later, put all of them to death. In retaliation, Scott occupied Ramray and refused to come to terms unless the inhabitants surrendered the rebel chief.<sup>33</sup>

The situation became worse in the south towards the close of August, 1829. Burmanik stockaded himself at Mosmy expelling from its possession his own brother Singmanik who, thereupon, appealed for aid to the Agent to the Governor-General. The confederacy of Tengrong (Twelve chiefs) assumed, at the sametime, a definitely hostile attitude. Under Makunda Singh, Raja of Mosmy, acts of aggression were reported from Bairampunji, Sooparpunji and other village chiefs who had abstained, so long, from unfriendly acts in spite of their dubious conduct.<sup>34</sup> The security of the Sylhet route and the operation of the lime-stone quarries on the Bogapani demanded reduction of these hostiles in the south. Despatching a detachment of the S. L. I. in pursuit of Burmanik, Lister accompanied by Townshend and Egerton, marched against Tengrong, and amidst showers of stones and arrows reduced the confederates to submission and forced them to pay a fine of rupees four thousand besides the right of working in the quarries. A severe attack was later made on Sooparpunji, and after strenuous fighting having casualties on both sides the enemy left; their villages burnt down and completely destroyed.<sup>35</sup> In the middle of September, the detachment of the S. L. I. succeeded in apprehending Burmanik who was despatched, forthwith, as a prisoner to Gauhati. This was followed by the surrender of two other fugitives Zuber Singh and Oolar Singh, the chiefs of Ramray and Muriau respectively.<sup>36</sup>

Towards the close of 1829, the hard core of the rebels broke down which gave Scott a breathing space to devote himself to the task of administrative reorganisation of the areas brought under control or sphere of British influence. Vexed as he was with too many problems of the far flung frontier, the Agent to the Governor-General did not aim at the permanent annexation

<sup>33</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829; 17 July, No. 2; Scott, 23 June; 14, August, No. 11; 28 August, No. 21.

<sup>34</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829; 11 September, No. 9; 18 September, No. 11.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> B. S. P. C., 1829; 2 October, No. 24; Scott, 7 September; 7 May, 1830; No. 49.

of territories. He, therefore, wanted to have an arrangement in these hills as would ensure communication between Assam and Sylhet, provide for the security of both divisions and reserve the power of utilizing the cool and salubrious region well adopted for resort of invalids, for the cantonment of troops and for the production of articles of European countries to which the climate of the plains was unsuitable.<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly, he entered into agreements with the chiefs of Ramray and Muriau in October, 1829, and Burmanik of Myllem in January, 1830. Subject to their dependence and acknowledgment of British Government, the chiefs were restored to their former possessions. They were entrusted with the administration of justice in all but capital cases which were to be tried before an assembly of chiefs twice a year and to be presided over by the Agent to the Governor-General. The chiefs should be amenable for treason or resistance to the authority of the Paramount power and were liable to be removed in case of continued oppression. The chief persons in that event would assemble and would elect a successor subject to the approval of the British Government.<sup>38</sup>

Of the territory of Burmanik, a narrow strip of land south and east of the river Oomeeam, known as Syung, was made over to the authority of the twelve Lingdows in pursuance of an earlier stipulation made with its inhabitants that they should not again be placed at the mercy of their former chief. Burmanik further relinquished his claims over the disputed areas in Desh Dimrua in lieu of a tract near the Sonapur market<sup>39</sup>

To win over the disaffected Khasis, Scott recommended to the Governor-General in Council that Nungklow should be restored to Rajen Singh; and that during the period of his minority the territory should be managed by a few nominees of the Government who would also look after the education of the boy-chief. In recognition of his valued services during late operations, the Agent further proposed that Kala Raja of Nuspung be favoured with the fertile tract of Moteekhar besides a few villages to be transferred from the territory of the chief of

<sup>37</sup> B. S. P. C., 1830; 7 May, No. 49; Scott 9 April.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*; Aitchison; *Treaties, Engagement and Sannads* P. 131.

Nungklow. Pending final agreement with their Sardars, the petty states in the south were placed under Dewan Singh, the chief of Cherra, who had been throughout a friend and ally of the British Government.<sup>40</sup>

Hardly had Scott made these arrangements when there arrived reports that the Singhphos from Hukwang, numbering about 2500, under Wookoom Koomyang had crossed the Buridihing with the object of effecting a combination with the fugitive Lattora Gaum.<sup>41</sup> Preparation to that end had been made since 1827; and the invaders were reported to be so sanguine of their success that they had brought with them one thousand pieces of handcuffs to seize the captives. On 27 February, 1830, on receipt of the intelligence of the advance of the enemy, Neufville marched against them with fifty men of the A. L. I. together with two hundred armed Muttocks and the Khamtis. At the village Latoo, the allies charged the enemy; the latter, after firing for a few minutes effected their escape, leaving thirteen dead besides arms and stores.<sup>42</sup>

Allegations were made at various quarters that the Khamtis were in league with the invaders; and even Wookoom openly said that he was expressly invited by the Sadiyakhowa with promises of plunder. In view of Khamti chief's consistent conduct and his enmity with the Lattora Gaum, Neufville considered the allegations as baseless. But it is not unreasonable to believe that the Singhphos acted in concert with disaffected nobles of Upper Assam who had been maturing plans, at this precise moment, for an uprising 'on a grand scale' at Legee in the heart of the Moamaria territory. This is borne out by several treasonable letters which the conspirators sent out through their emissaries to several hill chiefs including Terrut Singh.<sup>43</sup>

These developments, naturally, produced a revulsion of feeling in the minds of Scott as to the fidelity of the border chiefs. He was convinced that it would be extremely risky to arm the auxiliaries if they were to be left unwatched and uncon-

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> B. S. P. C., 1830; 7 May, Nos. 46-48.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*; B. P. C., 1830; 24 September No. 76; Neufville to Scott, 14 June; also Barpujari, H. K., *Assam in the Days of the Company* Pp. 56-57.

trolled by an officer on the spot. What was the guarantee, in the event of an irruption that these vacillating tribes, provided as they were with British arms, might not turn against their own benefactors.<sup>44</sup>

The sudden death of Captain Neufville on 30 June, 1830, at Jorhat, made Scott's demand for a permanent post at Sadiya all the more emphatic. Despite Scott's recommendations, as has already been mentioned, the Governor-General in Council entrusted on Neufville all the duties of a political nature of the far eastern frontier in addition to his responsibilities as the Commandant of the A.L.I. With his energy, ability and intimate knowledge of the affairs of the border tribes, Neufville discharged his duties, on the whole, satisfactorily. But the death of the Political Agent left a void which could not easily be filled up. In his lengthy report on 11 May, 1831, indicating the vulnerability of the frontier Scott strongly urged the Supreme Government the formation of a new political unit in eastern Assam with headquarters at Sadiya.<sup>45</sup> It might be placed under an officer who was to command the troops, to supervise the tribal militia and as an Assistant to the Political Agent, Upper Assam, to control the border tribes, hold criminal trials, and any other business as might arise in that frontier. To obviate the inconvenience arising from relief of troops from a distance of 170 miles below by upward navigation of the Brahmaputra, Scott further proposed that two companies of the A.L.I. should be permanently posted at Sadiya, as a distinct unit; and the necessary expense in this connection could be met by reducing the A.L.I. at the headquarters to eight companies of eighty each, giving ten sepoy the option of volunteering into the Sadiya corps or of remaining below with the same pay as permissible to the local corps. The proposed arrangement would, Scott hoped, acquaint the officer with local conditions, inure the troops with rigours of the climate and ensure, gradually, the efficiency and fidelity of the auxiliaries supplied by the Barsenapati and the Sadiyakhowa Gohain.<sup>46</sup>

In the event of Government's approving the above measure,

<sup>44</sup> B. P. C., 1831; 10 June, No. 50.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

Scott further proposed that all the Singphos residing on this side of the Patkais be required either to settle under the authority of the Beesa Gaum or to be expelled beyond the hills; allowing them, should they opt for the latter alternative, say a period of two years for emigration. Such a measure, Scott felt, as absolutely necessary in view of the difficulties of controlling the Singphos in their existing scattered habitations and also of the risks attended with large storage of grains available to the invaders at places not readily accessible to the British troops. Scott wanted to settle Beesa Gaum and his followers in the neighbourhood of Borhat and would ban the cultivation of areas eastward of Beesa not necessary for the support of the Singphos, but would afford the means of subsisting the marauders in their raids.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, Scott reminded the authorities at the Fort William that the militia was organised on the distinct understanding that it was to be efficiently controlled by an European officer located on the spot and possessing sufficient means of enforcing his authority. If the Governor-General in Council were now of opinion that there were material objection to the establishment of the proposed frontier agency and that the objective attended to would not justify the measure, Scott wanted in unequivocal terms to disarm, forthwith, the auxiliaries. He would rather run the risk of having that part of the country ravaged by the Singphos than remain in constant embarrassment resulting from leaving at the disposal of these predatory tribes effective means to disturb the tranquility of the frontier.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### COERCION CUM CONCILIATION

The unconditional surrender and subsequent agreement with several hostile chiefs, including Burmanik, relieved Scott much of his anxiety. But Terrut Singh was still at large, while his lieutenants Manbhot and Mankowar never ceased to struck terror into the hearts of those who made their abject submission; their activities at times caused so much horror that many abandoned their dwellings and took refuge in jungles.<sup>1</sup> Scott called upon the runaways either to defend themselves or to furnish information as to enemy's hideouts; failing both, to deliver up their arms and to receive in return protection of the Government. With few exceptions, the majority expressed their reluctance to disarm. There could indeed be no rebuttal when they argued: 'You may protect our villages from an open attack, who will defend us from being assassinated by the outlaws on the highways.'<sup>2</sup>

In October 1830, for his ready submission, Zuber Singh, the Ramray chief, had to pay dearly with his life in the hands of his rival, namely, Lal Singh; and when the pretender, subsequently, ravaged the plains of Pantan, Bogy and Bongaon and killed several officers on duty, a detachment of shams under Captain Hashlam annexed the *duars* and expelled the miscreants.<sup>3</sup> The Agent was at a loss when on 30 December, he learnt from the Magistrate of Sylhet that the rebels had made repeated attacks on some villages on the border of his district and several persons were killed and many houses were destroyed. He found no other way of putting a stop to these outrages than making responsible the chiefs for detection and apprehension of the

<sup>1</sup> B. P. C., 1830; 31 December, No. 22; Scott to Swinton, 1 December.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> B. P. C., 1831; 11 February, Nos, 27-30.



outlaws through whose lands they might pass. Circular letters were, accordingly, issued to the chiefs warning them of the consequences of admitting the offenders through their territory. To strengthen security measures in place of existing temporary stockades a number of block houses were constructed at different stages on the route to Sylhet.<sup>4</sup>

In spite of aforesaid measures, the road from Pandua to Cherra continued to be infested with the insurgents, and villagers preferred payment of collective fines to disclosure of the identity or whereabouts of the fugitives ; for such an action was sure to be followed by wholesale destruction of the lives and properties of the informants. The endeavours, later, made by W. Cracroft, who officiated as the Agent to the Governor-General, on the death of Scott in September, 1830, to render the outlaws doubtful of the bonafidés of those who harboured them proved also equally ineffective.<sup>5</sup> The officiating Agent, therefore, felt convinced that there remained no other alternative for the submission of the outlaws than a change of heart on the part of the Government. Advocating a conciliatory policy, he observed : 'I had hopes that many of the fugitives would come in, if life and liberty were granted.' With his inexperience and inadequate knowledge of the attitude and aspirations of the rebel chiefs Cracroft failed to realise that a change of heart of one party alone would not bring in peace. Only a few weeks before his death, Scott also offered indemnity for past offences to those who made their unconditional surrender. Owing to their distrust and suspicion of the Government, differences of opinion amongst rival chiefs and particularly the dilatory manner in which they conducted business in long debates in which every individual was at liberty to participate, Scott's gestures bore no fruit.

On being apprised of the whole situation, the Governor-General in Council in their proceedings on 23 January 1832, laid down the policy to be pursued towards the fugitives. While concurring in the views of the officiating Agent as to the necessity of a conciliatory policy for inducing the outlaws to surrender, it was pointed out that the lives of those who would voluntarily surrender might be guaranteed, but perfect immunity could not

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* : No. 26 ; Scott to Swinton, 12 January.

<sup>5</sup> B. P. C., 1832 ; 23 January, Nos. 110-14.

be granted to Terrut Singh, the chief perpetrator of the massacre. Those who were concerned as his subordinates or acted under his orders might be assured full liberty, provided there should be sufficient reason to rely on their future peaceable conduct. It was brought home to the officiating Agent that the ultimate aim of these negotiations was the assurance of future tranquillity in the hills. 'If we could rely with confidence', it was added,

'such a result from the measures of leniency and pardon, past offences might be forgiven and forgotten . . . . but if it was not improbable that after receiving pardon the same parties might eagerly seize any opportunity of again rising, then it would be useless to temporize with them and better to continue to pursue them as rebels and to adopt the most efficient measures that could be devised either to destroy them or compel them to surrender at discretion.'<sup>6</sup>

Though belatedly, the Supreme Government had adopted a clear-cut policy towards the fugitives; a timely application of these measures might have saved the lives of many who were mere pawns in the hands of their chiefs and who had nothing to do with the unfortunate incident at Nungklow. It was not unlikely that some of the rebels would have readily agreed to the proffered offer only to gain time to strike at the next earliest opportunity; and as such, nobody can doubt the soundness of a policy demanding drastic measures against all suspected cases of betrayal. But the extreme measures against Terrut Singh were neither just nor expedient; soon it was evident to the local authorities that the chief of Nungklow was merely an agent, though a powerful one, of the confederate chiefs who wanted to drive the English out of the hills. The authorities in Calcutta ignored the fact that 'so long Terrut was at large a feeling of loyalty to him or at least to save him from destruction would ever operate to keep alive spirit of resistance' even amongst those who were professedly friendly to British.\*

In April 1832, T. C. Robertson relieved Cracroft and assumed charge of the office of the Agent to the Governor-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

\* Thus Lursac, a Khasi sardar, who had surrendered and who was in dire need of employment, openly disclosed that 'he will never be a traitor to Terrut Singh' by enrolling himself amongst the armed Khasis.

General North-East Frontier. He endeavoured 'by mild and conciliatory measures' to win over the rebels and thus carry out the orders of the Government. His negotiations succeeded in bringing over Makunda Singh, the Raja of Mosmy, of course under definite conditions and after a good deal of vacillation.<sup>7</sup> Robertson found little possibility that others would follow suit, nor was he sanguine that such 'equivocal and conditional surrender', the utmost that could be expected, would lead to the pacification in the hills.<sup>8</sup> The activities of some of the rebels, on the otherhand, convinced him that they had unbounded faith in Terrut, for whose safety they might make any sacrifice that might be needed. For it was known to the Agent that several sardars nearabout Cherra had already advanced a substantial amount to the rebel chief, and that the latter often received supplies through the people of Cherra itself; although, its newly appointed chief Sobha Singh was in closest ties of friendship with the British Government. Robertson further learnt that only a few days back, Terrut had a prolonged conference with Burmanik who had not only surrendered but also promised, under the terms of the agreement, to apprehend and deliver the rebel chief to the British Government. About this time, Lieutenant Ingles, since appointed as the officer-in-charge of Cherra, brought to the notice of the Agent that Qarun Kowar (Mankowar), an outlaw, had recently purchased through the *omlahs* arms and ammunitions from Dacca and Mymensingh.<sup>9</sup> In view of these facts, Robertson saw little prospect of bringing matters to an amicable settlement with the outlaws; he felt no other measure than coercion absolutely necessary for the security and tranquillity in the hills. In a letter to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, on 19 June, 1832, with reference to the recent movement of the outlaws, he suggested the necessity of strengthening the security measures; for which he proposed (i) that an officer be immediately posted at Nungklow who should be in-charge of the armed Khasis since recruited, and the latter be augmented by an increase of 40 or 50 men, (ii) that on the approach of the next cold weather, the Goalpara Sebundis and such of the

<sup>7</sup> B. P. C., 1832; 9 July, No. 89, Robertson 19 June.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

shams as might be necessary be placed at the disposal of the officer commanding the S.L.I., and the latter would also exercise overall command over the detachment at Nungklow and (iii) that 100 convalescent Europeans be despatched to Cherra to strengthen the armed forces at that post. On completion of these measures, Robertson desired to close up the markets and occupy the principal villages friendly to the fugitive chiefs so as either to compel them to submission or to hazard on open resistance.<sup>10</sup>

While these measures were under consideration of the Supreme Government, to hold out the olive branch there had arrived at the headquarters of the Agent, Singmanik, the chief of Myllem. The latter succeeded in arranging a conference between the two parties to discuss the terms of a settlement agreeable to both.<sup>11</sup> Robertson directed Captain Lister to proceed to Nongkrem, 20 miles from Cherra, and to carry on negotiations with Terrut and his followers strictly in conformity with the directives recently issued by the Governor-General in Council. He was to explain to each chief the nature of his guilt and the extent of indulgence to which he would be entitled. Should the parleys fail to produce any satisfactory result, Lister was advised to intimate Singmanik and other friendly chieftains to break off; and after a period of reasonable time both the parties were free to renew their hostilities.<sup>12</sup>

Accordingly, Lister, accompanied by Lieutenant Rutherford and Ensign Brodie, arrived at Nongkrem on 21 August. He was intimated on arrival by the Myllem chief that Terrut Singh had also reached the vicinity with a party of 240 men. A controversy arose as to the venue of the conference, for Terrut was not disposed to meet the British party in their own camp. Singmanik succeeded in effecting a compromise under which both the parties would meet at his residence and on condition that Lister would attend unarmed. On 23rd, the conference began with Terrut Singh who was accompanied by his ministers Jeedar Singh, Man Singh, and Jeet Roy and a few others. Lister opened the discussions by alluding to the 'ungrateful and unjustifiable' action of the insurgents despite paternal treatment that

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> B. P. C., 1832; 22 October, No. 60.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

was meted out to them by the late Agent, the absurdity on their part to fight with the English, the advantages that had been derived by the people of Cherra for their good conduct in having a monopoly of the carrying trade, a share of which would have fallen on them had they followed a similar conduct etc. Finally, Lister made it clear to them that their past might be forgotten and forgiven if the chief subordinate to Terrut would give adequate security for their peaceable behaviour. Terrut, in reply, expressed his willingness to come to a settlement, provided the Government was prepared to return his territory, the posts of Myrong and Nungklow and also abandon the road through the hills. Since these terms were considered unacceptable, Lister terminated the discussions and allowed the chief four days for a second thought over the matter, after expiry of which both the parties might retire and resume hostilities.<sup>13</sup> Next day, on the request of Singmanik, Lister had another meeting with Jeet Roy and Man Singh. This too, ended in nothing ; nonetheless, it afforded Lister the opportunity to learn from some of the most trusted followers of Terrut that even the rebels were then tired of the hostilities ; and that 'the implacable hatred of the most hot-headed amongst them' had prevented them from submission.<sup>14</sup>

The conference at Nongkrem failed in its immediate objectives ; but it paved the way for further negotiations and ultimate surrender of the fugitives. It brought home to them the bonafidés of the English and, thereby, drove an wedge even amongst the warm supporters of Terrut Singh. Soon it became obvious to the local authorities that although much reliance could not be placed on the rebel chief, an arrangement might be made for a peaceful adjustment of differences with his followers. The meeting confirmed, above all, the belief that Singmanik was sincerely desirous of effecting an amicable settlement and that his endeavours deserved all possible encouragement. It was this conviction which prompted Robertson readily to agree to another meeting with insurgents when a request for the same was made, a few days later, by Singmanik. Lister was directed again to proceed to Nongkrem to have a second round of talk with rebel

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* ; Lister to Robertson, 2 September.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

chiefs. Emboldened by the scheme amongst the fugitives, Robertson defined on this occasion, rather emphatically, the conditions under which they could obtain pardon and protection of the Government. He made it clear in his instructions to Lister that Terrut Singh might be surrendered upon an assurance that his life would be spared, but with no other condition or promise whatever. Full amnesty might be granted to the other fugitives on their agreeing to the terms as given below :

'That the British Government shall have a right to carry a road in whatever direction it may think proper across the whole extent of the country lying between Cherra and the plains of Assam.'

'That the British Government shall be at liberty to construct bridges and to erect bungalows, stockades, guard rooms or store-houses at any point along this line of road.'

'That each chieftain shall engage to furnish as many workmen as shall be required on their receiving the usual remuneration for their labour, to assist in the completion and keeping in repair of the road and other works above detailed.'

'That the posts of Myrung and Nungklow with an extent of territory round each (the exact limits of which shall be fixed hereafter) shall be added in absolute sovereignty to the British Government.'

'That the chieftains shall engage to furnish, on being paid for the same, building materials and other articles for the use of any establishment either at Nungklow or Myrung.'

'That in consideration of no revenue or tribute being exacted of them, the chieftains shall engage to furnish grasslands for as many cattle as Government may deem it necessary to keep in the hills and for which it may be impossible to find pasturage within the limits laid down in article as given above.'

'The chieftains shall engage to arrest and hand over to the British authorities any person accused of committing an offence within the limits of the posts of Myrung and Nungklow and to assist in apprehending any convict or other persons who abscond from either of these posts.'

'The chieftains shall engage to pay such fine as may be imposed upon them by the Governor-General's Agent for any breach of the preceding conditions of which they may be convicted.'

'In the event of their according to the aforesaid terms, the chieftains will be at liberty to return to and reoccupy their respective villages and to exercise over the inhabitants of the same whatever authority belonged to them, according to the established practices of the country before they placed themselves in a state of hostility towards the British Government.'<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* ; Robertson to Lister and Rutherford, 16 September.

On 20 September, as scheduled, Lister accompanied by Rutherford arrived at Nongkrem, but he found none of the fugitive chiefs. The latter appeared on 25th, and even on that day Terrut did not turn up on the plea of illness which Lister treated as 'a mere fabrication'. Discussion began on the terms of the proposed agreement and controversy raged mainly on clauses relating to Terrut Singh, the road and the military posts on the hills. Finally, the leading chiefs agreed that they would meet the Agent very shortly at Cherra and finalise the terms.<sup>16</sup>

It was obvious to Robertson that the most formidable obstacle for a settlement was the surrender of Terrut Singh. He felt it undesirable to prolong the harassing warfare simply for securing the person of a chief who had already been demoralised. No wonder, therefore, after the final meeting when Singmanik hastened to the Agent to extend the period of ceasefire for a few more days to enable him to bring the chief to a settlement, Robertson readily agreed. He was even inclined to modify the demands provided the chief gave substantial proof of adhering to the terms of the agreement. He had also suspended the preparation of coercive measures since sanctioned by the Government.<sup>17</sup>

While Singmanik was carrying on negotiations, on 9 June, at a place near Oomchilong, Jeet Roy, the minister of Terrut, intimated Lieutenant Ingles the desire of his master to surrender on condition that his life would be spared. The latter consented and guaranteed the condition by taking an oath after the custom of these hillmen. Accordingly, on 13th, accompanied by a party of swordsmen and bowmen, numbering about thirty, with utmost dignity the valiant chief tendered his submission.<sup>18</sup>

On 26 January, 1833, Terrut Singh appeared before the Foujdari Court at Gauhati. When he was enquired of his participation in the massacre at Nungklow, he boldly denied of taking any part in it, and reminded the court that he surrendered himself on the distinct understanding from Harry Sahib (Lt. Ingles) that all circumstances connected with his past proceedings be

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*; Lister and Rutherford to Robertson, 28 September.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*; Robertson, 9 October.

<sup>18</sup> B. P. C., 1833; 12 February, No. 284; Lister to Robertson, 15 January.

forgotten and forgiven, and that his life and respectability should be preserved. The Agent, to whom the case was referred, also viewed him merely as an instrument of the confederate Khasis than as its spontaneous agent ; and as such, in lieu of capital punishment he was sentenced with transportation of life to Tenasserim. Eventually, he was removed to Dacca where he passed away early next year.<sup>19</sup>

Thus ended the stormy career of Terrut Singh and with him perished the dream of the Khasis to drive the English out of the hills. Nevertheless, the massacre at Nongklow and what followed, thereafter, demonstrated to the English the dangerous consequences of meddling in the affairs of the hillmen. It was indeed a tough job for them to fight in an extremely difficult terrain full of precipitous hills and deep ravines intimately known to an enemy adept in the harassing tactics of guerrilla warfare. The ruthless policy of subjugation by fire and sword consistently followed by the British detachments broke down the morale of the Khasis ; even the insurgents felt that theirs was the lost cause, that they must either surrender or perish. Despite his frantic efforts to inspire confidence in the minds of stragglers, Terrut's confederates like Manbhot, Makunda Singh, Zuber Singh, left him one after another, alone to continue an war against overwhelming odds. Despaired of all hopes and deserted by his most trusted agents, the redoubtable chief found no alternative but to submit to the inevitable.

On 29 March, 1834, with due formality, Rajan Singh was installed as a ruler of Nungklow. The agreement which the latter entered into with the British Government provided him, amongst others, a stipend of rupees thirty per month so that he might not be forced to have recourse to unpopular taxation before the villagers resettled themselves. He was also granted the right of farming a few villages in the lowlands which were, hitherto, enjoyed by his predecessors.<sup>20</sup>

Conversion of the Garos to Christianity, it may be mentioned in this connection, was one of the chief objectives which had actuated Scott in the establishment of a school at Singimari ; and Lord Amherst, the Governor-General, too, encouraged it

<sup>19</sup> B. P. C., 1833 ; 6 June, No. 109 ; Robertson 1 May.

<sup>20</sup> B. P. C., 1833 ; 1834, No. 78, Jenkins, 22 April.



with hopes that by this indirect means the Garos might ultimately be brought to receive with sincerity the Christian faith.<sup>21</sup> Since the declared policy of the authorities in England was then religions neutrality towards Indian subjects, the action of the Government of Bengal could not but receive their disapproval and condemnation. 'It was well known,' the Court of Directors remarked :

'that we would not engage in schemes for attempting to propagate Christianity among the natives ; it is a matter of surprise to us that an active part in the prosecution of this plan should have been taken by a Member of the Government, and neither the plan itself nor the very extra-ordinary mode in which it came to be recommended to your notice should have appeared to you unobjectionable.'<sup>22</sup>

As a dispenser of medicine and a school master Harley was also found to be 'ill suited to the office to which he was intended.' His mind being, as he himself explained, 'too much depressed' at the prospect of 'residing amongst the savages.' James Fernie who succeeded him in 1828, also passed away in November in that very year. The school was kept up for a few months, but abolished soon after.<sup>23</sup> With Scott's preoccupation with the suppression of insurgents in the Khasi Hills, the humanitarian and civilizing work amongst the Garos practically came to an end. To make matters worse, as has already been mentioned, several Garo chiefs, joining hands with the Khasis, raised their heads against the British Government.<sup>24</sup> The Dusanees of the Nazzarana mahals, who were in huge arrears, not only evaded the payment of tribute, but intimidated the collectors and constantly threatened to burn the villages and plunder the hats in the frontier.<sup>25</sup> In March, 1833, the situation became so serious

<sup>21</sup> C. D. (Judicial), 1831, 2 February No. 4, paras 70-86.

In a private letter to W. Bailey, Secretary, Government of Bengal, Scott proposed that the Government should pay the Missionaries. The latter replied : 'The Government could not . . . give salary to the people who might be employed in their capacity of Missionaries, but they might call them schoolmasters and give assistance in that shape.'

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> B. P. C., 1831 ; 11 February, No. 27.

<sup>25</sup> J. L. B., 1836 ; 14 June, No. 1.

that captain Davidson, P. A. Goalpara, had to take measures for sending troops into the hills ; but operations had to be suspended on the advance the rains. In November in the same year, when fresh acts of aggression were reported on the murder of four sham elephant hunters, Davidson despatched a party of two hundred shams and sebundis under the command of Mirza Bunda Alley, the sarbakar of the hills. At Cherangiri, the detachment was attacked by the Garos ; but they were immediately repulsed, four sepoys were killed and equal member wounded. Several chiefs came in and surrendered agreeing to pay their arrears of tribute. The Agent to the Governor-General, being not satisfied with mere submission, authorized Davidson to impose a fine of rupees one thousand on the village Runghoopura for the murder of the elephant hunters and also to assemble another party of troops to enforce the demand.<sup>26</sup>

The proceedings of the Agent did not find favour with the Governor-General in Council. The latter objected to the imposition of fines without ascertaining the real causes of the acts of insubordination and particularly the actual amount of arrears due from the Dusanees. They could not make out whether the payment they made on account of fines and tributes equalled the arrears claimed ; for it was not unlikely that the payments that had been made as tribute might be treated by the local officers as fines. If that be the case, it was inexpedient to make any further demand. Therefore, the Agent was directed to ascertain whether payments for the last few years were not made on account of the inability of the Garos to make both the payments of fines and tributes or for any determined spirit of resistance. In the latter case, he was advised to act with discretion in the employment of force.<sup>27</sup>

Official records revealed that the arrears arose partly from the poverty of the people and partly from the fine and additional impositions levied to defray the expenses of the military expeditions that were sent against the hostiles. Lieutenant Brodie who was later deputed by the Government of Bengal to make an enquiry into the causes of disaffection of the Dusanees was of opinion that 'the conduct of persons employed by the Government

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

as well as of the Garrows in the payment and receipt of tribute was so suspicious as to make it doubtful whether we had any just claim to arrears except for the past and the current year.' Brodie not only effected an amicable settlement of the disputes but also arranged for the future payment of tribute direct to the Government instead of through intermediaries who were alleged to have misappropriated substantial amount of revenues paid to them. To supervise the collection of tribute and also to ensure security of the frontier, in March 1835, John Strong, a Sub-Assistant, was placed in-charge of the Garo mahals under orders of the Principal Assistant, Gawalpara.<sup>28</sup>

In March 1832, there had arrived at Gauhati three messengers with letters from the Deb and Dharma Rajas of Bhutan soliciting restoration of the *duar* and mentioning, therein, death of Dumpa Raja, the author of the late outrage, which the officiating Agent considered as doubtful. The envoys returned unsuccessfully. They were told categorically that until grievances were redressed and adequate satisfaction was made the *duar* would remain under occupation of the British authorities.<sup>29</sup> The Government of Bengal lent support to the line of action taken by the Agent to the Governor-General, who was advised to accept such an 'atonement' as might suffice to vindicate and uphold the paramount authority of the British Government. At the sametime, the Agent was indirectly asked to collect such information of Bhutan and the countries beyond it as would enable the Government to form a notion of the means that might be necessary to employ should event develop as to render a rupture with Bhutan unavoidable.<sup>30</sup> When in a subsequent note the Deb Raja convincingly reiterated the death of the Dumpa Raja, T. C. Robertson, who had since assumed the office of the Agent to the Governor-General, could not dismiss the statement as entirely baseless. He suggested to the Government of Bengal, in his letter on 6 December, 1833, that the *duar* might be restored to the Bhutia authorities if the latter deputed an officer of rank to depose on oath the death of the Dumpa Raja and also agree to pay adequate compensation to the families of those killed by him and his followers.<sup>31</sup> The

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> B. P. C., 1833 ; 13 September, No. 53.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> B. P. C., 1833 ; 12 December, No. 75-76.

unsettled affairs of the valley of the Brahmaputra and the unfriendly conduct of the Garos and the Khasis in the south, Robertson felt, demanded a cautious and conciliatory policy towards the Government of Bhutan; for hostilities in the north would adversely affect the immediate interest of the Government. 'The first evil' Robertson apprehended,

'is 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 Burhampooter.'

'There would also be an indirect loss sustained, by the cessation of that commercial intercourse, whence there is every reason to hope that great benefits may soon accrue to Assam. The Booteahs, not only require the produce of the plains for their support, but seem disposed to become the customers of the Assamese for various commodities which the latter can either supply by their own industry or procure from Bengal to be exchanged, among other articles for gold, of which metal there seems reason to suspect that region to the north of Bhootan yield no inconsiderable quantity.'

'Years of disturbance and foreign invasion have interrupted the intercourse between the mountains and plains, but it has never been broken off, and will now, I trust, if not checked by any political misunderstanding, annually increase.'

Finally, the Agent drew the attention of the Government of Bengal that apart from the expenses and difficulties attended with military operations in an unhealthy region at the foothills, an offensive against Bhutan could be pursued only, 'at imminent hazard of a war with China and without the slightest prospect of any compensatory result.'<sup>32</sup>

Robertson's policy was one of moderation not of appeasement. If the authorities in Bhutan were not disposed to reciprocate but rendered hostilities inevitable, he wanted to attack their lowlands in the plains and to employ the *sebundis* in guarding the passes leading to the hills besides stationing a regiment or two in the district of Darrang. Concurring fully in the views of the Agent, on 12 December, 1833, the Government of Bengal accorded their approval to the measures suggested for effecting a settlement of the existing disputes.<sup>33</sup> It was, however, not until July 1834, that the Government of Bhutan deputed the

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*; see Pemberton; *Report on Bootan*, Pp. 27-28.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.

Zinkoffs to the headquarters of Captain Jenkins, who had since succeeded Robertson as the Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier, to give evidence as regards the death of Dumpa Raja. The Agent was satisfied as to the correctness of their testimony that Dumpa Raja while he was kept confined in the palace of the Deb was burnt to death when that building was suddenly destroyed by a fire and that his confederate Nakphulia Karjee also had the same fate as the result of the accident. Subsequent to the payment of a fine of Rs. 2000, the Bhutias were allowed to reoccupy the *duar* Buriguma which had since been placed in-charge of Gambhir Uzir, an Assamese officer of rank, subject to the authorities in Punakha.<sup>34</sup>

Topographical reasons apart from the exigencies of the political situation actuated Scott to extend the same spirit of moderation towards the tribal chiefs who occupied the hills eastward of Bhutan. As early as February 1825, Scott allowed the Bhutias of Charduar, commonly known as the Kampos, to collect from each house a cotton shawl, another bit of cotton cloth, a handkerchief, one brass bracelet, some quantities of *muga* thread, rice and paddy. The Hazarikhowa Akas in the east were authorized, at the same time, to raise from each family a female dress, some cotton thread, one handkerchief, a part of which was to be made over to their kinsmen the Kappachors. Likewise, the Dufilas in the Noduar and Chaiduar had the right of *posa* under which Assamese *pykes*, known as the *Bohoteahs*, were bound to serve these hillmen with their requirement of personal service and produce in lieu of a remission of two thirds of the land tax.<sup>35</sup>

It is rather difficult to specify accurately the articles collected by these chiefs or the conditions under which they were allowed to do so, for no two statements ever agree. The *posa* was, however, not an 'illegal exaction dependent in amount upon the capacity of the different hordes'. Under the Ahom rulers it was 'a well ascertained revenue payment on account of which a corresponding remission was made in the State demand upon the

<sup>34</sup> Pemberton ; *Op. cit.*, P. 18.

<sup>35</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 20 February, No. 23 ; I. P. C., 1836 ; 18 July, No. 76 ; B. R. C., 1835 ; No. 5 ; Matthie to Robertson, 10 January, 1834.

ryot'.<sup>36</sup> Every chief and every tribe knew the areas to which they must look for their share ; and scarcely was there a dispute amongst them as to their respective rights in the plains. A radical change, however, occurred during the period of civil wars and invasions which had killed or carried away a large number of *pykes* earmarked for services of these mountaineers. The insecurity of life and property in the border areas, moreover, induced many to emigrate into safer zones under direct supervision of the British authorities. The entire brunt of exaction, inevitably, fell on those left behind who were not infrequently subjected to double or even more of the authorised demand. Entirely dependent as they were on the supplies of the plains, every winter the hill chiefs repeatedly visited the plains and carried off each in turn whatever they could. Under these circumstances, a system however tolerable, hitherto, became odious and oppressive causing wholesale depopulation of the areas north of the district of Darrang and Lakhimpur.

The 'undue interference and consequent harassment and molestation' of the unfortunate victims could not but draw the serious attention of the local authorities. To effect a reasonable adjustment of the claims, in early 1834, Robertson directed Captain White, the Political Agent, Upper Assam, to carry on negotiations with the chiefs under which either a certain sum of money should be annually paid to them in lieu of all demands or a certain quantity of various articles be collected for them at fixed localities ; and under no circumstance should they be allowed to proceed beyond a defined line to collect personally their contributions. If persuasion failed, Robertson contemplated even to resort to coercive measures to compel the chiefs to abide by the orders of the Government.<sup>37</sup> The Political Agent was sceptical from the very outset as to the success of the negotiations ; unless otherwise forced, he had great doubts whether the chiefs would consent to an arrangement which would restrict their movement in the plains. The Governor-General in Council in their letter on 20 February 1834, concurred in the views of the Agent as to the desirability of a fair commutation of the claims,

<sup>36</sup> Mackenzie, A. ; *A History of the Relations of the Government* etc. P. 27 ff.

<sup>37</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 20 February, No. 23 ; Robertson, 3 February.

but they were not inclined, on principle, to have recourse to a measure that would be at variance with the conciliatory policy that had been followed towards these tribes since the days of Scott. These tribes possessed, they felt, a right to levy *posa* or blackmail according to a prescribed form: 'We shall not be justified in setting it aside merely because it does not happen to suit our interests.'<sup>38</sup>

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FORWARD POLICY : EARLY PHASE

The repeated uprisings in Upper Assam coupled with administrative confusion persuaded Lord William Bentinck to assign this division, in October 1832, 'experimentally' to Raja Purandar Singha.<sup>1</sup> In the meantime, Captain Adam White assumed charge of the Political Agency in addition to his duties as the commandant of A.L.I. at Bishwanath.<sup>2</sup> Under the terms of the engagement the restored monarch was required to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 50,000, but the Barsenapati, the Moamaria chief, was exempted from the payment of any tribute. Considering this rather inequitable, on the advice of Robertson, the Agent to the Governor-General, Captain White made an attempt to induce the Barsenapati to agree to a commutation of the services of the contingents supplied by him for an annual payment of Rs. 10,000.<sup>3</sup> In spite of the tempting baits that were held out to him, the valiant chief stoutly opposed the proposal; for it was obvious to him that unless his subjects were taxed, the tribute could not be paid. Categorically he told the Political Agent: 'If the Government was determined to tax his subjects, they must take the country into their own hands; he would rather go out than raise such a tax.' So long as situation in the Sadiya frontier continued to be unsatisfactory the Government of Bengal could not but count on neutrality, if not of active aid, of the Barsenapati with the sturdy Muttocks solidly behind him. It was, therefore, considered inexpedient

<sup>1</sup> B. P. C., 1832; 5 November, No. 4. For details see Barpujari, H. K.; *Assam in the Days of the Company*, P. 69 ff.

<sup>2</sup> B. P. C., 1833; 30 May, No. 110; P. L. I. B., 1834; 16 January, No. 2.

<sup>3</sup> B. P. C., 1835; 13 April, No. 4.



to disturb the *status quo*, at all events during the lifetime of the present incumbent.<sup>4</sup>

The exigencies of the situation demanded that policy towards these frontier chiefs should be one of moderation and non-interference, but the policy that was actually followed by the local authorities was a slow but steady penetration. In conformity with the recommendations made by Scott, the Governor-General in Council decided on 30 May, 1833, that the tract in between the rivers Buridihing and Dihong occupied by the Moamarias, the Khamtis and the Singphos should be placed under an officer permanently posted at Sadiya; and exactly a year after, Lieutenant Charlton was appointed to that post.<sup>5</sup> In defining the duties of the officer-in-charge of Sadiya, Captain Jenkins, the Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier, issued a series of instruction which were as follows :

'Under the orders of Captain White you will consider yourself official channel with the Singphos and Khamti chiefs.'

'Take cognizance of all murders committed within the territory of the Singpho and the Khamti chiefs and of the Barsenapati. The offenders were to be brought to Sadiya before a *panchayat* of native of rank from the neighbourhood, whose opinion on the guilt of the offenders and the punishment they would inflict agreeably to their own custom you will record on your proceedings and forward the same with your own opinion as to the verdict and your recommendations as to the punishment through Major White to this office.'

'You will proceed to deal in like manner with any other heinous offences committed by the subject of one chieftain against the subject of another whenever your interposition is called for or when you have reason to fear that disturbances will arise from the one chieftain endeavouring to retaliate upon the other for the injuries received.'

'Take cognizance of all offences in which natives of Lower Assam are concerned.'

'All minor offences you will (refer) to (me) and admonishing them when you find any gross neglect of crimes (or) dereliction of justice.'

'You will consider it your particular duty to cultivate a friendly communication with the whole of the Singphos and other chiefs, and you will encourage them to visit you once a year and you

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*; No. 5.

<sup>5</sup> B. P. C., 1834; 24 July, No. 78.

yourself will be pleased to make a tour in the cold weather through such parts of their country as you can conveniently.'

'Another great object will be the advancement of the commerce of the frontiers and any obstruction to a free trade that the agent of the *Marwari* may bring to your notice either on our side or on the side of Ava you will endeavour to remove or report to me as you deem necessary.'

In conclusion, the Agent brought home to the officer in-charge of Sadiya that the main objectives of the Government in the establishment of the frontier outpost were 'to preserve tranquility among the frontier tribes, to stimulate them to habits of peaceful industry and to promote commerce; and whatever tends to improve the conditions of the neighbourhood will also contribute towards our ultimate designs in retaining the post of Sadiya, that of calling forth resources on the spot for eventual military operations and thus giving it the full importance of its position whether with a view to defend Assam from the invasions or to make an attack upon Ava.'<sup>6</sup>

It will be obvious from the above that a departure had been made from the cautious policy laid down by Neufville who wanted to avoid at all cost any infringement of the cherished rights and privileges of the frontier chiefs. The Government of Bengal, too, had great doubts on the suggestion that the officer in-charge of Sadiya should take cognizance of all disputes between the chiefs and also of cases of murder, dacoity etc. committed within their respective jurisdiction.<sup>7</sup> Jenkins endeavoured to remove these misgivings by an explanation that in the instructions issued to Charlton 'there is no assumption of any judicial power that was not been exercised eversince our conquest either by the Political Agent or by the *sunjatee* at Sadiya.'<sup>8</sup> The Singphos bound themselves, it is true, in their agreement with Scott to refer disputes between the chiefs to the British Authorities, but nothing was expressly stated, Jenkins himself admitted, of taking cognizance of heinous crimes.<sup>9</sup> While the Khamti chief, eversince his occupation of Sadiya, had exercised jurisdiction, both civil and criminal, over the Khamtis

<sup>6</sup> B.P. C., 1834; 4 September, Nos. 61-62.

<sup>7</sup> B.P. C., 1834; 24 July, No. 79.

<sup>8</sup> B.P. C., 1834; 4 September, No. 60; Jenkins, 17 August.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

as well as on the Assamese who formed the bulk of his subjects. The wrath of the Khamtis considerably increased when they found in the newly constituted *panchayat* the preponderance of the Assamese whom they deemed as social inferiors.<sup>10</sup> In doing so, Charlton acted on the principles of equity and justice, but this was construed as an encroachment upon their ancient rights by those who knew no other right than that of the strong over the weak.

Matters came to a head towards the close of 1834, when a quarrel broke out between the chiefs of Moamarias and the Khamtis.<sup>11</sup> There had been a long standing dispute between two chiefs over Saikhowa, a tract just opposite to Sadiya, which was inhabited by the refugees from the territory of Raja Purandar Singha. To refer the dispute to the arbitration of the Political Agent, Charlton issued a *parwana* to the Sadiyakhowa; but the latter not only defied the order but proceeded to the spot and took forcible possession of it by ejecting the people claimed as subjects by the Muttock chief.<sup>12</sup> 'For vindicating the supremacy of the Paramount power', the Political Agent suggested the suspension of the Sadiyakhowa and of exacting from his successor an agreement that the British Government reserved for itself the right of taxation and also of disbanding the militia which had made the chief so overbearing.<sup>13</sup> The Agent to the Governor-General went a step further. It would be highly inexpedient, he felt, to reinvest with high authority the chief whose conduct since the invasion of the Singphos, in 1830, was not above board; the only alternative was to restore an Assamese chief or allow Charlton to exercise direct authority over them, leaving in either case the remaining Khamti chiefs in the management of their respective affairs.<sup>14</sup> The Sadiyakhowa was eventually removed to Gauhati as an internee with a subsistence allowance of rupees fifty per month.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> B. P. C., 1835; 13 March, No. 2; White to Jenkins, 31 January.

<sup>11</sup> B. P. C., 1835; 13 March, No. 1; Charlton to White, 4 December, 1834.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; White to Jenkins, 22 December, 1834.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*; Jenkins, 20 January.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

Captain Gohain, the nephew of the chief, was to act in the same capacity with reference to his tribe under jurisdiction of his uncle. But he was not entrusted with controlling authority over other chiefs nor was he made the channel of communication with the British Government.<sup>16</sup> The remaining chiefs were allowed the management of their respective affairs under condition of previous engagement ; they were told that the arms that were supplied to them were not to be treated as personal gifts, but for the general protection of the territory ; that the waste lands under their jurisdiction should be treated as the property of the Government, and application for their cultivation should be made to the officer in-charge at Sadiya.<sup>17</sup>

By a *rubakari* on 1 February, 1835, Charlton was vested with direct authority over the Assamese inhabitants at Sadiya and Saikhowa, and was authorised to levy on them capitation taxes varying from annas eight to a rupee.<sup>18</sup> As to the administration of justice, he was to exercise magisterial duties to inflict punishment in petty cases with the aid of a *panchayat* to the extent of the fine of rupees one hundred or imprisonment of six months. All proceedings were to be conducted *viva voce*. In civil cases above rupees one hundred and heinous offences like murder, dacoity, slavery, Charlton was directed to send his proceedings to the Political Agent for final approval after a summary investigation before a *panchayat*.<sup>19</sup>

The usurpation of the authority of the Sadiyakhowa by the British Government could not but produce its inevitable reaction. This ran counter to the policy of Scott who consistently aimed at conciliating these warlike tribes to make them faithful allies against the Burmese or any other invader in that frontier. For fear of antagonising the Khamtis, White left them unassessed ; but the fact that their Assamese *pykes* were brought under the direct control of the Government and were subjected to a money payment was interpreted by these tribes as a breach in the agreement. From the legal point of view, of course, there was no injustice ; since the Ahom rulers used to collect some

<sup>16</sup> B.P.C., 1835 ; 13 March, Nos. 2-3 ; White to Charlton, *rubakari*, 1 February.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

revenue in cash or kind in and around Sadiya, and an officer of rank was stationed at the spot expressly for the purpose. During the period of civil wars and invasions, the Khamtis not only overthrew the authority of the Sadiyakhowa but reduced the Assamese to the position of slaves. After the lapse of over half a century this act of usurpation became a permanent right, and the Khamti chiefs had every reason to treat the innovation as a grievance; for it deprived them of the services of those on whom their livelihood mainly depended. Unaccustomed, as they were, to the control of foreigners the very presence of the officer in-charge of Sadiya and his active interference in their affairs, particularly in cases of slaves and bondsmen, produced in the minds of the Khamtis great dissatisfaction and deep resentment. The smouldering embers of discontent lay dormant to burst forth when an opportunity presented itself.

Likewise, the appointment of John Strong in special charge of the Garo mahals and latter's stringent measures for the realisation of revenue embittered the feelings of the Garos, particularly of the *Bemalwa* mahals. In early 1836, Captain Davidson, P. A. Goalpara, reported that the Garos of Subkaljara had intimidated the officers from collecting arrears from the dependent Garos of Hallal and Khalgaon and that the villagers were also threatened with their vengeance should they paid the Government demand.<sup>20</sup> Considering independence of the Garos a 'mere lawlessness of the banditti', Jenkins determined to subdue these turbulent hillmen to strict obedience at the earliest possible opportunity. 'I cannot but repeat', he observed, 'it would be an act of justice to our own people and humanity to them to take any opportunity for offence to extend our supremacy over the Garrow Hills.'<sup>21</sup>

The Government of India concurred in the views of the Agent, but expedition into the hills could not be sent out during the rains. Towards the close of December, Jenkins directed Strong to advance with a detachment under Lieutenant Abbot *en route* to Hallal and Khalgaon.<sup>22</sup> He was to call upon the chiefs of those villages to liquidate their arrears assuring them

<sup>20</sup> I. P. C., 1836; 25 July, No. 45; Davidson to Jenkins, 28 May.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*; Jenkins, 7 July.

<sup>22</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 23 January, No. 55; Jenkins, 28 December.

of the protection of British troops in the event of any aggression from their neighbours. He was also to bring home to the independent chiefs of Subkaljara that their interference in the collection of Government dues could not but be treated as an act of insolence on their part, which might however be condoned on the payment of a fine together with the expenses of moving troops within a specified period;<sup>23</sup> failing this he was to treat them as enemies. As regards Hallal and Khalgaon, if they withhold payment under false pretense he was to impose a fine upon them. Should they desert their villages, he was to burn their dwellings, destroy the crops and such grains as could not be consumed or carried off. Likewise, he was to proceed against all those who were in arrears and refused to come to terms. The amount of arrears payable by the defaulters was insignificant, yet the Agent was determined to realise it. What he wanted was the assertion of the rights of the Paramount Power : 'Money we have to receive from them', he remarked, 'is of trifling consequence . . . what is required of the Garros is submission to our demands for the murder of heinous offenders and reference to us of all the quarrels between the clans.'<sup>24</sup>

Ill health disabled Davidson from proceeding into the hills. Whereupon, the Agent to the Governor-General himself on his way to Cooch Bihar paid a visit to Singimari. He was awaited upon by the Luskars and headmen including the chiefs of the Dusanees whose relations with Government were also far from being friendly. Not only did they quietly pay their dues but some of them volunteered their services against the Garos of Amjong who continued to be refractory.<sup>25</sup> Coercive measures against Hallal and Khalgaon had become unnecessary. Even the chiefs of Subkaljara paid the fine and also agreed to pay the same revenue as was paid by their neighbours. Jenkins not unreasonably believed that if these chiefs had been brought in more frequent and intimate contact with European officers, the occasion for sending troops would not have occurred. He, therefore, suggested to the Government of India that the officer in-

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid* ; Jenkins to Strong, 25 and 28 December, 1836.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid* ; Jenkins to Secretary, Government of India, 28 December, 10 April, No. 114.

charge of the Garo hats should made Singimari his headquarters at least for three months in a year and that the *Kutchary*, therein, should be rebuilt.<sup>25</sup>

In the meantime, in the Khasi Hills, the surrender of Terrut Singh and the remaining rebels quickened the pace of administrative arrangements which had already been begun by Scott. Pending permanent arrangements, in September 1834, the Khasi states were placed under the political supervision of the Agent to the Governor-General. The local questions were entrusted to Lieutenant Townshend since vested with the powers of a Magistrate under the orders of the officer commanding the troops at Myrong.<sup>27</sup> He was directed to abstain, as much as possible, from taking any part in the internal quarrels of the chiefs, particularly those not dependent on Government; for it was not likely that the order of the authorities would always be implicitly obeyed. He was to interfere in the affairs of the hills only in cases 'which had a direct tendency to endanger the peace of our territory, or permanency of our arrangement and with a view to obviate the necessity of having recourse to hostile measures as much as possible.' Even in these cases, it was added, his proceedings should be confined to 'friendly mediation.'<sup>28</sup>

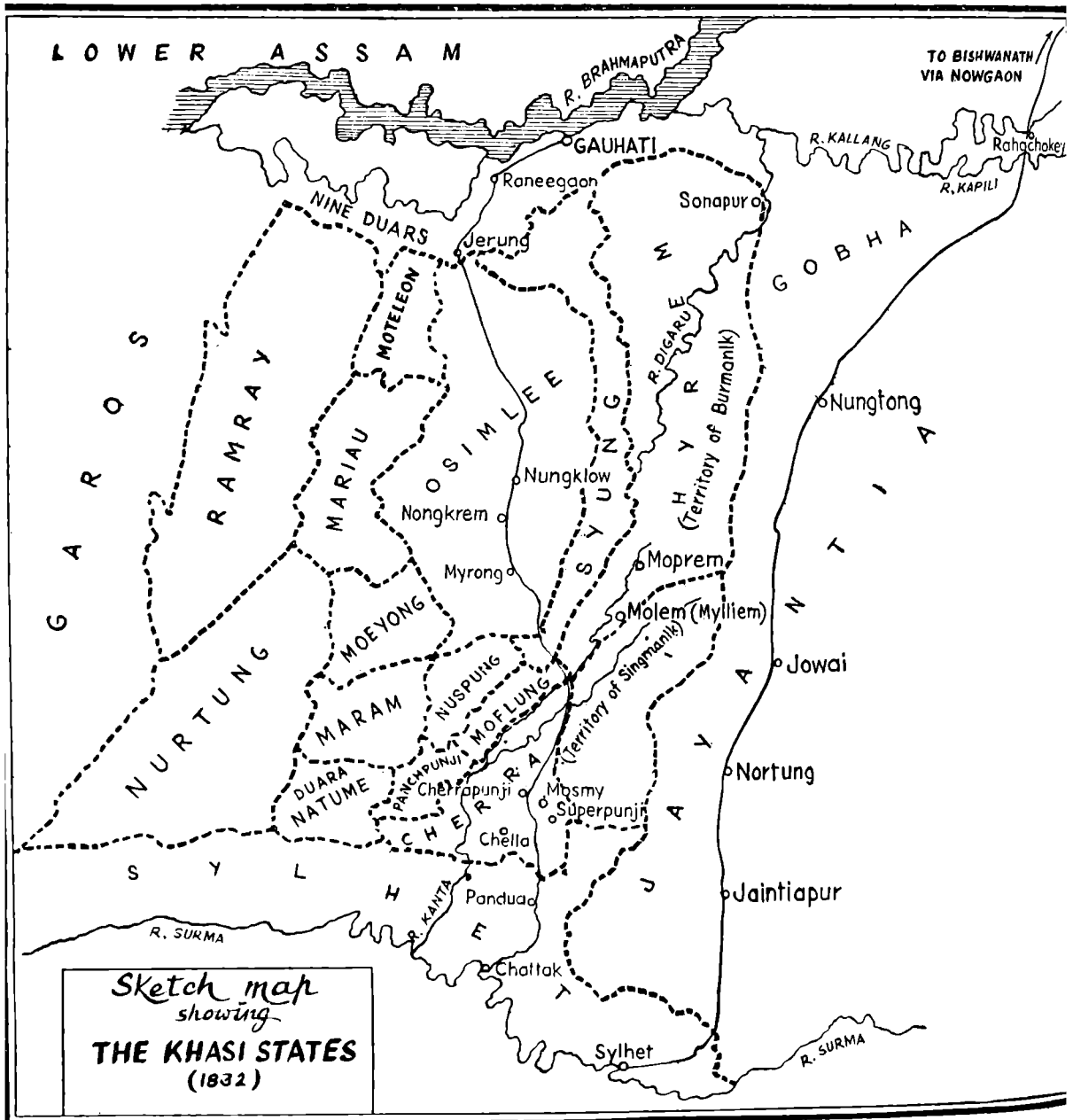
Hitherto, the Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier, was overburdened with responsibilities of an extensive territory comprising Cooch Bihar, Bijni, Assam, Cachar, Jayantia, Manipur and other independent states extending to the southern extremity of Tipperah. For effective supervision, in January, 1834, the jurisdiction of Captain Jenkins, the newly appointed Agent, was limited to Assam proper and north-east of Rangpur or Goalpara, and separate arrangements were made for Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur. In a minute on 11 February, 1835, Lord William Bentinck created also a new political agency in the Khasi Hills and placed it under Captain Lister with headquarters at Cherrapunji.<sup>29</sup> Vested with the powers of a Magistrate, Lister was to try cases and inflict punishment to the extent of a fine

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> B. P. C., 1834; 22 May, No. 83.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*; 13 September, Nos. 59-60.

<sup>29</sup> I. P. C., 1835; 11 February, No. 101; see Minute of Lord William Bentinck.





of rupees five hundred or imprisonment of a term not exceeding two years. In graver cases, he was to be aided by a *panchayat* consisting of not less than three persons and was empowered to fine rupees five hundred or to award sentences of imprisonment with or without labour for five years. In cases of crimes deserving of a still higher punishment proceedings were to be recorded in English and forwarded to the *Nizamut Adawlat* for approval.<sup>30</sup>

Though belatedly, the authorities at the Fort William realised that undue interference in internal affairs of the hills chiefs would worsen their relationship with the British Government. Therefore, although the Political Agent was directed to exercise his authority over areas acquired by the right of conquest, he was advised to act with discretion and not to consider it imperative to take cognizance of any offence that might occur within the jurisdiction of the States that retained their independence throughout or those which might be restored to their former chiefs.<sup>31</sup>

It was no small compliment to Scott that he was convinced of the impolicy of realising any tribute on the dependent territories; because the cost of collection would outweigh the receipts in addition to the risks involved in such an innovation.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, he felt it expedient to impose fines on those implicated in the massacre equivalent to the expense and troubles they had occasioned and with due regard to their means and past conduct. Accordingly, Burmanik of Myllem was required to pay a fine of rupees five thousand; Zuber Singh and Ollar Raja of Mariau rupees three thousand and rupees two thousand respectively.<sup>33</sup> A departure was made by Cracroft who allowed the Luskars of Mumlo to remain in-charge of their respective territories on payment of annual quit-rent of rupees two hundred besides a fine of rupees three hundred. The officiating Agent could not check the temptation of raising an annual rent of rupees three hundred from the resourceful sardars of Sooparpunji in addition to a fine of rupees six hundred for the alleged murder

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> B. P. C., 1839, 7 May, No. 49; Scott, 9 April.

<sup>33</sup> B. P. C., 1834; 27 May, No. 78; Jenkins, 22 April.

of some individuals on their way to Cherrapunji.<sup>34</sup> In May 1833, in commutation of earlier fines, which were in arrears, Lister made the Ramray chiefs agree to a house-rent of a rupee each on the villagers under their charge opening, thereby, the prospect for the first time of a sufficient tribute to be realised from the hills.<sup>35</sup>

The fines and other impositions levied by the local authorities could not but raise serious apprehension in the minds of Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of India. He doubted much the propriety of levying a money tax from the hills chiefs throughly impoverished by years of protracted warfare and entirely dependent upon the produce of the tribes which they bartered in the plains.<sup>36</sup> If such a tax was to be imposed at all, he felt, it should be such as could be easily paid; otherwise, it would be vexatious and would tend to further complications. It would be better, the Governor-General suggested, to limit such demands for the present to exacting personal service in the execution of works of public utility.<sup>37</sup>

That Lord William Bentinck rightly gauged the situation was evident from the fact that almost all the chiefs were in arrears. Towards the close of 1834, Jenkins endeavoured to realise an amount in cash from Burmanik and to commute the rest, as directed by the Governor-General, for labourers to improve the communication between Cherra and Myrong.<sup>38</sup> He allowed the Ramray chiefs the option of the house-tax as to liquidate a part of the fine or partly to commute as had been done by the chief of Myllem.<sup>39</sup> On the payment of rupees three thousand by the villagers near Chella, the rest of their arrear was written off. Since there was no other way of demanding reparation from these backward tribes, Jenkins felt fines were unavoidable. 'To desist from levying these,' he remarked, 'in part or in whole would be to encourage the hillmen to commit

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> B. P. C., 1833, 30 May, No. 108; *Minute* by the Governor-General, 25 March.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> B. P. C., 1834; No. 78; Jenkins, 22 April.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

further offences from observing that we allowed previous offenders to escape with impunity.<sup>40</sup>

There can hardly be any objection if these impositions were made, as Jenkins conceived, 'not as revenue measures but as judicial fines' and not amounted more than a just retribution for the offence committed whether by a chief or the community. But in cases of Mumlo, Sooparpunji and Ramray chiefs, obviously, the offences of the villagers on their chiefs had been taken as pretexts for imposing permanent obligations. Hardly was there a justification for penalising three villages near Sooparpunji for an offence committed exclusively by one of the chiefs. It may be argued that the Sardars of Mumlo undertook to pay the quit-rent in acknowledgment of the authority of the British Government and for the protection to be received from the latter in the event of any attack by the enemy. But acknowledgment could be made even without any payment of tribute, nor is there any evidence to show that the sardars ever solicited protection without which there was no plausible ground for such an imposition.\*

While the local authorities were pursuing a policy of slow but gradual penetration, the Court of Directors at the Home, in all sincerity, desired to remove the grievances of the Khasi chiefs which had occasioned the late uprising. In a despatch on 4 December, 1834, the Directors rightly suspected that one of the underlying causes of the massacre at Nungklow was the expulsion of the Khasis from the lowlands which they held as fiefs under the Ahom Government. 'That pecuniary advantages of

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

\* As a matter of fact, the Governor-General in Council in their letter on 22 May, drew the attention of the Agent that when a demand for reparation was made from a chief or a community for any outrage, this should be distinctly of a judicial nature both the amount and mode in payment, and should have reference only to the nature of the offence for which it was imposed. 'We once lose sight of the exact measure of punishment', it was observed, 'which justice regards and make the transgression of our dependents the occasion for introducing revenue arrangements, great danger must exist of our pushing our demands beyond what equity requires . . . . . the question of revenue ought to be determined on distinct grounds unconnected with usual fines.' B. P. C., 1834; 22 May, No. 83.

some sort' it was remarked, 'which whatever may have been their origin . . . . may since our establishment in Assam have been withheld from the chiefs'. 'We desire', it was enjoined upon the Governor-General, 'that you will ascertain the grounds and take measures for repairing the injury, if any, shall appear to have been committed.'<sup>41</sup> The problem of the *duars* came to the forefront when, in October 1835, Chandmanik, the nephew and successor of Burmanik, made a representation to the Agent to the Governor-General claiming his rights to enter into an engagement with Government with respect to the revenues of the Desh Demorua on the ground that his ancestors held this tract under the former Government.<sup>42</sup>

After having an investigation into the claims of chiefs, of course on verbal evidence, Lister recommended that the *desh* or *duars* should again be placed under the various chiefs claiming them on lease for a period of ten years and under the same terms as in the case of other farmers of revenue.<sup>43</sup> 'This will have the effect of,' he remarked, 'softening the ferocity of their character, the introduction of civilization amongst them by bringing them more frequently into the contact with our lowland subjects and doing away with the necessity of keeping up outposts on the southern boundary of Assam.'<sup>44</sup>

When the Agent to the Governor-General called upon Captain Bogles, Principal Assistant Kamrup, to give his sentiments on the subject, the latter on the authority of some revenue officials who were supposed to know the pedigrees of all old families of consequence, denied the claims of Chandmanik that his predecessors had held the *desh* for over a century<sup>45</sup> Bogles refused to believe that the transfer of tract would be attended with so many advantages as had been pointed out by Lister. On the contrary, if the Khasis were allowed to occupy the *desh*, he was afraid, that 'the unity of the province would be lost . . . and within five miles from Gauhati on the east our communication with Raha and Nowgong and rest of Assam

<sup>41</sup> C. D., 1834; 4 December, No. 14, paras 96-110.

<sup>42</sup> B. P. C., 1835; 24 November, No. 17.

B. P. C., 1835; 8 December, No. 21; *Vide Appendix II*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*; Lister to Macnaghten, 19 October.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*. <sup>45</sup> I. P. C., 1836; 18 July, No. 88; Bogles to Jenkins, 7 June. For claims of others *vide Appendix I*.

on the south bank cut off'. In these circumstances in the event of any disturbance,

'Gauhati would be between two fires; if the troops moved west the enemy might collect and attack on the east under the cover afforded them by Demorua; and if a flare (up) burst in that *desh*, it would for a diversion in favour of rising in the western Dooar cutting the land communication with Gowalpara and Cherra, and (consequently) the most populous country would be laid waste; the Dooar now a source of strength, would be a case of embarrassment and weakness.'<sup>46</sup>

The conflicting but equally cogent and forceful arguments of these two officials confounded the Agent in determining accurately the relative strength of claims of Hill and Desh Rajas over the *duars*. In consideration of the fact that the chief of Myllem had formerly a claim to certain demands upon the *desh* and Scott also agreed to make over to him a portion of land near Sonapur,<sup>47</sup> Jenkins was inclined to offer the chief the right of farming half of Demorua compensating the existing farmer, namely, the Demorua Raja, by a grant of waste land rent free for a term of years. He also advocated the policy of placing the *duars* in the hands of the Khasis, whenever practicable, under distinct condition that the latter would ensure security of the revenue of the Government and without depriving the right of others.<sup>48</sup> 'I believe', remarked Jenkins :

'if the Dooars were again placed under the Rajas either the converted or unconverted to Hinduism . . . the change would be beneficial to Assam and Cossya Hills . . . the Hill Raja would prefer the

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* *Desh* implies a territorial division. Here *desh* and *duars* are loosely used.

<sup>47</sup> Aitchison : *Treaties, Engagements and Sannads*, etc. P. 131.

<sup>48</sup> In support of his recommendations, Jenkins referred to certain extracts from the reports of Captain Welsh. It is recorded that the Demorua Raja in answer to Welsh's summons to attend on Raja Gaurinath excused himself from doing so on the plea that he was tributary not only to the Assam Raja but also to Khyrem and Jayantia Raja, although he agreed to do whatever the other Rajas of the *duars* consented to do. In another extract the Demorua Raja informed Welsh : 'you have sent sepoy, but I am (unlike the Durangi and Beltolah Rajah) at once a tributary to the Assam Government, the Khooram and Jayantee Rajah. I could not admit them to the interior part of my country.' B. R. C., 1835 ; 8 December, No. 21 ; Jenkins to Lister, 15 June.

plains, (as) heretofore, and in no lapse of time become one people with them' (people of the plains).<sup>49</sup>

In spite of such prospects, Agent's views did not receive the concurrence of Sir Charles Metcalfe, the officiating Governor-General of India, who considered the claims preferred by Chandmanik as 'wholly untenable.'<sup>50</sup> Whatever pretensions the chief might possess over the *desh*, Metcalfe felt, they became void by Article 5 of the agreement entered into by Burmanik on 15 January, 1830. He could not, therefore, be allowed to reclaim the consideration, on which an amnesty of the past offences was granted to him only a few years back. Nevertheless, Metcalfe expressed his willingness to sanction the arrangement suggested by Jenkins provided it could be effected without injuring the interests of existing occupant of the *desh*. The Agent was, at the same time, reminded that :

'The relation between the Hill chief and the persons really in possession of the *desh* did not extend beyond the payment and receipt of the tribute as the price of exemption from predatory incursions : a claim to blackmail of this description cannot be admitted by a regular government as a lien upon lands in the possession of its peaceable subjects.'<sup>51</sup>

That there occurred a definite change in the policy of the Governor-General in Council towards these hill chiefs—that appetite came with eating—is evidently clear in the unhappy transactions with the small State of Jayantia in the east of the Khasi Hills. Scott entered into 'an alliance of amity and friendship' with Raja Ram Chandra on 10 March, 1824, under the impression that the Raja commanded a number of feudal chiefs and the territory was inhabited by a warrior race. By a separate article, it was stipulated that in the war against Ava 'he will march a force and attack the enemy to the east of Gouhati ; and the Hon'ble Company agrees upon conquest of Assam to confer upon the Raja a part of that territory.'<sup>52</sup> Scott was disillusioned. With exception of supplying a few *pykes*, the Raja could not materially aid the British forces in the war against Ava nor was his assistance against the insurgent Khasis,

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> B. R. C., 1836 ; 2 August, No. 37.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Aitchison ; *Op. cit.* P. 119.

subsequently, was up to the expectation of the local authorities. Allegations were also made that the Raja of Jayantia, like his neighbours, had encroached upon considerable portions of lowlands in the north during the period of invasions and had established without authority a *chokey* at Chaparmukh near Raha to the displeasure of the British authorities in Assam. In a private letter on 16 April, 1832, Captain Fisher, Superintendent of Cachar, drew the attention of Captain Jenkins, then engaged on the survey of the North-East Frontier, to the mistaken policy adopted by Scott based on erroneous data.<sup>53</sup> It was mentioned therein that the people of the territory might be timid and unwarlike, but the Raja held besides the hills two fertile tracts on the north and south populous, well cultivated and capable of yielding a revenue estimated at a lakh and half of rupees sufficient to maintain four or five companys of sepoy or pay a subsidy equivalent to the cost of maintaining such a body of troops. 'When the extent, wealth and population of Jyntea is concerned', Fisher remarked :

'and when it is remembered that it is the only one of the petty States which in this quarter had enjoyed an uninterrupted tranquility for the last sixty years, it must be admitted we have made a very unsatisfactory bargain in accepting a military service in place of tribute, and that the sooner we amend that part of our treaty the better.'<sup>54</sup>

An opportunity to revise the treaty soon presented itself. On 25 September, 1832, Raja Ram Singh died. Robertson, the Agent to the Governor-General, lost no time in recommending to the Government of Bengal to amend the treaty with a view to imposing a tribute of Rs. 10,000 to the successor as the price of recognition of his elevation by the British Government.<sup>55</sup> In his view 'those who enjoy the most full and ample benefits from our protection, in fairness should contribute their proportions of expense at which it is afforded them.'<sup>56</sup> 'The best means of effecting this', Robertson suggested, 'could be by assis-

<sup>53</sup> B. P. C., 1832 ; 14 May, No. 117 ; Private letter, Fisher to Jenkins, 16 April.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> B. P. C., 1832 ; 5 November, No. 56, Robertson, 27 October.

<sup>56</sup> B. P. C., 1833 ; 7 January, No. 82 ; Robertson, 14 December.

ting the Raja in introducing an equitable system of taxation similar to those in operation in Sylhet and Assam<sup>57</sup>

In the meantime, Rajendra Singh, a nephew of the late chief, was raised to the throne. Since the new ruler was then a boy of sixteen actual administration fell into the hands of the Council of Ministers, particularly on Jaymony Laskar, the Dewan.<sup>58</sup> On his accession, Rajendra Singh sent a complimentary message with appropriate *nazzars* to the Agent to the Governor-General intimating therein that a similar communication would be forwarded to him soon for onward transmission to the Governor-General. In reply Robertson called on the Raja for an interview, assuring him that he would forward his message on receipt to its destination.<sup>59</sup>

On 21 May, 1833, accompanied by his *Muntrees*, Rajendra Singh awaited upon the Agent and Lieutenant Ingles, the officer in-charge of Cherra, at Sylhet. Without any introduction, Robertson pointed out to the young chief that the treaty entered into by his predecessor needed renewal, and that an additional article should be inserted under which he would be required to pay a tribute of Rs. 10,000 per annum. Rajendra Singh made a strong protest against the innovation. The Agent contended that the situation had completely altered; that his predecessors had little to fear from foreign invasions, whereas nothing but the presence of British troops would now save him from Burmese domination. British Government had also acquired in the meantime a title to demand of the tribute of Jayantia and her neighbours as the immediate successor to their patron and paramount authority, namely, the Ahom Government. In spite of the endeavours that were later made by Ingles to induce Rajendra Singh to agree to a new engagement, the latter remained adamant. He left the conference hall with an assurance that a reply would be communicated to the Agent within a fortnight. Robertson became furious; he did not allow the Raja to have even the customary guard of honour at the time of his departure and he was told point blank that until the treaty was renewed, he would not be recognised as Raja, but a *Jemadar* (in-charge) of the territory.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>58</sup> B. P. C., 1833; 13 June, No. 83; Robertson, 25 May.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> B. P. C., 1834; 6 February, No. 141.



The insults and indignities and the subsequent attempts made by Robertson to interfere in the internal affairs of Jayantia compelled Rajendra Singh to lodge a protest against his proceedings to the Governor-General of India. In his representation on 11 January, 1834, he referred not only to the shabby treatment that was meted out to him at Sylhet, but also to the unjust demand of tribute and proposed taxation on his subjects. With reference to the limited resources of the country and the recognition of the past services of Jayantia, the chief prayed for exemption of the tribute, the demand of which, he pointed out, was in direct contravention of the agreement as well as established regulations of the Honourable Company.<sup>61</sup> The prayers and protestations were of no avail. The Governor-General in Council concurred in the views of the Agent that the chief should not be recognised until he bound himself to contribute a part of the general defence of the frontier. Sir Charles Metcalfe, the officiating Governor-General, in his reply to Rajendra Singh reminded him that the agreement which the late Raja entered into with British Government should be treated as a personal one. Since there was no obligation on the part of the Government to afford him protection, the Agent was directed, he added, to suggest an amended engagement suited in the relative situation to both the parties.<sup>62</sup>

It cannot be denied that the timely presence of the British forces had saved Jayantia from being overran by the Burmese invaders. She had since enjoyed, though indirectly, 'the full and ample benefits' of British protection and, therefore, it would be impolitic on her part to take advantage of a treaty made in an hour of emergency; all the more, when her immediate neighbours having similar advantages had contributed their share to the defence of the frontier. No, arrangement would have been better than an endeavour to persuade the Raja to a voluntary commutation of a payment in money for military services he was required to furnish by the treaty. It was however, unfair and impolitic to make a heavy demand of Rs. 10,000 by a declaration that the treaty had become void through the death of the individual with whom it was contracted. 'If there was no document'

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid* : Rajendra Singh to the Governor-General, 11 June.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid* ; No. 143 ; Metcalfe to Rajendra Singh.

the Court of Directors rightly observed, 'to show that the Jynteah treaty was meant as a personal engagement liable to revision on the death of the Raja, we see no reason to assume that we are at liberty to consider it annulled by that event.'<sup>63</sup> The data on which Robertson based his assessment was erroneous.<sup>64</sup> He ignored the fact that the bulk of the revenues of the territory was derived from personal service and produce and only an insignificant amount came in cash. There can hardly be any rebuttal when the Raja argued :

'The Jynteah State is but a petty one ; its resources are scanty, and according to established customs contributions for any purpose are chiefly raised by personal service. What little is collected in money goes to meet the maintenance of the establishment etc. wherefrom it is utterly impossible that I can afford to pay a tribute.'<sup>65</sup>

Nor was it within the competence of the boy-king to change abruptly the established customs of the country as desired by Robertson without the fear of being deposed, if not the loss of his personal life. 'The Raja', it must be remembered, as Jenkins later remarked :

'is merely the head of a confederacy of republics, and he himself could entertain no negotiation from us and could find himself to no condition not previously approved by the Heads of the Hill States on the sole exception that we would support him with our troops in aiding to overthrow the old system of Government.'<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> C. D., 1834 ; 3 December, No. 14, Para 94.

<sup>64</sup> B. P. C., 13 June, No. 83 ; 25 March, 1834, No. 40 ; 30 March, 1835, No. 17.

Robertson reported : 'Judging from the number of his retinue and general style of his *suwaree* which surpassed anything that I have ever witnessed in Hindoostan, excepting at Lucknow, there cannot in my opinion be any doubt that the Raja could very well afford double the sum required of him.' This evidently shows the nature of data on which the Agent based his calculations. He presumed that the revenue of the State would be about rupees a lakh and a half, but the local authorities later showed that the receipt in money could not exceed Rs. 30,000.

<sup>65</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 19 June, No. 97 ; Rajendra Singh to the Governor-General, 7 *Baisakh*.

<sup>66</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 15 May, No. 77 ; Jenkins, 2 May. Lieutenant Ingles who was later deputed as a mediator wrote to Jenkins : 'If he did consent, a rebellion would be the only consequence and that even if we assist him to suppress it and carry the point, he could not exist comfortably being convinced that many plans

Actually, the position of Rajendra Singh was far from being secure. There had been a long standing quarrel in the *darbar* amongst the *Muntrees* of the confederate States, particularly those hailing from Nurtung and Jowai. The latter, taking advantage of the minority of the chief exerted an undue influence in the State not infrequently to the detriment of the interests of their rivals. Such a conduct, inevitably, made the people of Nurtung jealous and extremely vindictive.<sup>67</sup> Robertson's interference in the affairs of Jayantia and his refusal to acknowledge Rajendra Singh aroused in them a hope and even emboldened them to depose their hated chief at the earliest favourable opportunity.

To make matters worse, in August 1832, a few months before the death of Ram Singh, an unfortunate incident occurred ; four British subjects were seized at Gobha, a district in Jayantia ; of these, one escaped and the remaining three were, later, sacrificed before the goddess *Kali*.<sup>68</sup> As early as 1821, when an attempt was made to carry off some British subjects on their way from Sylhet for the purpose of immolating them, Scott warned the late Raja that a repetition of such a horrible crime would be followed by immediate confiscation of his territory.<sup>69</sup> A similar attempt was made in early 1832, when the officiating Agent merely drew the attention of the chief to the aversion of the Englishmen to human sacrifice and told him that if his people could not do without such inhuman practices, they should sacrifice his own and under no circumstance British subjects.<sup>70</sup> In the same manner, on the assurance made by the present chief that an enquiry would be instituted as to the seizure of the British subjects, the Agent to the Governor-General remained satisfied, and the attention of the Governor-General was not drawn on the subject until the close of July 1833, just two months after Rajendra Singh's refusal to enter into a new agree-

would be on foot to assassinate him.' B. P. C., 1834 ; 8 May, No. 62 ; Private letter Ingles to Jenkins ; 13 April.

<sup>67</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 10 April, No. 135 ; Jenkins, 25 March.

<sup>68</sup> B. P. C., 1833 ; 12 December, No. 70.

<sup>69</sup> Pemberton, R., *The Eastern Frontier of British India*, P. 271 ; B. P. C., 1834 ; 19 March, No. 79-80.

<sup>70</sup> B. P. C., 1833 ; 12 December, No. 70.

ment. Following a deposition made by the *Dolois* of Nurtung, Robertson suspected that Sobha Singh, the Gobha Raja, perpetrated the atrocity under orders of the heir-apparent, namely, Rajendra Singh who was supposed to be a great promoter of this inhuman rite. He, therefore, solicited permission of the Governor-General in Council to call upon the Raja of Jayantia to deliver up that chief and other perpetrators, and in the event of non-compliance measures should immediately be taken up to remove him from the throne according to the warning already given to his predecessor. The Supreme Government was, however, not disposed to act so hurriedly without further investigation. The Agent was, therefore, instructed on 12 December, 1833, to repeat the demand and in the event of Raja's indifference to arrest and punish the criminals he was to be deemed guilty of the crime and to be dealt with accordingly.<sup>71</sup>

A deputation on behalf of the Raja of Jayantia awaited upon Captain Jenkins soon after latter's assumption of office in April, 1834. They represented that their chief was willing to apprehend the persons concerned, but unable to do so on account of the resistance offered by the *Dolois* of Nurtung.<sup>72</sup> The refusal of the British Government to recognise Rajendra Singh, it was alleged, had not only emboldened his enemies to defy his authority but also produced a spirit of lawlessness throughout the territory. To put an end to these state of affairs, they prayed that the Raja might be given the benefit of arbitration of the British Government through Lieutenant Ingles, the officer in-charge of Cherrapunji. Imploring impartial justice, Rajendra Singh also wrote :

'My country is very small. No ryot pay revenue in cash and I cannot alter the old customs. By the former treaty, my grandfather was to have some lands in Assam when that country had been conquered. This has not yet given. On the contrary, my quiet country is put in trouble and my subject in agitation. My hope is in your justice. . . . .'<sup>73</sup>

After having a careful review of all the facts, the Agent to the Governor-General could not but entertain grave doubts as to the propriety of his predecessor in withholding the title of

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid* ; Nos. 70-72.

<sup>72</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 10 April, No. 135.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid* ; No. 136 ; Rajendra Singh, 25 *Phalagoon*.

the Raja when he was acknowledged as legitimate ruler by his subjects as well as Council of Ministers.<sup>74</sup> The Government might object to abide by the treaty concluded with Ram Singh in the breach of any of its provisions by him or by his successor, but he felt it unusual to have deemed the treaty a personal one and annulled by the death of the chief with whom it was made, because none of its terms alleged to have been broken. The imposition of a heavy demand of Rs. 10,000 on the Raja was also considered by the Agent as highly inexpedient.<sup>75</sup> In his private letter to Traveyan, the Secretary, Government of Bengal, Jenkins remarked : 'There seems to be no alternative with regard to the tribute ; it must be abandoned. This would not have come well from my predecessor.'<sup>76</sup> As to the responsibility of the Raja in the seizure of the British subjects, Jenkins drew the attention of the Supreme Government, in his letter on 25 March, 1834, that the offence was committed during late Raja's life time and that the present chief was then a mere puppet in the hands of his Minister. In view of these facts, he doubted much whether it would be justified to punish him personally for non-compliance of the demands made by Robertson ; for it was certain that the Raja had not the power to enforce it on Sobha Singh, the person supposed to be implicated in the crime and who had already set at naught Raja's authority.<sup>77</sup> The Governor-General in Council, on the other hand, held the view that as long as the Jayantia Raja pretended to be sovereign of Gobha, he must be held responsible for the offences of the inhabitants of that territory. The Agent was, therefore, directed on 15 May 1834, to call upon that chief to punish the perpetrators ; should he alleged inability or unwillingness, he was to be informed that the British Government would consider Gobha as dissevered from his dominion and they would proceed to adopt such measures as might be necessary for the reduction of its refractory chief, and that such measures might be its annexation.<sup>78</sup>

The unbending attitude of the Supreme Government and

<sup>74</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 10 April, No. 135.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 8 May, No. 61, Private letter to Traveyan, 22 April.

<sup>77</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 10 April, No. 135.

<sup>78</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 15 May, No. 78.

their ultimatum resulted in September, 1834, the surrender of Sobha Singh and the persons alleged to have been implicated in the seizure and sacrifice of the British subjects.<sup>79</sup> This was, of course, made possible by the reconciliation of the differences between the chief and the *Dolois* of Nurtung through the mediation of Lieutenant Ingles whom Jenkins directed on the representation made by the deputationists, as mentioned above.<sup>80</sup> But the investigation which the Agent conducted towards the close of the year could not legally convict any one of the persons apprehended.<sup>81</sup> The individual who escaped, the most important eye-witness of the event, endeavoured to identify one of the headmen ; but the manner in which he acted led Jenkins to suspect whether he actually did recognize him. It was proved beyond doubt that Sobha Singh, the person alleged to be greatly concerned in the atrocity, was entirely ignorant of the transaction ; and as such, he was released forthwith. The individual for whom he was mistaken was Chatter Singh who was then in confinement. All that Jenkins could collect from the depositions, which were summarised in his letter to Governor-General in Council on 31 January 1835, were as follows : That during the reign of Raja Ram Singh, a member of the royal family according to the time honoured customs of the family and country decided to offer human sacrifice before the goddess. Under orders of his liegeland, Gobha Raja seized four British subjects while passing through Gobha to Nowgong, three of whom were sacrificed and one escaped through whom the incident came to light. On the demand made by the Agent, Raja Ram Singh arrested Chatter Singh, the then Gobha Raja, and several others and confined them at Jayantiapur. Rajendra Singh, on his accession, released the Gobha Raja, but subsequently deposed and imprisoned him in all probability for reasons other than the sacrifice.<sup>82</sup> The concluding sentence clearly shows that the Agent entertained great doubts as to the complicity of the Raja. He wrote :

'Should the Government consider the fact of the sacrifice established and that the privacy (*Sic*) to the crime by the present Raja be

<sup>79</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 25 September, No. 84.

<sup>80</sup> B. P. C., 1834 ; 8 May, No. 62 ; Ingles to Jenkins, 13 April.

<sup>81</sup> B. P. C., 1835 ; 23 February, No. 3 ; Jenkins, 31 January.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

sufficiently proved to justify his deposition, I would suggest . . . . . that the lowlands on either side of the hills on the plains of Assam and Bengal should be taken under our own management . . . . . and that the intermediate tract should be governed by a chief of their own independent of the British Government.<sup>83</sup>

In spite of meagre evidence and misgivings entertained by the Agent, the Governor-General in Council considered that the guilt of the Raja was 'sufficiently proved' as to warrant the annexation of his territory under warning previously given by Scott. Considering, however, such an extreme measure as deposition as inexpedient, it was resolved on 23 February 1835, to confiscate his possessions in the lowlands leaving him in possession, as before, of the territory in the hills.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly on 15 March, under advice from the Government of Bengal, Captain Lister arrived at Jayantiapur and explained before the Council of Ministers at the *darbar* the purport of the Government order. Without raising any protest and with dignity the young chief resigned not only from the lowlands but also from the possessions left for him in the hills for the obvious reason that resources of the latter would be extremely inadequate to support himself and his establishment. Next day, he abandoned his palace and took shelter at the residence of his family priest with the intention of ultimately settling in Sylhet. Consequently, in early April, the lowlands in the north were attached to the division of Central Assam and the rest of the territory was placed under the control of Captain Lister since made the Political Agent, Khasi Hills.<sup>85</sup>

The Jayantia affair evidently shows the persistent endeavours that were made by the British authorities to rectify the mistakes of a hurried transaction and their deliberate aim at annexation, for which sacrifice of three British subjects offered the much-desired pretext. When the depositions could not conclusively prove the guilt, justice demanded that the Raja should have the benefit of the doubt ; instead he was awarded a sentence that was irrevocable. The very practice of such a horrible rite as human sacrifice, clearly indicated the utter backwardness of

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* ; No. 5.

<sup>85</sup> B. P. C., 1835 ; 30 March, Nos. 17, 23 and 24 ; 20 April, Nos. 1 and 2.

the inhabitants in the midst of whom he lived and moved. It was, therefore, nothing but a travesty of justice to apply these people the ordinary rules and procedure devised for more civilized nations.

The proceedings of the Governor-General in Council could not but attract the serious attention of the authorities in England.<sup>86</sup> The Court of Directors stood opposed, from the very beginning, to the idea of imposing a tribute on the Raja for they felt it to be 'an act of impropriety and breach of good faith' to subject to his successors a condition not deemed expedient to impose on the original party in alliance. It was obvious to them that Rajendra Singh neither refused nor decisively evaded of the local authorities for the surrender of the culprits in a manner to justify the sequestration of his whole territory. 'The confiscation of his territory' the Court observed in their despatch on 28 March, 1838, 'has always appeared to us as a very summary measure and one of very doubtful propriety.'<sup>87</sup> As the annexation was already a *fait accompli*, the Directors could do no more than direct the Governor-General to treat the 'unfortunate chief' with 'every reasonable indulgence', and to guard against over assessment or the recurrence of other abuses such as had resulted from the occupation of Assam. The irregularities in this transaction so much incurred the displeasure of the Directors that they were constrained to issue a directive to the Governor-General to the effect that :

'the confiscation of the territory of the native prince is an act even when just and unavoidable involving such serious consequences that we desire you not on any future occasion to have recourse to so extreme an measure without a previous reference to our authorities.'<sup>88</sup>

The wishes of the Court were respected, unfortunately, more by their breach than observance.\*

<sup>86</sup> C. D., 1836 ; 14 March, No. 11, paras 1-5.

<sup>87</sup> C. D., 1838 ; 28 March, No. 18 ; para 22.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid* ; para 24.

\* See *Barpujari*, H. K. ; *Assam : in the Days of the Company*, P. 123 ff.



## CHAPTER SIX

### SOUTH-EAST FRONTIER

Beesa Gaum and his satellites entered into an alliance with the British Government, as discussed earlier, through fear of a power that was extending towards them, and no less than from 'motives' of self interest, blood feud and personal vengeance. The public recognition of Beesa as the 'Paramount' chief over others, an outrage on the political sentiment of the Singphos, rendered impossible all Duffa's chances of recovery. His jealousy and hostility towards Beesa Gaum were intensified ; and he was driven, for a time, to seek his fortunes on the other side of the hills. In early July 1835, Duffa re-emerged at the head of a horde of Hukwang Singphos and made a surprise attack on Beesa massacring indiscriminately the inhabitants that fell into his hands including the wife and the sister-in-law of the Gaum.<sup>1</sup> Later, he retired to the Patkais and sent a message to Charlton, the officer in-charge of Sadiya, intimating, therein, that he had not come to fight with the English, but with Beetha NOUNG Tsaubstra *alias* Beesa Gaum who had not only murdered his wife but prevented him from settling in his paternal possessions in the plains.<sup>2</sup>

The family feud between the two chiefs was a long standing one. In his statement to the Mogaung Military officer at Mainkhwon, on 23 March, 1836, which corroborates on main lines the report of the Political Agent, Duffa alleged that, in early 1826,\* Shikan Khandu, a chief of Hukwang, proposed to Beesa to make a surprise attack on the Barsenapati ; the latter agreed on condition that Duffa would also be made a party to the enterprise. Duffa not only refused but gave a timely warning to the Muttock chief which had enabled him to repel the attack with

<sup>1</sup> B. P. C., 1835 ; 3 August, No. 10 ; Jenkins, 20 July.

<sup>2</sup> B. P. C., 1835 ; 13 August, No. 2 ; Charlton to White, 17 July.

\* Major White rightly puts this as February, 1823.

several losses to the invaders.<sup>3</sup> Foiled in his attempt, Beesa and his party fell upon Duffa's village, brutally murdered the chief's wife and several others, and forcibly took possession of his property and slaves. Duffa, thereupon, withdrew and took shelter at Wa-khyeet-teng, a village in Hukwang.

The endeavours that were, later, made by Beesa's relatives to reconcile the two warring chiefs by a matrimonial alliance ended in failure. To aggravate the situation, in March 1834, Beesa made another attack on Wa-khyeet-teng, killing its chief who happened to be the father-in-law of Duffa.<sup>4</sup> In spite of this, Duffa, stated that he desired to settle peacefully in his possessions in the lowlands, and to that end carried on negotiations with the officer in-charge of Sadiya sending him blunted sword and spears, as tokens of peace, besides presents of gold, silver and amber. Hearing this, Beesa had sent to him musket ball and a flint with a message—'if you are a man, come on.' Duffa accepted the challenge; otherwise, he would be in the estimation of his companions 'a dishonourable man'.<sup>5</sup>

Doubts were raised in the minds of the Deputy Governor of Bengal as to Beesa's claim to British protection, and whether British Government would be justified and, if so, to what degree in interfering in internal feuds of the Singphos. Captain White, the Political Agent, Upper Assam, held the view that even if Duffa was the victim of aggression, it was incumbent upon him instead of taking the law into his own hands to make a demand of redress of his grievances from the British Government.<sup>6</sup> 'We are amply justified' remarked White 'in retaliating Duffa on the ground of his wanton massacre and plunder of property of British native merchants residing at Beesa.'<sup>7</sup> He drew the attention of the Deputy Governor to the fact that the Singphos on this side of the Patkais were divided under these chiefs into two hostile camps. It was with the object of neutralizing the hostility of a

<sup>3</sup> I. P. C., 1836; 18 July, No. 41; see translation of the statement of Duffa Zaa Rajah, on 23 March, in presence of Nay Myoteza Nauratha; also 20 June, No. 114, Hannay's Memo. on 23 March; 26 September, No. 47; White to Jenkins, 20 August.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> B. P. C., 1835; 20 September, No. 1; White to Jenkins. 28 August.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

substantial majority of the tribe and of making them a counterpoise against the hostile elements on the other side of the Patkais, that engagements were made by Scott with Beesa and several other Gaums. Since Beesa had been made the chief and the official channel of communication, he is entitled to the protection of the British Government which could be effected, according to the Political Agent, only by following the enemy to the Hukwang. The attention of the Court of Ava should also be drawn, he added, to these incidents so that they might take steps to put a stop to the recurrence of such events in future.<sup>8</sup> The Governor-General in Council although concurred in the views of the Political Agent as to the claims of the Singphos to the protection of the British Government, they expressed their reluctance to pursue Duffa Gaum to Hukwang. They entertained great doubts whether the Burmese Government were actually aware of the movement of the Singphos; in any case, it was decided that the attention of the Court of Ava should be drawn to the recent happenings in the frontier.<sup>9</sup>

In the meantime, Lieutenant Charlton directed the native commandant at Sadiya to occupy the stockade at Beesa since abandoned by Duffa Gaum.<sup>10</sup> He wrote to the headquarters of the A. L. I. for reinforcements of three companies of troops; because he had some doubts about the disposition of several chiefs, of whom Lattora had already joined hands with Duffa Gaum. He was cautioned by Beesa that the Khamti chiefs had also secretly espoused the cause of his opponents.<sup>11</sup> With the advance of the rainy season it was found extremely difficult to push up a larger body of troops as demanded by Charlton against the upward navigation of the Brahmaputra. In spite of this, White hurriedly despatched under Lieutenant Miller a company of troops; and on its arrival, Charlton with a party of thirty scpoys left Sadiya on 12 August 1835, to the relief of the detachment at Beesa. The enemy, who had then erected two stockades at Gakyn, were taken by surprise. After firing of a few shots, the first stockade was evacuated. While arrangements were made to seize the second, Charlton was mortally wounded. Mr.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2.

<sup>10</sup> B. P. C., 17 August, No. 2; Charlton to White, 17 July.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

Bruce, the commandant of the Gunboats, who arrived just in time with his Artillery, succeeded in blowing up the second.<sup>12</sup> Duffa withdrew towards Hukwang.

Till the close of the year, there was no response from the Court of Ava to the communication made by the Government of India. Therefore, the latter having no other alternative, had to advise the local authorities to pursue Duffa Gaum, if necessary, beyond the frontier.<sup>13</sup> Captain White, the commandant of the A. L. I., was vested with discretionary powers as to the mode of prosecuting the hostilities, and was also authorised to follow Duffa as far as Hukwang, if he could do so with any prospect of success ; of course, without too much hazard of a reverse with reference to the force under his command.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, White left Bishwanath and arrived at Beesa in early November, 1835. Just a few days before, Duffa and his party had been driven out by Lieutenant Miller from his stockade near Beesa, but the officer commanding the troops, like his predecessor, received a severe wound which compelled him to retire to the headquarters.<sup>15</sup> On 13 November, with a party of 250 sepoy and some irregulars White advanced against the enemy. Previous to the commencement of hostilities, he granted a truce for four days with a view to having a dialogue with the Gaum and to lay down the terms on which peace could be restored.<sup>16</sup> After prolonged negotiations and on distinct understanding that the parties should attend the meeting with 30 men each, Duffa issued forth from his stockade in the Manbhoom Hills. He came out only after the party was thoroughly counted and the Khamti chiefs that accompanied them had guaranteed his personal security.<sup>17</sup>

In the conference that followed Duffa made repeated references to the injuries and insults he suffered in the hands of his enemy. While admitting that Beesa was the aggressor, the Political Agent brought home to the Gaum that the Government could not take cognizance of acts done prior to the assumption

<sup>12</sup> B. P. C., 1835 ; 10 September, No. 1.

<sup>13</sup> B. P. C., 1835 ; 1 October, Nos. 2-5 ; 24 November, Nos. 11-13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> B. P. C., 1835 ; 8 December, Nos. 12-13 ; Jenkins, 2 December.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* ; White to Jenkins, 22 November.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

of its authority. If he had any complaint to make, that should be brought before the officer in-charge of Sadiya. Instead he had taken the law into his own hands and had done great injuries to the British Government by murder of the merchants, plundering their property and burning their establishments. White proposed that the merchants should be compensated by an annual instalment in money, elephants teeth or gold dust, that he should furnish security or hostage for doing so, and that he should dismiss his auxiliaries from the Burmese territory.<sup>18</sup> On his agreeing to these terms, he would be allowed to resume his former territory in the lowlands and would be recognized as a friendly chief under the protection of the Government. To reconcile the two rival chiefs, White also held out to Duffa the prospect of a union of his daughter with the son of Beesa, to which the latter was not averse.<sup>19</sup> Duffa 'joyfully' acceded to these terms; and for their ratification agreed to meet the Political Agent on the next morning. He did not turn up as promised, but sent a letter reiterating, therein, his ancient disputes with Beesa without any mention of the propositions made on the previous day. The negotiations, consequently, broke down and the hostilities were renewed. For the apprehension of Duffa, a reward of rupees one thousand was declared by the Government.<sup>20</sup>

The failure of the negotiations had been attributed by Captain Jenkins to Duffa's inability to appreciate British character and to distinguish them from his neighbours. The Political Agent, on the otherhand, suspected the Khamtis 'as having marred the negotiations', although he found no proof of their perfidy.<sup>21</sup> Whatever might be the feelings of Duffa towards the English or of the rôle of the Khamtis, a settlement with aggrieved Gaum would not be possible by an agreement which made no provision to avenge the wrongs done to him according to his notion of justice.

Duffa's episode amply demonstrated that engagement with the Singphos stood on a broken reed. With exception of Beesa, the Gaums supplied neither grain nor men, nor even information

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; also I. P. C., 1836; 26 September, No. 47; White to Jenkins, 20 August.

<sup>21</sup> B. P. C., 1835; 8 December, Nos. 12-13.

whatever ; on the contrary, it was strongly suspected that many of them rendered substantial aid to Duffa and his followers. Placed, as they were, between two powerful belligerents, their policy was one of conciliating both and offending none. Some chiefs, of course, defied the authority of the Government and openly joined hands with the enemy. There was a general feeling even amongst the friendly chiefs that their alliance with the British brought no gain, rather puts a formidable check upon their plundering raids on lowlands which provided them, above all, slaves so necessary for their livelihood. Not unnaturally, they were looking forward to the defeat of the British which might place again the lowlands at their mercy. As a corollary to it, in the contest between the two rival Gaums, they were actuated by a dislike of Beesa who being a henchman of the British Government had the obnoxious duty of calling upon them, under the agreement, to surrender their Assamese slaves, a duty, they alleged, he enforced not unoften in his own interest.\*

After the flight of Duffa, the Political Agent adopted deterrent measures against his adherents—burnt their villages, destroyed their crops, seized their cattle and released their slaves. Such measures, he considered highly desirable to make the chiefs feel the consequences of their alliance with that Gaum with a view to dissuading them from inviting him again to repeat his marauding activities.<sup>22</sup> Even the chiefs apparently friendly to the British were forced to provide security for their good behaviour, and were warned sternly that in the event of Duffa's re-entry they would be held responsible individually and, thereupon, war would be declared against them destroying their crops, releasing their slaves and carrying away their cattle ; for he firmly believed that without the aid of the Singphos and the Khamtis, directly or indirectly, Duffa could not dare to cross the boundary.<sup>23</sup> The retaliatory spirit exhibited by the Political Agent might have had the sanction of European Law, as conceived by him, but it was not in conformity with the laws of the tribals. The difference between the Singphos and the English, inevitably, widened into

\* Of the slaves, Beesa is alleged to have surrendered half and the rest he kept for himself.

<sup>22</sup> I. P. C., 1836, 9 February, No. 2 ; White to Jenkins, 15 December, 1835.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

an yawning gulf which made itself apparent in the renewed agerions in the frontier.

On 11 October, 1835, Lieutenant Colonel H. W. Burney, the British Resident at the Court of Ava, received the despatch from W. H. Macnaghten, the Secretary, Government of India. He was directed, therein, to ascertain the extent of the authority possessed by the Burmese Government over Duffa Gaum and his followers, and to urge upon that Government the necessity of restraining the above tribes subject to its authority from repeating aggressions.<sup>24</sup> Burney knew it well that although the Court of Ava claimed sovereignty over the Kachins and the Chins in the north, the Ministers themselves knew little or nothing about those tribes or the country occupied by them ; that the control of the local authorities over them was merely nominal and, as such, they could hardly restrain them unless aided by a force from the capital. He, therefore, requested the Court to despatch immediately Moug Nee, the newly appointed Governor of Mogaung, with a strong force to the spot where Duffa and his followers had recently committed violence for the purpose of forcing them to retire from Assam and effectively restraining them from committing similar atrocities.<sup>25</sup> Burney also wanted to take the opportunity, which he had repeatedly failed earlier to utilise, to explore the route between Ava and Assam, and to acquire some correct information regarding the country and the inhabitants north of Ava. For, 'no foreigners except the Chinese are allowed to navigate the Erawadi above the chokey of Isampaynago, situated about 70 miles above Ava, and no native of the country even is permitted to proceed above that point excepting under a special license from the Government.' On his own responsibility, the Resident proposed to the Ministers that the Governor of Mogaung and their military force should be accompanied by Captain S. F. Hannay of the 40th Regiment, N. I., who was then at Ava on special duty.<sup>26</sup> The entry of a foreigner into the frontier was so much dreaded by the Ministers that they were not disposed even to listen to the proposal made by the Resident ; but the latter

<sup>24</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 5 December, No. 82. *see Narrative of a Journey from the city of Ava to the Amber Mines near the frontier of Assam.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

persisted in pointing out to them the advantages of allowing a British officer to go and see that the Burmese authorities did their duty in removing Duffa from the Assam frontier and also to ascertain the causes of the late irruption and the best means of preventing a repetition of it. After heated discussions lasting for several days, in which the Resident told the Ministers point blank that British authorities in Assam strongly believed that the late incursion had been undertaken with knowledge and tacit consent of the Court of Ava, the Ministers gave way and agreed to the proposition made by the Resident.<sup>27</sup>

Accordingly, the Mission left Ava on 22 November, arrived at Mogaung on 5 January, 1836, and staying there 17 days for provisions reached Mainkhwon or Morng-Khom, capital of Hukwang on 31 January. The Mywoon or governor of Mogaung was instructed by the Court not only to accompany Hannay to the frontier but also to render him necessary assistance to proceed to Sadiya. But on account of the advance of rains, scarcity of provisions and paucity in the number of troops, the governor pleaded his inability to advance beyond Hukwang, knowing fully well that the excuses instead of incurring displeasure would gratify the Ministers who were averse to the despatch of the Mission. Not only did the Mywoon prevent Hannay's progress towards the north, but he kept him ignorant of Duffa's location or of anything relating to him. He endeavoured to deceive him throughout assuring him that he had sent messages to all the chiefs to find out Gaum's residence, at the sametime issuing orders to the chiefs and Burmese officers not to see Hannay at the peril of their lives. Mournfully Hannay remarked: "He seems neither to move forward nor allow me to do so keeping strictly to the same answer—'stop still I get certain information'."<sup>28</sup>

In these circumstances, in spite of the advice of the Resident to the contrary, towards the close of February, Hannay sent a message to Duffa inviting him in a 'friendly manner' to meet him at Mainkhwon. After protracted negotiation, on 22 March, the Gaum majestically made his appearance at the camp where he was received by Hannay and the Governor of Mogaung. Hannay found nothing in his demeanour that would indicate that he was

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*; 18 July, No. 4; Hannay to Burney, 24 March.



the leader of a band of freebooters. 'I think him' he remarked, 'the most respectable looking chief I have seen in the valley and his relations are superior in appearance and dress to the people I have been in the habit of seeing.'<sup>29</sup>

The friendly invitation and cordial reception that was accorded to the Duffa incurred the displeasure of Burney who desired under orders of the Government of India the apprehension of the Gaum immediately on his arrival at Hukwang. Hannay explained that if the Gaum had not come on his own accord it would have been impossible on the part of the Burmese sepoy at his disposal to seize him by force ; for 'a chieftain like Duffa can muster thousands.' As a matter of fact, in his dealings with the Gaum Hannay was virtually dictated by the governor who advised him not to treat him 'harshly'.<sup>30</sup>

On 23 and 24 March, Duffa had several interviews with Hannay. After recording the statement of his earlier and existing feuds with the Beesa, and enquiring about the friends and foes of each, Hannay came to the conclusion that Duffa Gaum was a victim of injustice through misrepresentation of his enemy. 'Whatever may have happened', he remarked in his letter on 27 March, to the Agent to the Governor-General :

'his case ought to have a fair and impartial investigation, and I firmly believe that upon a proper settlement of the affair depends a free and constant intercourse between the Singphos of Payendwen (Hukwang) and to the eastward as far as China.'

'I should certainly say punishing him will be of no use, but on the contrary, ..... judging from what I see of Singpho character, be adding to the feud ; and I may add that Duffa Gaum ..... (has)..... four sons and numerous relatives with whom it will be continued in the event of Duffa Gaum being punished.'<sup>31</sup>

The proceedings of Hannay at Mainkhwon disappointed the local authorities of Assam as well who wanted, above all, the seizure of the redoubtable Gaum. The security of the frontier demanded, Jenkins pointed out to the Government of India, that Duffa should be kept under restraint in Burma, and that Beesa Gaum should be compelled to change his quarters either to the

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 20 June, No. 114 ; Hannay to Jenkins, 27 March.

north bank of the Brahmaputra or to some other locality.<sup>32</sup> Since he had, of late, become unpopular with a large section of the Singphos, his present position would interfere greatly with the free intercourse between Assam and Hukwang. While admitting that Beesa was the aggressor, Major White, the Political Agent, did not agree with the suggestion made by Hannay that the Duffa should be restored to his paternal estates. From such a questionable policy, he was afraid, 'the enmity of these chiefs, far from being extinguished, would in all probability burn anew more fiercely than ever.....the proximity of these two rival Gaums to the tea forests would in probability disturb the entire tribe of the Singphos and prevent the success of the experiment.' Since the Singphos had not fulfilled their obligations, White argued, Government might release itself from its engagement and leave the chiefs to settle their disputes amongst themselves.<sup>33</sup>

The Government of India was in a dilemma in view of these conflicting views. They realised after a perusal of all correspondence that the offences of Duffa, though of a very serious character, were not without provocation and originated in a feud of very old standing. To prevent the recurrence of such outrages they considered it expedient that the Gaum should be allowed to remain at the custody of the Burmese Government.<sup>34</sup> They did not agree to the proposition made by the Agent that Beesa should be removed to the north nor would they approve of the policy advocated by the Political Agent that the Government might release itself from the engagement with the Singphos and leave the two warring chiefs to settle their disputes in their own way. 'So long any hope remains,' it was observed, 'of civilizing these wild tribes, the British Government should not leave them to their own courses and, thereby, placed in a continual danger to the tranquility of its frontier.'<sup>35</sup>

To their utter surprise, the authorities in Calcutta learnt from the Resident in his despatch on 18 July, 1836, that Duffa was later conveyed to Ava where he was bestowed with marked 'favours and honours' by the Burmese Government. 'Presently

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* White to Jenkins, 24 May.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

of silk cloths and other articles have been made to him and his principal followers and the King has conferred honorary titles on them. Duffa Gaum . . . . . has now been raised to the higher degree of *Maha*.<sup>36</sup> The Ministers who possessed no substantial power over the Singphos, it was explained, were endeavouring by these means to win over Duffa and his followers, and to induce them to follow their directives in future.<sup>37</sup> Burney on his part admonished the Gaum and exacted from him a written engagement pledging his own as well as his followers good conduct; but he also represented the Gaum as if he were an 'aggrieved individual'; and that 'it would be impossible for him to remain quiet so long as he was deprived of his paternal estate.' Notwithstanding the marks of kindness and consideration of the Burmese, Burney believed Duffa at heart desired the protection and liberal treatment of the British authorities in Assam. The Resident, therefore, submitted to the decision of his Lordship in Council whether it would not be advantageous to the British Government 'to appease and gain over this influential chief and his numerous followers than to exasperate them and drive them to despair.'<sup>38</sup>

Naturally, the Government of India was highly dissatisfied at the action of the Burmese Government in showering honours and favours to an 'atrocious offender'. The Resident was directed to explain to the Ministers that a sense of delicacy alone prevented the British Government from demanding the surrender of the Gaum, and to demand that the Court of Ava in future be made solely responsible for his peaceable behaviour. As to Burney's suggestion for gaining over that chief and his followers, the Resident was reminded that after all that had happened the Governor-General in Council could never sanction any communication being made with that chief on any other term than that of unconditional surrender to the British Government.<sup>39</sup>

Though it failed in its immediate objectives, Hannay's Mission was not entirely barren in its results. In his journey through a territory, hitherto, untravelled by any European, he had

<sup>36</sup> I. P. C., 1836; 26 September, No. 45; Burney to Macnaghten, 18 July.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

collected a mass of information which he later embodied in his report *The Journal of a route from the capital of Ava to the Amber Mines of Hukwang valley on the South-East frontier of Assam*. Apart from details of topography, climate, flora and fauna of the region, the report affords a glimpse into the customs, manners and institutions of the Kachins and Shans, particularly their political relations and commercial intercourse with the neighbouring states. Incidentally, it has supplied information of the Assamese inhabitants at Bhamo, Mogaung and Mainkhown and also of the Tipam Raja *alias* Bishwanath Singha whose sister Hemo Aideo happened to be the second consort of His Majesty, the King of Ava. Swerdeen (?) Singh, a sepoy of the 40th B. N. I., whom Hannay deputed under a Burmese escort to communicate with the Political Agent, Upper Assam at Sadiya, succeeded in discovering, the old routes connecting Hukwang and Upper Assam. Burney in his letter to Macnaghten, on 18 May, 1836, stressed the need for keeping open these lines of communication by repeating such missions on some pretexts. Thereby, 'not only the trade between Assam and this country would be placed on a more secure footing, but the Court of Ava would remove the prohibition which it now interposes to our traders proceeding above Ava towards Baman (Bhamo) and Mogaung, and disturbing the monopoly which the Chinese have long enjoyed of the whole trade in that quarter'.<sup>40</sup>

Major White learnt from a relative of the Tipam Raja, who had accompanied the Burmese escort, that the number of Assamese captives in Burma would exceed 25,000 (?), and that greater part of them were anxious to return to their homeland, but were prevented from doing so by the Burmese.<sup>41</sup> Referring to previous

<sup>40</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 18 July, No. 42 ; Burney to Macnaghten, 18 May. According to Burney, the frontier provinces of Burma were then in a state of desolation containing a poor and scanty population, having few products except Amber and serpentine which the Chinese monopolised. So zealous were the Chinese of their trading rights that they remonstrated with the Court of Ava for having allowed Hannay to proceed to the north. They feared that the monopoly which they held of the whole trade to the north of Ava might be disturbed should the English officer 'exploring the country in that direction and communicating freely with its inhabitants' I. P. C., 1836 ; 18 July, No. 45.

<sup>41</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 27 June, No. 49 ; White to Jenkins, 1 June.

correspondence on the subject, the Political Agent in his letter, on 1 June, urged on the Government of India the necessity of emancipating these unfortunate Assamese. The release and re-settlement of these captives in the tea districts, he felt, would prove the most valuable acquisition—solving to a great extent the problem of procuring labour from outside. The Assamese subjects who had returned from Burma, he added, proved to be more energetic and industrious than their countrymen under the British.<sup>42</sup>

The proposal was highly opportune. About this time, the Burmese authorities, too, urged the Agent to the Governor-General to send back the Shams, or the Burmese residents in Assam. Jenkins raised no objection, for although the Shams proved, occasionally, very useful as militiamen, as ryots from their unsettled habits they were found to be useless. Motives of humanity alone demanded the emancipation of the Assamese captives. But a direct application for their release, Jenkins apprehended, would defeat the very object in view. This should be done in a way not to excite the suspicion of the Court of Ava. 'It seems to me' he wrote :

'no more effectual method for accomplishing this could be devised than under the pretense of quieting the frontier, subduing the Singphos to obedience and facilitating communication for the purpose of traffic, to follow up the example of deputing English officers to Hookoom to treat on the spot with the Burmese authorities on the means of effecting the above objects.'<sup>43</sup>

He suggested that Hannay should be deputed again to Hukwang, and that permission be obtained of the Court of Ava for Major White to meet him there with a view to effecting the release of the Assamese and also of establishing improved means of intercourse between Assam and Ava.<sup>44</sup> The Governor-General in Council concurred in the line of action suggested by the Agent. Since the Burmese Government entertained great jealousy on this point, they were afraid that any ineffectual endeavour made in this regard might render their condition more deplorable than at present. Nevertheless, the Lieutenant Governor was of the opinion

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* : Jenkins to Macnaghten, 6 June.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

that in intimating the Burmese officers that the Shams had received permission to return to Ava, there could be no objection to conveying the general terms an expectation of the Government of India that a similar indulgence would be shown to the Assamese then in Burma. A copy of the letter addressed to the Agent to the Governor-General was forwarded to Burney; and the latter was enquired whether the proposition for deputing Hannay for a second time to Hukwang was likely to be favourably received by the Burmese Government.<sup>45</sup>

It was subsequently known that the Shams were unwilling to avail themselves of the opportunity that was offered to them; and that the majority of the captives were then not in the hands of the Burmese but under the clutches of the Singphos and other tribes who acknowledged but a nominal allegiance to the Court of Ava and who would offer stiff opposition to any direct attempt to effect the liberation of these unfortunate ones who were reported to be employed as domestic and agricultural slaves.<sup>52</sup> It was evident to the Governor-General in Council that their release must be effected by 'indirect and gradual means' as suggested by the Agent to the Governor-General. The attainment of this object would be among the advantages anticipated from opening a more regular and frequent intercourse with Ava.<sup>46</sup>

On 12 November, 1836, Burney reported that he had succeeded in persuading the Court of Ava to depute another mission to the north. It was to be accompanied by G. E. Bayfield, Assistant to the Resident, and the Governor of Mogaung for the purpose of meeting British officers from Assam and jointly concerting measures for preventing the Singphos and other wild tribes from repeating their aggressions into British territory or obstructing trade and intercourse between the two countries.<sup>47</sup> To the displeasure of the Government, the Resident further informed that Duffa Gaum, then in Burma, would also accompany the mission, affording, thereby, the officers in Assam an opportunity of hearing his grievances and also of judging if further measures were necessary for keeping him and his followers under

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*; 1 August, Nos. 74-75; 8 August, Nos. 27-29.

<sup>47</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 23 January, No. 24; Burney to Macnaghten, 12 November, 1836.

control.<sup>48</sup> The Ministers, it appears, would not have acquiesced in the proposal, but they saw in the proposed meeting the prospect of a decision on the north-west boundary between Ava and Assam, of which no mention was made in the treaty of Yandabo.<sup>49</sup>

Hardly had Hannay submitted his report on his earlier mission, when he was directed by Macnaghten, Secretary, Government of India, to proceed to Assam and thence to Ava through one of the passes of the Patkais in the company of Major White, the Political Agent, Upper Assam.<sup>50</sup> The object of the mission was to conciliate the Singphos and other tribes in the south-east frontier and to concert measures with the officers of the Burmese Government for preventing their inroads on British territory. He was further commissioned to enquire into and effect a settlement, if possible, of the feud existing between Beesa and Duffa Gaums and their followers, and to enter into discussion of the question in regard to the north-western boundary between Ava and Assam in the event of the Burmese raising it.<sup>51</sup> To collect natural history of the region, Dr. W. Griffith, a scientific officer, was also directed to accompany the mission.<sup>52</sup>

Bayfield left Ava and reached Mogaung on 18 January, 1837, to join its governor *en route* to the frontier of Assam.<sup>53</sup> Hannay, accompanied by White and Griffith, also proceeded via Namrup and reached the Patkais on 25th, but he found therein no trace of the Burmese party.<sup>54</sup> This inordinate delay, scarcity of provision and the attacks made by the Kakhyens on the Nagas, on whom White depended for his supplies, compelled him to retrace his steps to Sadiya. Hannay and Griffith, however, succeeded, in effecting a passage across the hills and on 9 March, joined Bayfield and his party on the other side of the hills.<sup>55</sup> The conference began; the only question that was discussed was the boundary between Ava and Assam. When Hannay and Bayfield

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> I. P. C., 1836; 5 December, No. 83.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 12 January, No. 1.

<sup>53</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 20 March, No. 79; Bayfield to White, 20 January.

<sup>54</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 10 April, No. 120, White to Jenkins, 15 March.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

pointed out the recognised and undisputed boundary of the Patkais,\* the Mogaung chief producing a manuscript record of his kingdom claimed lands in Assam as far as Jaypur in Raja Purandar Singh's territory. Failing to arrive at an agreed decision, the parties decided to postpone the matter to further discussions next year. Rightly Hannay saw little prospect of having another meeting in future. The Governor-General in Council in their proceedings on 10 April, 1837, considered the pretensions of the chief as 'manifestedly preposterous'. The Resident was at the same time directed to bring home to the Court of Ava, should they refer to that extravagant claim, that the British Government had determined to make the Patkai range the boundary between the two countries. He was further advised to see that the question should not be raised again in any shape in future.<sup>56</sup>

Hannay was unable to advance to Ava as scheduled because of the lack of carriers and partly because of the jealousy and suspicion of the Burmese Ministers on his proposed return to Calcutta via Ava.<sup>57</sup> They were alarmed, as reported, by the rumour that the British were amassing troops on the north of the Patkais with the object of taking the lands of the Singphos and the Shans.<sup>58</sup>

The Burmese Governor expressed his readiness at the conference to co-operate in maintaining the tranquility of the frontier. Nothing specific was, however, done relating to Duffa Gaum nor for keeping open the lines of communication. Nothing effectual could, therefore, be expected in these matters except by constant interference of the Resident and of active measures on this side by the establishment of such posts near the frontier as would be sufficient to give full protection to those who sought it from the British Government. Already on 25 April 1836, the Government of India advised the Resident to endeavour to prevail on the Court of Ava to station a force permanently at Hukwang to

\* In 1224, Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom, having taken possession of the country on this side of the Patkais established Khamjung or Naungongpanee as the boundary. This continued till 1402, when Sukhangpha, the eighth King, made the Patkais the boundary between the two kingdoms.

<sup>56</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 17 April, Nos. 47-48 ; 24 April, Nos. 102-5.

<sup>57</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 8 May, No. 64.

<sup>58</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 20 March, No. 82.



act in concert with the British troops, if necessary, against the Singphos, and particularly with a view to securing a safe communication between the frontier of the provinces for the advancement of trade of either country.<sup>59</sup> Burney in his reply, on 18 July, brought home to the Governor-General in Council that the Burmese Military force, with its exacting and oppressive character, far from advancing the cause of trade and agriculture, would be a curse on the poor inhabitants of the country and would prove to be the greatest obstacle to the freedom of trade and intercourse.<sup>60</sup> When there remained no other alternative, on 3 August 1836, the Agent to the Governor-General proposed to establish a post in advance of Sadiya, beyond Beesa, either by setting up a colony of the Doaneahs or by posting, therein, a detachment of their militia on regular pay.<sup>61</sup>

The repeated attacks on the Nagas by the Singphos, early next year, rendered the establishment of a post in the south-east frontier all the more necessary.<sup>62</sup> To counteract the hostile Singphos, Major White desired to arm the Nagas ; but this was opposed by Hannay since arrived at Gauhati *en route* to Calcutta.<sup>63</sup> The latter agreed with the views of the Agent who held that 'the offer of powder and musket would not answer', since the Nagas who had either been slaves or vassals of different border clans of the Singphos were entangled in all feuds and quarrels which exist amongst that race besides their own feuds. Strengthened by these argument, Jenkins in a letter on 19 April 1837, reiterated his proposal of establishing a military outpost on the Buridihing, near Jaypur, under the command of a European officer.<sup>64</sup> The latter should be able to exert his influence over the chiefs to reconcile them in their mutual quarrels on the spot. After having a knowledge of the waterparting forming the boundary between the two dominions, he must make it known to the tribes on either side of the hills and cause it to be respected. On him should also devolve the duty of demarcating the undefined

<sup>59</sup> I. P. C., 1837.

<sup>60</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 26 September, No. 45, Burney to Macnaghten, 18 July.

<sup>61</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 2 August, No. 81, Jenkins 3 August.

<sup>62</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 7 November, Nos. 85-86.

<sup>63</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 8 May, No. 64..

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

boundary of the Barsenapati, the Muttock chief, with the Singphos on the line of the Buridihing and also of the districts of the Singpho Gaums with each other and with the lands of the Doaneahs, the Khamtis and the Nagas. The Governor-General in Council entertained grave doubts as to the expediency of the project, specially with reference to the great distance at which the proposed detachment would be placed. Therefore, on 8 May, the Agent was advised to augment the strength of the detachment at Sadiya by reinforcement of the Assam Light Infantry, if considered absolutely necessary.<sup>65</sup>

Lieutenant Miller, the officer in civil charge of Sadiya, in the meantime, drew the attention of the Agent to the rumours of an anti-British movement of the Abors, the Mishmis and the Khamtis. These were so widely disseminated that 'inhabitants of one village have been in the habit of some days past passing the night in jungle while in others sit upon all night for fear of being surprised.' Reports also arrived towards the close of May of further attacks of the Singphos<sup>66</sup> on the Nagas. Of the former, it was learnt, there were many who entered into alliances with Major White and who also agreed to desist from attacks on their neighbours. The questions, naturally arose how to deal with these whimsical tribes, whom to rely on and what measures were to be pursued. There could be no solution, Jenkins felt convinced, save by the adoption of measures which he had suggested already. 'Our best reliance for the establishment of tranquility',<sup>67</sup> he made it clear to the Government of India, 'must for sometime to come be in the show of military strength . . . . and the creation of different interests in them'. By employing a number of the Doaneahs and the Khamtis in the proposed levy, Jenkins hoped to attach to the British the whole of their respective tribes and, thereby, raise up in them a formidable counterpoise to others. He also brought home to the authorities in Calcutta in his subsequent letter, on 29 May, that the Hindustanee sepoy or the Gurkhas could not be called upon for active service in Assam during the rains without the risk of being disabled by sickness.<sup>68</sup> As far as possible they

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 15 May, No. 12 ; Miller to White, 14 April.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 19 June, No. 57 ; Jenkins 29 May.

should be retained as reserves for emergencies or for services in the cold weather. It was, therefore, absolutely necessary to have people who could meet the Singphos at all seasons, and this could be done efficiently and without much loss of life by arming men of the same country and hardihood as themselves. 'Unless we can put an end to these disturbances' he added, 'we shall not be able to avail ourselves of the great resources of the district in tea, coal and any other product nor to open any profitable commerce with any of the surrounding countries.' He, therefore, strongly urged the Governor-General in Council to reconsider the propriety of appointing an officer in-charge of the south-east frontier who was to be supported by a detachment consisting mainly of the Khamtis and the Doaneahs.<sup>69</sup> The officer commanding the post, he added, should be no other than Captain Hannay who had, already, earned the approbation of the Government as an officer of proved merit and having ripe experience and intimate knowledge of the tribes he was to deal with.

These cogent and convincing arguments of the Agent never failed to produce the desired result. The territorial claims recently made by the Governor of Mogaung and the pretensions of sovereignty usually put forward by the Burmese King over the Singpho chiefs,\* including Duffa and Beesa Gaums, might have been the additional grounds for the altered attitude of the authorities in Calcutta. In view of the 'emergency of the case'

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

\* In a letter addressed to Beesa Gaum, the Governor of Mogaung wrote : 'The King of Ava having appointed Duffa Gaum a ruler over 1500 men with two officers had ordered him accompany the governor to Hukum. Therefore, the acting governor orders Beesa Gaum to report to him where the wife and children of Duffa are ..... and send a reply by the person bringing this message.' Out of fear, Beesa made over the letter to the local authorities who interpreted it as a deliberate attempt on the part of the governor to support Burmese claims of sovereignty over the Singphos. Whatever might be the real intentions of the Burmese chief, the Government of India felt that such communications were usually resorted to by the Burmese authorities at those quarters with the object of keeping the minds of the frontier tribes agitated with the expectation of their being transferred to Ava. I. P. C., 1837, 30 March, No. 81.

and 'growing deterioration in relation with Ava' the Governor-General in Council resolved on 19 June, 1837 on the deputation of Hannay to the frontier to establish a military outpost on the Buridihing for the protection of the Nagas and other tribes from the aggression of the Burmese and the Singphos.<sup>70</sup> He was to entertain a militia consisting of two Havildars, four Naiks and forty sepoys; and the latter were to be recruited from amongst the Khamtis and the Doaneahs and were to be trained and armed for services in that quarter. To this, a party of the A.L.I. of such a strength as might be necessary to be detached either from Sadiya or Biswanath.<sup>71</sup>

Major White, who saw little reason to incur the expenditure for an additional political officer in the south-east, also felt that the deputation of Hannay might be attended with beneficial results in asserting British sovereignty over tribes in that quarter and in keeping up a channel of communication with the shans and Singphos depended on the Burmese.<sup>72</sup> In his preliminary instructions, the Political Agent brought home to Hannay that the various Naga tribes were dependent on the Singphos; and although this connection was of an oppressive character, it would be inexpedient to break off rashly this relation which would alienate these warlike tribes from the British Government at a time when the relations with Ava was far from being satisfactory. To avoid conflict in jurisdiction the Political Agent placed the Singphos, the Nagas and other chiefs adjacent to the Buridihing under Hannay and directed him not to meddle with the affairs of the Beesa and other Gaums, the Fakials and the Doaneahs near Borhat who were under the control of the officer in-charge of Sadiya except in connection with supply of men and provision; and even in making his requisitions, he was instructed to be always cautious and moderate; for the Singphos scarcely laboured and that on account of their scarcity of grain and thinness of population their ability to answer these demands was extremely limited.<sup>73</sup>

The Doaneah Militia, Jenkins, fondly hoped,<sup>74</sup> would turn

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, No. 58.

<sup>71</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 14 August, No. 77.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*; White to Jenkins, 25 July.

<sup>73</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 16 October, No. 121, White to Hannay, 13 September.

<sup>74</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 29 August, No. 90, Jenkins, 8 August.

out as good soldiers as the Jarrowas\*—‘laying the foundation of a military spirit amongst the tribes in the frontier which may, hereafter, be of greater value to us.’† The hopes of the Agent were doomed to bitter disappointment. The Doaneahs miserably failed when they were called upon to do the duties of the regulars. Even Hannay, the father of militia, had much misgivings about the fighting qualities of the Doaneahs; and in fact he incurred the displeasure of the Agent in not enrolling the whole of the sanctioned strength. With their dread of the Burmese, Hannay feared that these militiamen would either hang back or desert in an emergency. What was the guarantee that the Khamtis, who constituted a substantial element in the new levy and who were smarting with their grievances, would not opt in favour of the Burmese the moment the latter arrived at the frontier?

From the military point of view, a central position on the Buridihing was also not the most convenient strategic position for defending the Naga country or the Patkai frontier. A detachment posted in that quarter would be thrown completely into the rear and unable to reach any point attacked in time, because it would have to march several miles across the plains, and again twenty to thirty miles over different ranges in the hills. Before all these could be done, the invading force would occupy the frontier. White rightly suggested that the detachment should be located at a central position in the hills close to the boundary lines.<sup>75</sup> That would be much more convenient for defence; and its moral effect would also be definitely greater both as regards the Burmese, and the Nagas; for the former would have the clear evidence of a force being arranged for the protection of the latter, and the Nagas would resist with confidence when convinced that a force was near at hand to come to their rescue.

The policy of peaceful penetration steadily followed by the local authorities could not but produce jealousy and suspicion

\* Tribes who inhabited on the border of the Garo Hills.

† ‘We are at the sametime’, he continued, ‘attaching to ourselves through them and their families a large portion of the population and weakening the influence over these people of their chief whose attachment to Government cannot for many years be expected to be sincere.’

<sup>75</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 25 September, No. 112, White to Jenkins, 5 September.

of the Singpho chiefs who had, hitherto, been left almost unfettered from any outside control. The presence of a European officer with a detachment so close to them became all the more obnoxious since it afforded facilities to their remaining slaves to run away. Major White frankly admitted: 'the exertion of our allies on behalf of the British interests were rewarded by the desertion of their slaves'.<sup>76</sup> The escape of the Assamese from slavery might itself be one of the desirable objectives, as Jenkins argued; but such a result could be achieved only by driving the Singphos to revolt. The prophecy of the Political Agent—'most probably it will embroil us with the Singphos'—was literally fulfilled within less than a decade as will be seen in our next volume.

<sup>76</sup> I. P. C., 1837; 31 July, No. 64.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### PROBLEM OF THE NORTHERN DUARS

The extension of police regulations to the border areas produced a reaction against the British Government in spite of latter's conciliatory policy towards the hillmen of the north. The Kappachor Akas were allowed, it may be remembered, a share of the collections made by their kinsmen, but they were strictly forbidden from entering into the plains. In doing so, Scott followed the precedent of the former government; but a discrimination of this nature could not but cause dissatisfaction and bitter resentment of those who considered the lowlands as common preserve over which all hillmen had equal rights. Tribal feuds prevented them for a few years from giving vent to their vendetta; but on 3 February, 1835, under Thagi Raja, their redoubtable chief, the Kappachors made a sudden attack on the police outpost at Balipara, killed the Havildar, the Naik and several sepoy with their women and children.<sup>1</sup> On the request made by Lieutenant Matthie, Principal Assistant, Darrang, the Agent to the Governor-General hastened to the spot and noticed that the atrocity was 'merely an act of savage revenge'; for it was concerned to the party of the A. L. I., and no harm was done to the inhabitants in the neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup>

Immense, however, were the difficulties that confronted the local authorities in carrying on operations against the enemy. A pursuit against the bandits would be doubtful of success besides being extremely hazardous since the enemy would penetrate into the thicket of the hills known only to them and from there they would evade the most vigilant search. Therefore, Matthie had no other alternative than to strengthen the guards at Balipara,

<sup>1</sup> I. P. C., 1835; 13 March, No. 7; Matthie to Jenkins, 6 February; 4 May, No. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*; Jenkins, 23 February.

Orung, Gorakuchi and Borgaong. Thagi Raja and the Kappachors were declared outlaws liable to be fired on if they entered into British possession. Rewards were announced for the head of the chief or for any information leading to his apprehension. Simultaneously, the inhabitants were warned on the pain of severe punishment to refrain from furnishing information, grain or any assistance to the marauders.<sup>3</sup>

The punitive measures proved of no avail. Thagi Raja remaining at large continued his depredations at Borchapari, Majbat and Nomati; and with a show of bravado collected from the villagers his requirements of grain, cloths and spirits.<sup>4</sup> Hardly had two months passed when on 11 April 1835, to satisfy a previous grudge, Thagi Raja attacked and set fire to the house of Madhu Saikia, an influential officer at Orung, killing three individuals besides causing considerable damage to his property. The outrage occurred within fifty yards of the police outpost which clearly shows that the frontier guards were hopelessly weak and were unable to afford protection to the people.<sup>5</sup> Matthie himself admitted that over an area about 400 square miles 15 or 20 sepoy would serve no other purpose than that of 'keeping a surveillance over the tigers and jackals'. 'So long the tribes are allowed by us,' he felt, 'to visit the plains to collect in person, they (inhabitants) will be left to their mercy and will rather submit to their oppression and insult than resist or complain fearing their vengeance'.<sup>6</sup> Since the offer of rewards and other measures proved ineffectual, Matthie recommended that a military force under a European officer should be sent into the hills to endeavour to seize Thagi Raja and to destroy such habitation and granaries as might be found therein. Jenkins also agreed that the hillmen must be taught that they were not safe in their hills; but the advance of the rains and the lack of European officers suspended the operations till the cold weather. Matthie was advised to confine himself for the next few months to defensive measures by pushing guards to the extreme frontier. For effective supervision, the headquarters of the district was at the

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*; 4 May, No. 2.

<sup>4</sup> I. P. C., 1835; 3 August, No. 3; Matthie; 13 April, 14 May.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.



sametime ordered to be shifted to Pura, the present town of Tezpur.<sup>7</sup>

Not only the Akas of both the clans but the Duflas of Charduar were also prevented from collecting the *posa* when it was subsequently known that the latter acted in concert with the Kappachors in the attack at Orung. In retaliation, when on 17 December, the Duflas were about to carry away a few Assamese subjects, the officer in-charge Balipara thwarted their attempt; and a few days later, a successful incursion into the hills in pursuit of the fugitives brought down nine captives including two chiefs.<sup>8</sup> To intercede on their behalf, several Gaums came down which afforded Matthie the opportunity to bring them to the terms of a revised agreement. The devoted attachment and jealousy with which the chiefs clung to their ancient customs rendered it difficult for the P.A. to induce the chiefs to consent to changes in their existing arrangement. However, after some modifications, on 17 January, 1836, the chiefs entered into a new engagement, the provisions of which were as follows :<sup>9</sup>

'That they will forego the custom of collecting the *posa* in person from every house and will for future receive these from the *Malgoozari* who will collect the articles from the ryots of their respective villages as per annexed revised rates. That in the event of the *Malgoozari* not paying over them the articles regularly and in full, they would come to the Magistrate directly to complain and on no account use force or carry off British subjects.'

'That they will never combine with any tribe at enmity with the British Government, but at all times render assistance in apprehending and opposing any such tribes. That if they commit a breach of this article they are to forego altogether the custom of receiving blackmail.'

'That whenever they may visit and remain in the Assam plains, they will come unarmed either by lodging their offensive weapons with the outpost frontier guards or leaving them in one of their villages beyond the frontier.'

'That they depute Borobong Gaum, their agent and representative, who will remain in the plains and for whose actions they will be responsible, and for that if he shall be withdrawn another agent shall be appointed in his place.'

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*; Jenkins to Matthie, 16 April.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*; Jenkins to Secretary, Government of India, 29 June.

<sup>9</sup> I. P. C., 18 July, No. 76; Jenkins, 23 June.

Matthie succeeded not only in introducing a radical change in the mode of collection but also in reducing the demand of the Dufas. Hitherto, they were entitled to have from each ten houses one *borkapor*, a coarse *area* sheet, one handkerchief, one *gamcha*, one *dao*, two seers of salt and one black cow. In view of the altered situation arising out of the emigration of the *Bohoteahs* to less disturbed areas, the *posa* was reduced to one *borkapor*, one *gamcha*, one *dao*, and two seers of salt.<sup>10</sup>

Of the thirteen Dufla clans† whom the Ahom rulers allowed to collect *posa* from Charduar, eight had entered into an agreement as stated above. The negotiations which Lieutenant Vetch, since succeeded Matthie as the P.A., Darrang, later carried on with the remaining five Gaums were also crowned with success. On 5 April, 1837, the latter agreed to abandon their former custom of collection, and to accept the arrangement that in future the patgiris of the respective mouzas of Majbat and Orung would collect for them their dues payable to them by their *Bohoteahs*. Should they be guilty of any acts of aggression against Company's subjects they would forfeit future claims of the *posa*; that they would not join in any of the tribes at enmity with the Company and that they would do their best to hinder their inroads on Assam.<sup>11</sup>

As regards the *posa* claimed by the Dufas of Noduar,\* the Agent held the view that the Government was under no obligation to concede to their demands since Scott's agreement was confined to the Dufas of Charduar alone. Nevertheless, he advised Major White to offer to the chiefs their respective demands on their agreeing to receive the same from him or from the local authorities, and in case of objection not to permit them to raise from house to house. Towards the close of 1835, on the failure of the Political Agent to arrive at a settlement with the chiefs, the latter's right of collecting the *posa* was totally stopped.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

† These were as follows : Pahuwalliah, Opartulia, Opartakalia, Namtakalia, Richutulia, Oportulia, Namtialia, Salalahia, Namtapolia, Rambulia, Rangolia, Sarudhunia and Bordhunia.

<sup>11</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 8 May, No. 62.

\* It owes its origin from having nine passes leading to it from the mountains in the north occupied by the Dufas.

<sup>12</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 15 May, No. 10, Vetch to Jenkins, 12 April.

It was however reserved for Vetch, P.A. Darrang, to effect the much desired settlement. The task was rendered extremely difficult not only from the ignorance and suspicion with which the hill chiefs looked upon the proposed measure, but also from the misrepresentation of the subordinate officials who had vested interests in upholding the earlier system. It was a tough job for the P.A. to induce the chiefs to accede to terms that would not protect their acknowledged rights. After a good deal of bargaining on both sides an agreement was made on 9 April, 1837, under which the Dufla chiefs of Noduar also agreed to abandon collection of the *posa* from house to house, and to receive it in kind, as before, after the same had been collected by the *Sanjatees* of the British Government through the *Katakees* appointed for the purpose. But under this arrangement, collections would fluctuate according to extension and diminition of the cultivation or of the population of the areas known as the *Dufla Bohoteah* mouzas, and they would not be bound to ensure good conduct of their kinsmen or neighbours, but furnish information for apprehension of the offenders.<sup>13</sup>

Totally distinct from their western neighbours, the Duflas on the north of Noduar were more ferocious, more warlike and, therefore, more exacting. However, extravagant might be their pretensions, Vetch had to give them a patient hearing and to concede to them most of their demands instead of driving them back into their hills; all the more, when they put forward the plea that their coming was at the behest of the Government. They were given a distinct understanding that their ancient rights would under no circumstances be affected. As open foes, the Duflas might not be very formidable, but they were inaccessible and capable of doing greater harm by the devastating inroads on the plains in comparison with which the amount of blackmail payable to them was insignificant. Summarising the effect of the new measure, Jenkins remarked :

‘The chiefs are now get accustomed to personal intercourse with our officers, and as they must perceive that we have no wish to deprive them of any emolument and are anxious to extend our communication with their hills, it is to be hoped that we shall find it less difficult hereafter to effect negotiations with them, and that

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

an interchange of products with these extensive countries will be much improved as tranquility and confidence is established.<sup>14</sup>

On the west of Charduar lie the *duars* Koriapara, Buriguma and Kulling. The latter two, like the Kamrup *duars*, were subject to the Deb and Dharma Rajas of Bhutan, but the former was held by the Sath Rajas who were feudatories of the Towang Raja who himself was a vassal of the authority at Lhasa. Under precedent of the former government, these *duars* came under the British Government for four months in a year, July to November, whereas the Kamrup *duars* remained always with the Bhutias. It is rather difficult to explain the origin of this material distinction except by the suggestion that this was done as a token of the assertion of the sovereign rights of the Paramount Power. Subject to the payment of annual tribute, Scott allowed the Bhutia authorities of these *duars* to collect *posa* from the inhabitants of Charduar, and a remission of annas eight of the land tax was granted to the *pykes* to meet the requirement of the Bhutia chiefs which they collected from house to house. With the abolition of the *khel* system\* in Central Assam in 1834-35, the operation of this system became extremely difficult. When several headmen of the villages brought the anomalies to the notice of the Collector, Darrang, the latter introduced land-tax in Charduar, as well, with effect from 1836-37. Accordingly, the former practice of allowing the Bhutia chiefs and their followers to collect in person miscellaneous articles from every house was commuted to an annual payment to be made by the Collector in cash or kind, and to cover the expenses a remission of six per cent was made in the assessment.<sup>15</sup>

The reforming measures afforded relief to the petty collectors and freed the ryots from the direct and exacting demands of the hillmen. Its operation had also effect in augmentation in revenue, in spite of the fact that total amount of remission granted on account of these tribes was also on the increase. But the Bhutias feared that the innovation was only a prelude to the entire abolition of their much cherished rights. They stood opposed not

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid* ; Jenkins, 24 April.

\* For details of the *khel* system see Barpujari, H. K. ; *Assam : in the Days of the Company*, P. 23 ff.

<sup>15</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 15 May, No. 7, Jenkins, 20 April.

only to the new measures as such, but resisted the action of those who wanted to carry out the orders of the Government. On 7 April, 1837, the fury of some of these hillmen again fell on Madhu Saikia, the zealous and faithful Patgiri since moved to the village Panbari in Charduar, killing one and wounding several others of the household.<sup>16</sup> Suspecting the Ruprae chiefs, who were seen loitering in the village a few days before the occurrence, Vetch prohibited them strictly from entering into the plains. Likewise, he warned the Thebeangians, who occupied the hills on the north, from collecting *posa* until they could exculpate themselves from the charge of participating in the atrocious attack. The enquiry which Vetch later held about the Ruprae and other chiefs could not prove their guilt, and the Principal Assistant satisfied himself only in procuring from the chiefs an assurance of their good conduct and a promise that they would surrender any one of their followers if they were found, hereafter, involved in any offence. The chiefs were also not slow to express their resentment to the changes that had recently been made in the revenue system which they interpreted as an encroachment on their former rights. The endeavours made by Vetch to allay their fears had only a partial success. The Thebeangias appeared satisfied when they were told that their collection would be allowed, as before, but their neighbours remained unconvinced and as such dissatisfied with the new arrangements.<sup>17</sup>

Major Jenkins, the Agent to the Governor-General, was so keen about this time in promoting commercial intercourse with Tibet and countries in the north, that he considered it highly inexpedient to offend these hill chiefs. Therefore, on being acquitted, the Bhutias were allowed by him to visit the plains and to levy the *posa* without any let or hindrance; for he hoped that the Collectors would be able by firmness and conciliation to prevail on the chiefs ultimately to come to terms. But the Agent was belied in his expectations. On 25 April, 1838, Vetch reported that despite several conferences he had failed to arrive at a settlement with the Kampos either to make them agree to a commutation of their personal collections for payment in kind or cash or to restrain their collections to the amount of

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

remission made to the ryots under the previous agreement.<sup>18</sup> It was also evident to the Agent that as the country improved, their *posa* would also go on increasing without the Bhutias rendering any service to entitle them to the increased output. If European settlers be settled there, their labourers and dependents would be equally liable to the *posa* with the other inhabitants which would prevent the settlement of any entrepreneur in that region. As a remedy, Jenkins suggested to the Government of India to make a fair offer of the *posa* to the Bhutia chiefs either in money or in kind ; and in case of its rejection, to withdraw it altogether. At the same time, he directed Vetch not to make any remission to the ryots in the existing settlements on account of the Bhutia blackmail but to retain from the collections an amount equal to previous year's *posa* to be paid to the Bhutias in cash or kind should they agree to accept it. Such a measure, Jenkins believed, might lead to the overtures of their highest authority, namely the Tibetan Government, which would enable the Government to extort terms advantageous to trade or communication beneficial to both the countries. Of course, he did not rule out the possibility of vengeance of the Bhutias in the endeavour to exact by force the payment of articles withheld from them. In the event of Bhutias refusing a commutation of the demands, it would be necessary to take precautionary measures by scattering a number of outposts in that frontier, as Vetch had already done in the Dufla frontier. Jenkins, therefore, solicited, as a temporary measure, to increase 100 men per company of the Assam Sebundis ; and this received the sanction of the Government on 6 June, 1838.<sup>19</sup>

The conciliatory policy towards the Government of Bhutan also failed to produce the desired result—the tranquility in the frontier. Hardly eight months had passed after restoration of the *duar* Buriguma, when on 28 May, 1835, a party of fifty armed men from the Bijni *duar* attacked one Moonoo Jauldah in the village Nowgong and carried off eleven persons.<sup>20</sup> To rescue the captives, a detachment was sent under Zalim Singh against the marauders. Having stormed the stockade of the enemy, the

<sup>18</sup> I. P. C., 1838 ; 6 June, Nos. 47-49 ; Vetch to Jenkins, 25 April.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Pemberton. R : *Report on Bootan*, P. 19.

party succeeded in rescuing some captives and in seizing Dooba Raja, an officer of rank in the Bijni *duar*, who was supposed to be the organiser of the incursions and a protector of the criminals and robbers. He was however released when he delivered up a few captives and also admitted that the rest of them had already been despatched to Tongso Pilo, the viceroy of the Eastern *duars*.<sup>21</sup> The existence of mutual understanding between the offenders and the Bhutia officials who offered them asylum was suspected in another outrage on 16 November, in the Kulling *duar*. Captain Bogle, P. A., Kamrup, reported on 19 January, 1836, the occurrence of three dacoities attended with loss of lives and properties of the British subjects during that month from the Buxaduar—all supposed to have been committed under express orders of Bura Talukdar, the officer in-charge of the *duar*. 'So great was the terror excited by these repeated excursions', writes Pemberton, 'that the villages on the border were entirely deserted by our subjects and the general feeling of insecurity was rapidly attending along the whole line of frontier.'<sup>22</sup>

Under the direction of the Agent, Bogle advanced into the *duar* with a party of Sebundis under Lieutenant Matthews. On the approach of the detachment at Hazaragaon, the residence of Bura Talukdar, the latter retired to Dewangiri, the headquarters of the Bhutia Raja of the same name (his immediate superior). The party discovered considerable portion of the stolen property at the residence of Bura Talukdar and also succeeded in seizing Jadu Kachari, a notorious robber, who had committed several outrages in the British territory. Without delay, Bogle wrote to the Dewangiri Raja and Tongso Pilo demanding reparation for losses and the surrender of the offenders, pending which the *duar* was temporarily attached and the principal passes leading from it to the hills were occupied by the detachment.<sup>23</sup>

The prompt and vigorous measures taken by the P. A. compelled the Dewangiri Raja to despatch his messengers to negotiate for a settlement. This having failed, the Raja at the head of an armed force himself came down from the hills and endea-

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid* ; I. P. C., 1836 ; Nos. 2-3..

<sup>23</sup> Pemberton, R. ; *Op. cit.* Pp. 22-26.

voured to win over Bogle by the surrender of several offenders. But the negotiations bore no fruit ; the Raja expressed his utter inability to make over Bura Talukdar on the ground of the latter's being a direct nominee of the authorities at Punakha. The Raja left the conference apparently peacefully, but on the next morning intelligence reached that he had stockaded a strong party at Silkee, near Dewangiri pass, and himself moved with his followers to Subankhatta, a few miles west, with a view to preventing the *duar* from being occupied by the British troops.<sup>24</sup> When hostilities with Bhutan became unavoidable, on 7 March, 1836, Bogle marched against the enemy with a detachment of the Sebundis under Lieutenants Vetch and Matthews ; whereupon the Bhutias abandoned Silkee and fell back on the main wing under the Raja at Subankhatta. The Bhutias, numbering about six hundred, commenced action. Matthews after charging a few volleys hotly pursued the enemy ; and the latter took to flight and abandoned their army and stores leaving 25 dead and many wounded. Several captives under the Raja were rescued and Bura Talukdar finding no alternative, voluntarily surrendered. The *duar* passed under the control of the British detachment.

The loss of Buxaduar, the most valuable possession of the Bhutias in the plains, could not but rouse the serious attention of the authorities at Punakha. In less than a month, several Zinkoffs with letters from the Deb and Dharma Rajas and Tongso Pilo came down to enquire into the circumstances which led to the attachment of the *duar*. The most polite tone in which these letters were addressed and particularly the extremely miserable condition of the inhabitants consequent upon the occupation of the *duar* as represented by the Zinkoffs induced the Agent to the Governor-General to open the passes leading to the hills ; but he refused to restore the *duar* until the Zinkoffs guaranteed the immediate surrender in future of heinous offenders and satisfactory arrangement for the due payment of the tribute.<sup>25</sup>

On the execution of the agreement by the Zinkoffs on behalf the Deb and Dharma Rajas on 2 June, 1836, the *duar* was again made over to the Bhutia authorities.<sup>26</sup> Notwithstanding this,

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> I. P. C., 1836 ; 27 June, No. 52 ; Jenkins ; 9 June. Pemberton, R ; *Op. cit.* P. 103.



the local authorities strongly felt that the security of the frontier demanded some definite arrangements directly with the higher authorities in Bhutan; 'for experience had shewn that it was in the power of the frontier officers not only to intercept any communication which might be addressed to the Deb Rajah complaining of their conduct, but so as to misrepresent the circumstances that had actually occurred as to make that appear an aggression against their Government which was really an injury to ours.' In his letter on 9 June, 1836, to Macnaghten, Secretary, Government of India, Jenkins strongly urged the deputation of a mission to Bhutan to represent to the Deb and Dharma Rajas the actual state of affairs in the *duars* and to prevail upon them to a commutation of the tribute for the *duars*\* and to ensure its effective management. He was also to endeavour to maintain a British Resident at the capital to appraise the chiefs of the tyrannical proceedings of their subordinate officials towards the unfortunate victims in the plains.<sup>27</sup> The Agent had also some ulterior objectives in view—to improve commercial intercourse with Tibet through Bhutan and with the countries in the north,† and also to ascertain the real feelings of the Bhutias and their neighbours towards the English with the ultimate object of extending and stabilizing British influence over areas occupied by these tribes as a safeguard against the south-west drive of the celestial empire. 'Our subjects have been excluded', reported Jenkins, 'from the trade of Tibet and of Bootan, through the jealousy and influence of the Chinese Government against the

\* Arrear of tribute amounted to Rs. 26,231 in February, 1836; R. L. B. 1836; 6 December, No. 12.

<sup>27</sup> I. P. C., 1836; 27 June, No. 52, Jenkins, 9 June; also 12 June, No. 58; Jenkins, 3 May.

† 'There can be no doubt,' Jenkins added, 'that if we could establish a perfectly free intercourse with Tibet, the commerce with that country would become as valuable as if not superior to that carried on with any neighbouring state; but although there may be little hope at present of placing the trade between the countries on a reciprocal footing as regards the permission of free entry to merchants of either from the influence of Chinese policy over these States, yet some arrangements very profitable to us might probably be made for the promotion of extension of the present petty commerce.....'

wishes of the Lamas and the inhabitants of either country'.<sup>28</sup> Already there had developed an anti-Chinese movement in Tibet and the Agent believed that, before long, the Chinese would be thrown into the defensive and would occupy Bhutan in full force. That such a contingency, he apprehended, would be highly 'calamitous' to the security of the British Himalayan frontier, for 'it would be (then) extremely difficult to dislodge the Chinese'. On the other hand 'were we to obtain prior possession of the northern passes, our position would be altered,' for that would enable the British, Jenkins calculated, not only to rally round their banner the disaffected Tibetans, but also the Bhutias whose fortunes had been linked up for centuries past not so much with the Chinese as with the inhabitants of Bengal and Assam.<sup>29</sup>

Influenced by these considerations, the Governor-General in Council resolved, in early 1837, to send a mission to Bhutan under Robert Boileau Pemberton. He was to be accompanied by Dr. William Griffith of the Madras Medical service and Ensign Blake of the 56th Bengal Native Infantry. Besides procuring information as to the nature and resources of the country and its political relations with the countries in its neighbourhood, the main objective of the mission was to establish frontier relations with Bhutan on a improved footing and to provide for the punctual payment of the tribute. This was to be secured, if possible, by inducing the authorities in Bhutan either to make over the management of the *duars* to the British Government in consideration of an amount as might be agreed upon or by the commutation of tribute to a cession of land. The decision of the Government was accordingly communicated to the Deb and Dharma Rajas of Bhutan and the Dalai Lama of Tibet. Towards

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

Since the establishment of the Chinese supremacy over Tibet and her dependencies, particularly after the Gurkha war, 1792, Anglo-Tibetan trade was on the decline, although the commercial treaty of 1775 entered into by Bogle remained unabrogated. This was due not so much to the 'Chinese' as conceived by the Agent, as to the exclusive policy adopted by the Tibetans themselves who attributed the invasion of the Gurkhas to the instigation of the British Government in India.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

the close of October, 1837, the Mission left Calcutta *en route* to Bhutan.<sup>30</sup>

Overwhelming, however, were the odds that confronted Pemberton on his way to Bhutan. To begin with, the authorities in Bhutan were at first reluctant, and, later, grudgingly agreed to receive the Envoy. When he arrived at Gauhati, he found no Zinkoff who was expected to escort the party through the hills. Hardly had he reached Dewangiri, the residence of a governor of the same name, when a communique arrived that Daka Pilo, an officer of rank, had revolted against the Deb which had rendered the passage quite unsafe through the hills. Not only was the Envoy detained at the foot hills for nearly three weeks but he was to take a more circuitous route to Punakha.<sup>31</sup> Finally on his arrival at the seat of the government on 1 April 1838, he found that the Deb Raja had just succeeded in obtaining the office by expelling the pretender whose adherents continued to occupy several strongholds, including Tassissudden, the summer capital of the Deb. There existed, above all, a continuous scramble for the headship of the State and the real authority consequently passed under the control of the provincial satraps—Tongso and Paro Pilos. Naturally, the Deb Raja, the theoretical head of the State, dared not to enter into any engagement with the British if it clashed, directly or indirectly, with the interest of the Pilos and Zimpé. 'Various propositions were submitted and discussed' reported Pemberton,

'and a draft treaty was at last prepared with the avowed concurrence and approval of the Deb and his ministers, who repeatedly admitted both in public and private *Durbars* that its provisions were unobjectionable . . . . that it was calculated to benefit his country . . . . yet he avowed that he dared not sign it, as the Tongso Pilo objected.'<sup>32</sup>

Inevitably, the Mission failed in its immediate objectives ; it failed to effect a satisfactory settlement of the tribute ; it failed to ensure an efficient management for the *duars* ; it failed to promote Indo-Tibetan trade ; it also failed to conciliate the Bhutias and to preserve good will and understanding which had

<sup>30</sup> I. P. C., 1837 ; 10 April, No 113 ; P. L. I., 1837, 20 December, No. 65 ; also Pemberton, R ; *Op. cit.* P. 36 ff.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Pp. 96, 104-106.

existed, hitherto, between the British and Bhutan Government. Pemberton, however, succeeded in procuring a mass of information not only on the government and people of Bhutan but also on its topography, resources, communication and political relations indispensably necessary for a reorientation in the British policy towards Bhutan and her neighbours in the north. Whatever might be the political situation in Bhutan or feelings of its people, he strongly felt the urgency of some decisive measures to put a stop to the repetition of the aggressions. Since these outrages were committed invariably within the jurisdiction of Tongso Pilo, he suggested that punishment should fall on him alone, and that such punishment would not be deterrent one unless Assam *duars* were annexed.<sup>33</sup> For such a measure, he calculated, would compel the Bhutia authorities, high and low, to come down and submit to the terms of a treaty that might be dictated by the British Government. Pemberton did not rule out the possibility of some show of force ; but the resistance, if there be any, would be feeble ; militarily, the Bhutias were extremely weak. The Envoy removed, above all, the Chinese bugbear from the minds of the local authorities as well as of the Government of India. He pointed out that the control of Peking over Bhutan was only indirect which was evident from the fact that the Chinese rarely interfered in the earlier political intrigues in Bhutan and even in the existing revolution their attitude was one of total indifference.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, it was quite unlikely that the Ambans at Lhasa would intervene even if the British authorities in India pursued a forward policy towards these Himalayan States.

The failure of the mission left no room for an amicable adjustment of the disputes with the Government of Bhutan. H. T. Prinsep, Secretary, Government of India, had no other alternative than to write to the Agent to the Governor-General in his letter on 1 August, 1838, to give his views on the course he considered proper to be pursued towards the Bhutias on the *duars* of Darrang and Kamrup.<sup>35</sup> Thereupon, the latter called upon Captains Vetch and Matthie, the Collectors of these two

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, P. 97 ff.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> I. P. C., 1838 ; 21 November, No. 98.

districts, to give their sentiments on the subject bearing on the commutation of the present tribute, on the joint jurisdiction of the *duars* Buriguma and Koriapara, on mutual rights to claim the surrender of robbers and other heinous offenders and on the mode of adjusting the boundary disputes. In their replies, both of them agreed that the existing arrangement should not be disturbed so far as the *duars* in the frontier of Darrang were concerned, for they were punctual in payment of tributes. As to the *duars* in Kamrup, which were then in huge arrears, Matthie proposed a period be fixed to pay up the whole of the balance ; and that for the future the annual tribute be paid at a fixed period in default of which the *duars* be annexed, one by one, and be retained under Government management until the whole amount of arrears be realised and good security furnished for future regular payment.<sup>36</sup> They were also unanimous that on no account, whatever, any alteration be made in the existing right of holding judicial jurisdiction in the three *duars* of Darrang for four months of the year which provided a great check against the secreting in the *duars* of desperate dacoits and other offenders. Instead of foregoing this established right, Matthie suggested that the Bhutia authorities be warned that unless due attention was paid to the articles of treaty made with them, in 1836, as to the seizure and restoration of dacoits etc. in the *duars* of Kamrup, that the system in force in Darrang of exercising jurisdiction for four months in a year should be extended to this district as well. Finally, on the failure to reach an amicable adjustment of the boundary disputes, they insisted on the right of the British Government to dictate the line of demarcation to be maintained, because the whole territory in the valley from the base of the southern to that of the northern mountains was the bonafide property of the Government by right of conquest. Matthie remarked :

‘we have most perfect equitable right to exercise our judgement of what shall be the fixed boundary line of the Bootan Dooars, and adopt such arrangement, and enforce such engagement (which the Assamese Government would have had it been able), as we may deem will be most conducive to the security of the lives and property

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* Vetch to Jenkins, 7 September ; Matthie to Jenkins, 17 September.

of the inhabitants on both sides of the boundary and to the prosperity of our dominions generally.<sup>37</sup>

In spite of these forceful arguments, the views held by the Agent to the Governor-General were entirely different. The authorities at Punakha were 'totally imbecile', yet they were so 'obstinate and ignorant' that Jenkins doubted much if there was any chance of prevailing upon them to adopt any measure that would be beneficial to either Government. 'Mutual cooperation and concession would not be obtained, and there seems no reason why we should yield anything when we were certain there would be no return'. At the seat of the government there was confusion all around, but the British Government had no right to interfere except for the recovery of its tributes which was itself a matter of little significance. To seize a *duar* or several others and to give up these after the collection of the tribute would serve only to impoverish the Bhutias still more and would perhaps leave things in a state of affairs worse than before. The mission under Pemberton confirmed the melancholy and hopeless state of affairs in Bhutan. Since there was no chance of effecting any measure by an appeal to reason and good feelings of that government, Jenkins proposed drastic measures in his letter on 15 September, 1838.<sup>38</sup> He sought to cut off all communication with the Government of Bhutan and to breach off all intercourse, as far as practicable, with its inhabitants. He would receive no revenue from the Kamrup *duars*, but as a compensation for arrears and security for future losses, retaining the *duars* Kulling and Buriguma. He would do nothing to the Koriapara *duar*, but prevent the pilgrimage of the Bhutias and the Tartars to the temple at Hajo. This would create a sensation, Jenkins hoped, throughout Tartary and would draw the attention even of the Emperor of China. If this measure led to overtures, Jenkins determined not to receive any one except one of the highest dignitaries of the Government of Bhutan and would consent to no negotiations except on the basis of a perfectly mutual intercourse to be secured by a British Resident stationed at Tassissuden.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*; Jenkins to Prinsep, 15 September.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Jenkins was however not prepared at this precise moment to take any measure other than addressing a letter of remonstrance to the Government of Bhutan to prepare the ground for measures that might be necessary to adopt hereafter, and for offering them the opportunity by deputing an officer of rank still to make terms. Behind this temporizing policy of the Agent; there lay the insecurity of the far eastern frontier. Pending unfriendly relations with Ava and continued acts of aggressions on the part of the eastern tribes, a rupture with Bhutan was considered highly impolitic, in any case, until the arrival of additional troops in that quarter.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*; Jenkins to Prinsep, 2 October.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### GATHERING OF THE STORM

On the refusal of Sir Charles Metcalfe to recognize their rights on the lowlands, the Khasi chiefs, including the Raja of Myllem, were reconciled to their lot; but Oalar Singh and Jaber Singh, the Sangaup chiefs of Maram, did not acquiesce without a challenge. These chiefs who held lands in the district of Sylhet were in arrears of revenue. In October 1837, they defied the Collector of Sylhet when the latter issued two *rabakarees* demanding the government dues. Whereupon, the Collector addressed a letter to the Sardars asking them to settle the account; but to no purpose; on the contrary, the sepoy who conveyed the message were driven out by a body of armed Khasis who threatened them that they would be put to death should they made any attempt to return. In early March, 1838, the Marams assembled themselves at Singmooleen Punji wherein they had erected two strong stockades.<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant J. W. Bennett, on the advice of the Political Agent, advanced with a detachment of the Sylhet Light Infantry and met the enemy on 9 March. Through a *Doobhashe* he intimated the rebels to lay down their arms, but the latter replied by a volley of arrows. In the skirmish that followed five or six Khasis were killed, several wounded and the stockades were completely destroyed. At this discomfiture, the Sardars tendered their submission making a solemn engagement on behalf of their subjects and of themselves to desist from acts of hostilities against the British Government. Troops were consequently withdrawn.<sup>2</sup>

The Maram chiefs, who could hardly command more than three hundred armed men, failed to make a common cause with their neighbours. Being unable to meet the enemy single handed they resorted to harrassing tactics. Keeping a vigilant

<sup>1</sup> I.P.C., 1838; 21 March, No. 161.

<sup>2</sup> I.P.C., 1838; 28 March, No. 53; Bennett to Lister, 9 March.



eye from the heights overlooking the roads, they cut off the stragglers and killed the sepoy and others while passing through and near that part of the hills.<sup>3</sup> Sardars who were friendly to the British when summoned could not prevent and even explain the reason of their continued aggressions, nor was it possible on the part of the local authorities to distinguish between the friend and the foe, for most of them looked alike.

The recurrence of these outrages had been attributed by Major Lister, the Political Agent, Khasi Hills, to the withdrawal of troops and mainly to the lenient policy, hitherto, followed by the Government. Mere despatch of a party of sepoy or destruction of a few stockades, he conceived, had been interpreted by the rebels as the weakness of the British Government which had emboldened them to renew their atrocities. He proposed drastic measures to reduce the refractory Marams to submission. His scheme envisaged (1) the establishment of a chain of military posts throughout the territory (2) the stoppage of cultivation and traffic in that part of the hills, and (3) the evacuation of all those peaceably inclined to the neighbouring friendly territories; and if any one of them was found within specified boundaries he would be treated as enemy. In short, Lister considered 'distress and starvation' to be the only way to enforce tranquility amidst these 'misguided tribes'.<sup>4</sup> On the approval of these measures by the Government of India, pickets were posted at various parts of the territory. Within a month or so, several offenders were apprehended, and the inhabitants in the hills were reduced to great straits. In early January, 1839, Burmanik, Raja of Myllem, accompanied by his nephew Chandmanik waited upon the Political Agent at Cherra and intimated to him that the Sangaup chiefs were willing to surrender; that they were agreeable to pay a fine of rupees two thousand and to give security for future good conduct on condition that life and liberty would be granted to them and to their followers, and that the troops would be withdrawn from their hills.<sup>5</sup> Lister did not doubt the bonafide's of the Sardars; and when the chiefs of Myllem themselves

<sup>3</sup> I.P.C., 1838; 1 August, No. 89; Lister to Prinsep, 10 July.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 23 January, No. 74.

volunteered to be the security for the good behaviour of the Maram chiefs, he readily entered into an engagement on the terms solicited.<sup>6</sup>

It was evident to the authorities at the Fort William that the unconditional surrender of the insurgent chiefs would require much time and could be effected only through slow operation of starvation. Moreover, the deep and precipitous valley afforded the rebels ample opportunities for concealment which rendered their apprehension a task of utmost difficulty. The Government of India had no alternative but to accord their approval to the proceedings of the Political Agent.<sup>7</sup> As a measure of additional security, however, it was left to the discretion of the Political Agent to consider whether it would be advisable to demand of the chiefs to keep at his headquarters some of their near relatives nominally as a medium of communication but really as a kind of hostages.<sup>8</sup> Considering this to be 'distasteful and inexpedient', as a compromise Lister stipulated that a nephew of the Maram chief should reside with the Raja of Myllem instead of the Political Agent at Cherra. He also released all the prisoners against whom no specific act of criminality could be established, but those strongly suspected as having been involved in the outrages were detained until return of normalcy.<sup>9</sup>

Internal feuds amongst the Duflas disturbed again the peace in the north. On 26 April, 1837, a party of about forty Duflas of the lower hills, mostly of the Latakateah tribe, made a surprise attack on Jyram Gaum and his followers who were residents of the village Samdhara in the Noduar area.<sup>10</sup> The miscreants burnt the houses, destroyed properties therein and carried off twenty nine women and children into the hills. Vetch, the Junior Assistant, Darrang, avoided a rupture with the Duflas in view of the difficulties of carrying on operations in a wild region, particularly at a time when the political situation in the Sadiya frontier was far from being favourable. He despatched a *Katakee* or messenger demanding of the Duflas the restoration

<sup>6</sup> I.P.C., 1839 ; 27 February, No. 170 ; Lister to Prinsep, 14 February.

<sup>7</sup> I.P.C., 1839 ; 23 January, No. 75.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> S.C.I., 1937 ; 27 December, No. 6 ; Vetch to Jenkins, 8 May.

of the captives.<sup>11</sup> The Duflas not only remained indifferent, but detained the *Kataki* in confinement. When insult was thus added to the injury Vetch stopped the *posa*. To reinstate them in their former privileges, he demanded the restoration of Jyram Gum's family and the surrender of the persons implicated in the attack; in default of which they would forfeit half of the *posa* for the year, a part of which was to be paid as compensation to the Gaum for his losses. He further proposed that the *posa* in future be paid at a fixed rate in cash direct from the treasury. To prevent similar acts in future, Vetch wanted to make the Duflas feel that they would be jointly answerable for the security of the frontier against depredation of any of their tribes; for it would be too much on the Government to submit to the blackmail and at the same time to guard the frontier against aggressions.<sup>12</sup> The Government of India approved these measures and also agreed to the suggestion that if aforesaid terms were not complied with, the Dufla dues would be collected and appropriated for erecting and strengthening such stockades as might be necessary to maintaining and improving communication between chain of posts in that frontier.<sup>13</sup>

The aforesaid measures produced the desired result. The Duflas in the high hills, dependent as they were on their kinsmen in the south for supplies, were hard hit by the cessation of blackmail; and their wrath, ultimately, compelled the offending chiefs to come down with offerings of ivory, *munjeet*, *mithun* (hill cow), as tokens of peace.<sup>14</sup> It was made known to Vetch that the attack was made in retaliation of a similar outrage by Jyram about ten years back; and that the chiefs were unaware by doing so they had committed any offence against the British Government; for only a few years back when they had approached the British officer at Bishwanath to seek redress, they were told to settle their quarrel in their own way.<sup>15</sup> In these circumstances Vetch, too, had to be less severe; he treated the suspended

<sup>11</sup> I.P.C., 1838; 5 February, Nos. 35-36; Vetch to Jenkins, 10 January.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 6 March, No. 135; Vetch to Jenkins, 4 February.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

amount as a fine on the offending tribe, but allowed them to collect *posa*, as usual, pending a permanent arrangement in future.<sup>16</sup>

Since the middle of 1835, there appeared a new danger in North Cachar—the incursions of the Angamis. Divided, as they were, into a number of communities, with chiefs excessively jealous of each other, the Angamis were incapable of offering any concerted action against their common enemy viz. the Kacharis and the Manipuris. The rulers of Cachar had been endeavouring to subjugate the Nagas and to reduce them to the position of slaves; while the Raja of Manipur always aimed at making the land of the Angamis his sole preserve.<sup>17</sup> In 1833, Gambhir Singh, Raja of Manipur, appeared in the hills with the object of bringing the Nagas directly under his control. The presence of the Manipur *Raj* in the neighbourhood of the newly restored monarchy in Upper Assam was considered by the Government of Bengal as somewhat 'uncomfortable'.<sup>18</sup> He was, therefore, asked not to advance beyond the hills; but indirectly a free hand was given to him over the Angamis with the object of erecting Manipur as a bulwark against their incursions.

In August, 1835, Captain Fisher, the Superintendent of Cachar, reported that several outrages attended with loss of lives and destruction of properties had been committed in North Cachar by the Nagas of Bysampa, Angamis and Rangai; the first two villages belonging to the chief of Manipur and the last one to Tularam Senapati, the chief of Mohung<sup>19</sup> The attacks were suddenly made at night with no other objective, as was believed by the Commissioner of Dacca, than to procure a few human heads.<sup>20</sup> Jenkins presumed that the incursions originated in the dispute between the Nagas and the Kacharis over salt

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 6 February, No. 60; Jenkins 18 December, 1838.

<sup>18</sup> B.P.C., 1833; 14 January, Nos. 69-70; 30 March, No 110; 30 May, No. 105.

<sup>19</sup> B.J.P., 1835; 17 November, No. 47; Fisher to Commissioner of Dacca, 14 August.

<sup>20</sup> B.J.P., 1835; 15 December, No. 43; Commissioner of Dacca to the Secretary, Government of Bengal, 9 October.

springs near Semkar.<sup>21</sup> On the otherhand, Lieutenant Bigge, Principal Assistant, Nowgong, later pointed out that the Nagas, like all other hill tribes, when hard pressed came down for provisions in batches to the plains. If they obtained supplies, no harm was done to anybody; otherwise, they carried away by force whatever they could.<sup>22</sup> The British occupation of North Cachar, presumably, emboldened the Kacharis to resist such demands, and in consequence they had to suffer from the frequent raids of these Nagas.

Whatever might be the real cause, the hilly and thickly-wooded nature of the country, the isolated location of the villages and the sudden character of the incursions rendered it extremely difficult on the part of the local authorities to put an end to these marauding raids. On the representation made by the Superintendent of Cachar, in November, 1835, the Government of India sanctioned a Jamadar's party at Mohung;<sup>23</sup> and in this connection, Sir Charles Metcalfe, the officiating Governor-General remarked; 'no such guard nor indeed any that could be maintained . . . (as) would suffice to protect the inhabitants of a wild and open frontier from attacks which may be so extensively varied a place at the will of the murderers.' He felt that the only way by which such outrages could be effectively put down would be to follow the perpetrators into their fastnesses and then to punish their aggressions<sup>24</sup>. Fisher was, accordingly, directed to endeavour in conjunction with Tularam and the chief of Manipur to find out the miscreants and to bring them to book. The chiefs were also asked to station responsible officers at such points of their respective frontier as would be indicated by the Superintendent of Cachar so that combined measures might be concerted for the effectual protection of the British subjects in Cachar from such aggressions. At the same time, the Agent to the Governor-General and the Political Agent in Manipur were advised to take such measures to suppress these inroads as would be 'expedient within their respective jurisdiction'.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 6 February, No. 60.

<sup>22</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 27 February No. 164.

<sup>23</sup> B.J.P., 1835; 17 November, No. 48.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

In spite of these measures, on 24 August, 1836, another severe attack was made at Haflong, wherein, as reported by Burns, since succeed Fisher as Superintendent, Cachar, 8 villages were plundered, 18 lives lost and 69 individuals carried away. The loss of life in a subsequent report was stated to be 69.<sup>26</sup> The repetition of outrages demanded prompt and vigorous measures to compel the marauders to respect the rule of law and to afford protection to the unfortunate Kacharis. Burns suggested that a portion of Tularam's territory should be occupied by Manipuri troops, and that a detachment of the S. L. I. under a European officer should take up position near the frontier for the purpose of preventing any inroads or, if necessary, of apprehending the offenders in concert with the Manipuri troops; and that the latter in subordination to that officer to use every means in their power of conciliating and reclaiming the Nagas in the neighbourhood.<sup>27</sup> Concurring in this arrangement, Lord Auckland suggested that Captain Gordon, Political Agent, Manipur, should be instructed that it was not the intention of the Government to undertake at least during the present season any expedition against the Nagas; but that a Manipuri force should be stationed at some convenient point in the frontier in communication with the Superintendent of Cachar and, later, officer in-charge of the detachment proposed to be located in that quarter.<sup>28</sup>

The Agent to the Governor-General, protested against the employment of Manipuri force in the Naga territory.<sup>29</sup> He pointed out that the Manipuris, after enlistment, received neither pay nor adequate provisions. The presence of such a detachment in a sparsely populated area, the Agent feared, would be productive of much hardship and irritation for the Nagas whom after exhibition of some force it would be the policy of the Government to conciliate. In view of these objections, Lord Auckland considered it inexpedient to employ the Manipuri force and agreed to the suggestion made by the Agent that a company of S. L. I. under a European officer should proceed to

<sup>26</sup> B.J.P., 1836; 22 November, Nos. 37-38.

<sup>27</sup> B.J.P., 1837; 8 August, No. 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> B.J.P., 1837; 25 April, Nos. 17-18; Jenkins to Macnaghten 12 March.

Haflong or any other place with a view to ascertaining the origin of the atrocity of the Nagas and also of devising measures for their future prevention.<sup>30</sup>

Accordingly, in early May, 1837, Lieutenant Lyons, the second in command S.L.I., was deputed to Cachar with a detachment of 200 sepoy.<sup>31</sup> Through the *Harkaras* or interpreters, he was directed to issue proclamations to the chief of the villages implicated inviting them to a friendly conference and assuring that no attempt would be made to detain them either in coming or from return from the place of meeting. He should held out to them indemnity for past offences subject to their emancipation of all the captives and to their entering into a solemn engagement to desist from future incursions and also to holding themselves responsible for offences committed by their people on the British subjects. Should the chief remain indifferent or refuse to accede to the terms set forth, he was to pursue them into their fastnesses and coerce them into submission. He was further instructed not to resort to burning and destroying their villages until every other expedient had been tried and failed, and even then to a very limited extent and only towards the most turbulent of the tribes implicated.<sup>32</sup>

In the middle of 1837, Lyons arrived at Haflong and preparations were set on foot for his advance into the land of the Angamis. In the meantime, the situation in the far eastern frontier became extremely disquieting. With the accession of ambitious Tharrawaddy to the throne of Ava, there loomed large the danger of another invasion from Burma.<sup>33</sup> The new monarch was determined to undo the treaty of Yandabo and he assumed a definite policy of hostility against the British Government by collecting arms, recruiting men and strengthening the frontier. The threatening attitude of Ava and the growing insecurity of frontier forced Lyons to suspend his departure and to remain in Cachar with his detachment until further orders from the headquarters.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> I.P.C., 1837; 8 May, No. 3; 9 June, No. 66-67.

<sup>32</sup> I.P.C., 1837; 19 September, No. 7.

<sup>33</sup> See Banerjee, A. C.; *Annexation of Burma*, Pp. 29-31, 33, 39-40; Desai, W.S.; *History of the British Residency in Burma*, Chapter XI.

<sup>34</sup> I.P.C., 1837; 8 November, No. 50; 21 September, No. 121.

As months passed, dark clouds were gathering fast in the political horizon of the whole of the North-East Frontier. Since the middle of 1838, the Angamis had made repeated attacks on the Kacharis; yet the commandant of the S. L. I. could not spare troops since they were employed against the refractory Marams in the Khasi Hills.<sup>35</sup> The Duflas of Naduar, as has already been mentioned, tendered their submission, but their kinsmen, namely the Latakateahs, not infrequently descended down on the plains and carried away men and livestock from the villages.<sup>36</sup> On the north of Kamrup the Bhutia chiefs made no response to the offer of terms by the local authorities; and it was evident that they would not acquiesce in without a further struggle. The death of the Barsenapati, the Muttock chief, on 2 January, 1839, afforded the Political Agent, Upper Assam, the opportunity to impose a tribute on the new incumbent; but Maju Gohain, the successor of the late chief, was a hard nut to crack; and it was obvious to White that nothing but force would compel the 'stiff-necked' Muttocks to come to a settlement.<sup>37</sup> The Singphos under Beesa Gaum showed signs of exhaustion, but Duffa was still at large in Hukwang, while the Tengapani Singphos were actively intriguing with the disaffected Khamtis at Sadiya.<sup>38</sup> Brodie reported, about this time, that the Nagas in the south of Jaypur were restive and an expedition had to be sent out against the tribes that occupied the hills on Assam-Manipur border.<sup>39</sup> Although there was no open demonstration of the Burmese against the British till the close of the year, it was feared that the Court of Ava would take the earliest opportunity to make its influence felt amongst the easily excited races in the frontier to ascertain the strength of the British in Upper Assam.<sup>40</sup>

The Commissioner of Assam rightly gauged the whole situation. The more he was entangled with these tribes, the more he was convinced of the necessity of 'a stronger and more constant manifestation of power' from a position in advance of

<sup>35</sup> I.P.C., 1838; 21 November, No. 104.

<sup>36</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 16 January, No. 52.

<sup>37</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 14 August, No. 105, White to Jenkins, 26 January.

<sup>38</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 16 January, No. 52.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



the headquarters of the A.L.I. 'Sadiya seems to me' he pointed out in a letter to the Government of India on 12 January, 1838, the most commanding position with reference not only to Ava but also with Singpho districts and it entirely commands the Muttock country containing the bulk of the population of the Sadiya district from whose cooperation or hostility we have most to hope or fear.'<sup>41</sup> When a reference was made on the subject to Major White, Political Agent, Upper Assam, the latter objected to the measure on the ground that there would be great difficulties in the supply of troops with provisions at Sadiya. He was also not agreeable to any alteration in the location of troops so long as the Bhutias and the Akas were carrying on raids in Charduar and Naduar, and the Duflas continued to be troublesome in the adjoining district under Raja Purander Singh.<sup>42</sup> Undoubtedly, conveyance of military stores in an emergency by upward navigation was expensive and inexpedient. The Commissioner too could not rule out the necessity of guarding the northern frontier against sudden inroads by the marauding tribes. But the nature of the hills and fastnesses and the difficulties of the terrain in the north led him to believe that it would be inexpedient to employ a larger force of the A.L.I. even if there be a necessity of invading the hills. Preference should be given in such operations to the Irregulars, the Shams and the Kacharis, who could carry their provisions for many days and also could subsist in any jungle.<sup>43</sup> In that event there could be no objection to removing the greater part of the A.L.I. to Sadiya where the state of affairs, of late, had become extremely disquieting. The proposal deserved all the more consideration in April, 1839, when on the departure of Lieutenant Miller, officer in-charge of Sadiya, the civil duties of the district fell on White. In this capacity, the Political Agent had to exercise the function of a Collector, Magistrate and Judge of an extensive district. In addition, he was to take cognizance of all capital crimes whether occurring in the territories occupied by the Khamtis, the Singhphos or the Muttocks. It was too much to expect that these duties could be properly discharged at

<sup>41</sup> I.P.C., 1838 ; 5 February, No. 33 ; Jenkins 12 January.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

Bishwanath; 'for it would be a mockery of justice to tell the people that they were on every trifling occasion to go to 250 miles to the residence of the Magistrate or the Judge.'<sup>44</sup>

In spite of these forceful considerations, owing to the uncertainties as to the fate of the Ahom monarchy in Upper Assam, the Commissioner did not press the matter. He was of course, relieved to some extent on the appointment of Hannay, in June 1838, as the second in command of the A.L.I. with headquarters at Jaypur. However, in August, the Government of India resolved on the resumption of Upper Assam, whereupon major changes became imperative in the military locations of the province. On 7 September, subject to the approval of the Governor-General in Council, the Commissioner of Assam directed Major White to remove the headquarters of the A.L.I. as well as the Political Agency to Sadiya.<sup>45</sup> Of the corps consisting of ten companies, three were to be located at Jorhat, one at Lakhimpur, two at Jaypur and the remaining four at the new headquarters. The officer second in command was stationed at Jaypur which enjoyed a commanding position as regards the passes to Ava and for its vicinity to the territory occupied by the Nagas demanding a greater degree of protection and surveillance than was done hitherto. He was also to supervise the Doancah Militia since raised in that quarter. As to the troops maintained by the ex-Raja Purandar Singh, namely the Assam Militia, consisting of five hundred *pykes* and one hundred Hindustanees, Jenkins wanted the latter to be retained in civil duties, but the former to be disbanded gradually. In Lower Assam, to compensate for the loss of the A. L. I., the Commissioner suggested that the Sebundis should be raised to ten companies and it should be redesignated as Lower Assam Local Corps or Light Infantry while the existing regiment as Upper Assam Local Corps or Light Infantry Battalion.<sup>46</sup>

In view of the annexation of Upper Assam, unsatisfactory relations with Ava and the probability of some troubles in Muttock on the expected death of the Barsenapati, the Governor-

<sup>44</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 23 January, No. 76; Jenkins to Prinsep, 28 December.

<sup>45</sup> I.P.C., 17 October, No. 161; Jenkins to White, 5 September.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*; 28 November, Nos. 131-32.

General in Council accorded their approval to the shifting of the headquarters of the A.L.I. to Sadiya. The military stores at Bishwanath were directed to be placed in the custody of some Sebundis to be moved to that station for the purpose. As to the location of troops and the number of men to be placed in each, the Commissioner was advised to settle these in consultation with the Political Agent, Upper Assam.<sup>47</sup>

There was hardly any possibility of an immediate flare up with Ava—Jenkins knew it well. But he was apprehensive of the Burmese machinations; they were capable of spreading such an alarm along the whole line of frontier as would seriously retard the settlement of the newly annexed territory. As a precautionary measure, in his subsequent letter he strongly urged the augmentation of the A.L.I. of ten to twelve men per company and the Sebundy corps to ten companies of one hundred men in each with necessary complement of European officers.<sup>48</sup> The relieve the Assam Militia from all detached duties, he further proposed to increase the existing strength of the Doaneah Militia to two or three companies of one hundred men in each. It would seem much better he remarked, 'to allow these husband men . . . . . to return to their ploughs and to enlist a more energetic race in their place, men who are besides valueless as cultivators.'

By these measures Jenkins hoped, the Irregulars would be sufficient to meet any emergency which might arise short of an invasion of a powerful Burmese army. The recommendations received the concurrence of the Lord Auckland who considered the augmentation of the local force in Assam as highly expedient not only as one of precaution but also of immediate necessity. The growing revenue of the province, it was hoped, would be found sufficient for the increased expense which the arrangements determined upon would entail.<sup>49</sup>

No sooner had Major White, the commandant of the A.L.I., removed a part of his regiments to Sadiya than in early morning on 28 January, 1839, the cantonment was suddenly attacked by the Khamtis.<sup>50</sup> The insurgents numbering about six hundred

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> I.P.C., 1839, 16 January, Nos. 52-54.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 20 February, Nos. 105-110.

armed with *daos*, spears and muskets commanded their assaults from all sides, seized the magazine, set fire the sepoy lines, killing every one on the way men, women and children. Major White while he was hastening from his bungalow to the military lines was cut to pieces. Amongst others killed was the Subedar Major of the Gorkha Regiment who killed two of the enemies who surrounded him. On the night preceeding the attack, the commandant had all the Khamti chiefs at his residence at an entertainment and they stayed with him till mid night. There was, therefore, little cause to suspect that they had made up their mind to commit the treacherous attack on that very night.<sup>51</sup>

The enemy was soon repulsed despite confusion and conflagration all around. Lieutenant Marshall who followed up the Khamtis succeeded in killing Ranua Gohain, the principal instigator, and one hundred twenty five others on the spot.<sup>52</sup> Captain Hannay, since vested with command of the A.L.I., had burnt all the Khamti villages near Sadiya and those of Derak and offered rewards for apprehension of other two leaders, Tao Gohain and Captain Gohain. Intelligence arrived from Bruce then at Jaypur that the people were greatly alarmed at the reports of an intended invasion of the Singphos and the Burmese. Brodie, Principal Assistant, Sibsagar, was directed to hasten one hundred men of the Assam Militia in case of any alarm in that quarter. On 6 February, the stormy weather and the absence of any detachment encouraged some Khamtis to carry raids on the Doaneah inhabitants nearabout Sadiya; but the assailants were gallantly repulsed by a Havildar's party detached from the A.L.I.<sup>53</sup>

'The attack of the Khamtis' remarked Jenkins, 'was the boldest attempt yet made in the eastern frontier'.<sup>54</sup> He was inclined to believe that although the Khamti chiefs were directly concerned, the Singphos, the Muttocks and even the Court of Ava had a secret hand in the insurrection. The various

<sup>51</sup> I.P.C., 1939; 27 February, Nos. 159-162.

<sup>52</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 6 March, No. 139; 2 March, No. 75; 13 March, No. 70.

<sup>53</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 20 March, No. 31.

<sup>54</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 20 February, No. 108; D.O., Jenkins to Prinsep, 4 February.

reports which reached the frontier, from time to time, the determination of the Muttock chief not to pay tribute to the British and the unusual arrival of a number of Kakos in the neighbouring Singpho village just on the eve of the occurrence led Hannay to suspect that some deep laid plot was made to subvert the British Government in Assam. In the event of their success, 'they would have been joined by countless host of plunderers ; and before assistance would have arrived Upper Assam would have been in a worse state than in 1825.'<sup>55</sup> It cannot be definitely stated if there was really an organised move of the tribal chiefs with the help of their supposed instigators on the other side of the hills. Nevertheless, the tragic event at Sadiya greatly alarmed the people and produced a profound sense of insecurity throughout the valley of the Brahmaputra.

<sup>55</sup> I.P.C., 1839 ; 22 May, No. 117 ; Hannay to Jenkins, 2 March.

## CHAPTER NINE

### TOWARDS CONSOLIDATION

'All remained quiet on the north of the Brahmaputra' so ran a communique from Hannay on 20 February, 1839.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, every precaution had to be taken to restore confidence in the minds of the people and to cover the country from disastrous raids expected at any moment from the Shans and the Singphos. 'We have neither army nor ammunitions' wrote Jenkins in his demi-official letter to Prinsep, Secretary to the Government of India, for he found only sixty men disposable at Bishwanath until the Sebundis moved up and relieve the guards in the Dufra frontier.<sup>2</sup> Even of the Sebundis, excepting raw recruits, very few were available since the corps had to be scattered in a number of small guards on the whole line of the frontier. He, therefore, urged the Governor-General in Council hurriedly to despatch a regiment of Regulars and, in the meantime, Lieutenant Jones who was in command of the troops at Bishwanath was directed to move with all disposable troops to Sadiya.<sup>3</sup> Major Simmund, the Commandant of the Sebundis, was instructed to proceed with all men he could spare to Bishwanath and the district officers were also asked to relieve the guards by the A.L.I. and the Sebundis as could be spared by drafting local militia, if necessary, for the purpose of concentrating troops in Upper Assam.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, Hannay was authorised to complete two companies of the Doaneahs of one hundred in each which was to relieve the Assam Militia then engaged in duties in the Naga frontier.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 20 March, No. 31.

<sup>2</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 20 February, No. 105; D. O. Jenkins to Prinsep, 1 February; No. 108, 4 February.

<sup>3</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 27 February, No. 159; Jenkins to Prinsep, 4 February.

<sup>4</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 6 March, No. 129; Jenkins to Brodie, 9 February.

<sup>5</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 2 March, No. 75.

The authorities in Calcutta were greatly alarmed by the tragic event at Sadiya. To tide over the immediate crisis, they ordered the despatch of a detachment of Regular troops for services in Assam and accorded their approval to the measures since adopted by the Agent to the Governor-General.<sup>6</sup> Captain Hannay was confirmed as the commandant of the A.L.I., while Lieutenant Marshall was made the second in command.<sup>7</sup> The jurisdiction of Brigadier W. D. Littler of the Eastern Command was extended to the North-East Frontier so as to give him a general control over the movement of different corps without, of course, interfering with the authority of the Commissioner of local corps.<sup>8</sup>

The insurrection made it clear to the Agent to the Governor-General that the South-East Frontier was extremely vulnerable. 'Whether we do go to war or not (with Ava) we shall long have troubled frontier in the south-east and east from the difficulties of controlling the Singphos and the Khamtis to quiet submission'.<sup>9</sup> Even if there be no war, he felt, that the prospects of peace were extremely bleak on account of the jealousy of the Burmese who never ceased to keep the frontier districts in a state of alarm. This constant apprehension not only disturbed the tranquility of the whole of the frontier but also adversely affected the growing tea industry in that quarter. To put a stop to this state of affairs, in his despatch on 28 April, 1839, the Agent brought home to the Governor-General in Council the expediency of bringing under effective control the entire region by the establishment of a number of advanced posts which would make it impracticable for the Singphos and the Kakos to enter into this side of the frontier.<sup>10</sup> The proposed outposts should be stockaded; and one of these should have a gun cannonades. This would secure, he hoped, the fidelity of Beesa and other Gaums who could, hitherto, render little aid for fear of being cut off before any succour could reach them from the detachment at Sadiya.<sup>11</sup> This necessarily involved an

<sup>6</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 3 April, No. 118.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 5 June, No. 87.

<sup>9</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 22 May, No. 117; Jenkins to Vetch, 28 March.

<sup>10</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 5 June, No. 84; Jenkins to Prinsep, 27 April.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

increase in the strength of the local corps which should be made sufficient to meet all ordinary demands without looking to reinforcement from Jamalpur. He, therefore, suggested that the headquarters of the A.L.I. should be located at Seebpur (Sibsagar) which commanded the route to Ava and a few detachments may be posted at Jaypur, Lakhimpur, and Sadiya.<sup>12</sup> But the main wing of the regiment, numbering about five hundred, should be kept as a reserve for any emergency and should not be frittered away by taking small posts in the frontier. Moreover, this regiment, composed as it did mostly of the Hindustanees, was less capable of enduring the climate and jungle warfare. To relieve the A.L.I. from the small outposts and to provide for the detachments of the proposed advanced posts and also to ensure security to planters and manufacturers, Jenkins proposed to raise a new corps composed of hard natives of the frontier able to endure privations and exposures and to pursue the enemy without any assistance of transport for conveyance of their baggage and ammunition. What Jenkins wanted to do was to increase the strength of the Doaneahs since authorised to a levy of two hundred men to a regiment of eight companies of eighty men in each to be composed of the Doaneahs, the Rabhas and the Kacharis.<sup>13</sup>

The continued disturbances of the eastern tribes and the outbreak at Sadiya drove home the authorities in Calcutta the insecurity of the whole of the North-East Frontier. The gravity of the situation found eloquent expression in a minute of W. W. Bird, a member of the Supreme Council, wherein he observed :

'The affair of Sadiya sufficiently demonstrates what these tribes are capable of effecting. There is little doubt that had that attack been successful Upper Assam would have been in the utmost danger of being lost; and even though it failed, the panic which it occasioned extended not only throughout the province but all along the eastern frontier. The loss of the province or even any serious impression made upon our forces in that quarter would be attended with consequences, the extent of which it is not easy to foresee. Not only would the whole of the tea cultivation, now of more importance than ever, be swept away but it would open a road into the heart of our most valuable provinces to a host of enemies.'<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*; see Minute by Hon'ble, W. W. Bird, 22 May.



The Governor-General in Council, therefore, strongly felt that effective steps should be taken for the defence of the frontier and the protection of the inhabitants from future attacks. Sharing the views of the Commissioner, the President-in Council in his minute, on 22 May, laid greater stress on the increase in local corps and deprecated the very idea of employing the Regulars in the North-East Frontier.<sup>15</sup> He remarked :

'They require so much in the way of Commissariat, spend so very little in the country, excite so much envy amongst the locals who receive little pay and (are) so liable to sink both the health and spirits, that it is seldom that either the Government or the people can desire any greater benefit from their presence in a province like Assam.'<sup>16</sup>

With the concurrence of Lord Auckland, the Governor-General, it was resolved to raise a new levy of 640 men, the second Sebundy corps, on the lines suggested by the Agent, with headquarters at Jaypur.<sup>17</sup> The new corps should be formed by drafts from the old Sebundis and embodying the Doaneah Militia to the strength mentioned above. As a measure of economy, it was directed that the pay of the men should on no account exceed that of the Sebundis *i.e.* rupees five per month, rather endeavours should be made to induce to engage them at a lesser amount, say rupees four, with the assurance of a bonus of rupees fifty or sixty after a period of creditable service of four or five years.<sup>18</sup> Apart from this discrimination, difficulty arose from the fact that the Sebundis, who were so long maintained exclusively for services in Lower Assam, were not expected to occupy posts and perform duties in Upper Assam unless they were put on a par as to the pay and the *battas* with A.L.I. When this was intimated to the Government of India, the Agent was taken to task in not bringing the matter to the notice of the Government at the time of his recommendation of the augmentation of this corps in his earlier letter on the subject. The successive increase in strength, it was pointed out, would not have been sanctioned if the Government had supposed that

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid* ; see Minute by Hon'ble, T. C. Robertson.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* No. 87 ; also P.L.I.B., 1839, 26 August, No. 65.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

the Sebundis were not capable of being employed elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> In these circumstances, the Government of India had to revise their earlier order and to reduce the old Sebundis to eight companies of eighty in each. The Commissioner was advised that the remaining two companies be added to the new Sebundy corps in Upper Assam by the transfer of the new recruits from the old. It was also added that the Government would admit of no claim to the *battas* on the part of the men of either corps except when actually serving either with the A.L.I. or with the Regulars in the field.<sup>20</sup> The Government of India considered it inexpedient to authorise immediate disbandment of the Assam Militia, as was desired by Jenkins; at all event prior to the organisation of the Sebundy corps at such a state of discipline as would enable it to perform the duties that were expected of it.<sup>21</sup> Another detachment of two companies of the 30th Regiment was also ordered to be despatched to Bishwanath; and this corps was to stay there until the new levies were completely reorganised.<sup>22</sup>

The station of Jaypur, situated in the midst of tea districts, was made the headquarters of the new corps. From it, guards could be relieved in the Singphos country and along the Naga frontier. For convenience of communication with Jaypur south and eastwards, the cantonment was to be removed from Sadiya to Saikhowa on this side of the Brahmaputra.<sup>23</sup> Doubtful fidelity of the Singphos rendered it necessary, as suggested by the Agent, to raise up stockades at Delli, Tazee, Koojoodoo and Ningroo; and also to open up lines of communication from Saikhowa to Jaypur and thence to Ningroo so as to complete the lines of defence.<sup>24</sup>

On 18 September, 1839, Brigadier Littler was advised by the Government of India to proceed to Assam, and in concert with the local authorities he was to direct the movement of troops and to select the positions to be temporarily occupied for the

<sup>19</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 9 October, No. 90.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 94; P.L.I.B., 1839; 13 April, No. 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> I. P. C., 18 September, Nos. 159-60.

<sup>23</sup> P.L.I.B., 1839; 16 August No. 65.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

defence in the north and extreme eastern frontier.<sup>25</sup> With the Sebundis supported by the reinforcement then under way from Jamalpur, it was hoped, the Agent would be able to make all necessary arrangement in the Bhutan frontier; while two companies of the same corps stationed at Gowalpara would be sufficient to check and punish any act of violence or insubordination on the part of the Garos in the south. Reinforcement could also be pushed up into that quarter through the Sylhet road, if necessary. These measures, it was hoped, made adequate provisions for the defence of the North-East Frontier in any emergency.

The Moamarias or the Muttocks, hitherto, supplied the sinews of war against the hostile tribes in the south east-frontier. The substitution of the Doaneahs for these 'doubtful contingents' gradually removed their indispensability; while the affair at Sadiya disillusioned the Government once for all in regard to any reliance formerly placed on these auxiliaries. Even Maju Gohain, the Muttock chief, was suspected of having complicity in the late incident. He had also strongly opposed, as mentioned elsewhere, to the payment of the tribute demanded by the Political Agent as the price of recognition of the chief by the British Government. Appointed as he was by the vote of his followers, it was difficult to oust him; nor was it possible on the part of this chief to enter into a new agreement against the expressed wishes of his community. 'We cannot hold to the demand of Rs. 10,000 without the risk of disaffection,' remarked Vetch since appointed Political Agent, Upper Assam.<sup>26</sup> But once the demands were made to forgo it without a further equivalent would be attributed to weakness.

Towards the close of 1839, the arrival of the 36th Regiment under Captain Lloyd at Dibrugarh, emboldened the local authorities to direct their attention to Muttock. But the application of force was unnecessary; the Muttocks were now divided into two sectarian groups—the Muttocks and Morans, each under a *Gossain* or spiritual head, aimed at dominating the other.<sup>27</sup> The Morans, who formed the bulk of the population, claiming a superiority of extraction, defied the authority of Maju Gohain; and their party strife went so high as to induce them to welcome

<sup>25</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 18 September, No. 160.

<sup>26</sup> I.P.C., 1839; 14 August, 1839, No. 105; Vetch to Jenkins, 11 May.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*; Jenkins to Prinsep, 29 May.

the rule of the British in preference to that of the Muttocks. The endeavours which Vetch subsequently made to effect a compromise between the two rival groups ended in failure. Morans emphatically declared their unwillingness to accept the rule of the Gohains.<sup>28</sup> He, therefore, resolved on the separation of the Morans from the Muttocks and desired to vest Maju Gohain with the management of his followers should he enter into a new agreement with the Government.<sup>29</sup> On the refusal of the latter or any one of the chiefs to accept the charge of the truncated territory, the Political Agent formally annexed Muttock and placed it under the jurisdiction of the Principal Assistant, Lakhimpur.<sup>30</sup>

The local authorities rightly feared that the Muttock chiefs who had considerable influence over their followers would not reconcile themselves to loss of their power; that they were sure to take advantage of any disturbance in that frontier that might hold out before them the prospect of a change in government. To guard against any machination on their part, on the advice of the Political Agent, the Government of India directed the Agent to station the proposed second Sebundy corps at Rongagora, which was so long the stronghold of the Muttock chiefs.<sup>31</sup> The headquarters of the Political Agency was also shifted, about the sametime, to Dibrugarh, on the bank of the river of the same name, three miles off the Brahmaputra.<sup>32</sup>

Political uncertainties occasioned, hitherto, frequent shifting of headquarters and the erection of temporary structures, both civil and military, of combustible materials always exposed to the surprise attacks of the predatory tribes. 'Had there been a fortress', remarked Vetch, 'the affair of Sadiya could never have occurred, and (*in any case*) 'there could not have been depopulation in consequence at Sadiya and Saikhowa'.<sup>33</sup> The

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 106.

<sup>29</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 26 December, Nos. 74-75; Vetch to Jenkins, 28 November.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* For details, see Barpujari, H. K., *Assam in the Days of the Company*. Chapter VI.

<sup>31</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 9 March, Nos. 169-70, Vetch to Jenkins, 26 December, 1839.

<sup>32</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 15 January, Nos. 115-16; 5 February, No. 73.

<sup>33</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 9 March, No. 169; Vetch to Jenkins, 26 December, 1839.

tragedy brought home to the Government of India the urgency of establishing not only a number of frontier outposts but also erecting therein fortifications to resist incursions of any enemy in that quarter. In early 1840, Major Garstin, the Superintending Engineer, Lower Provinces, under orders of the Government visited the military stations in Eastern Assam; and the comprehensive scheme which he later submitted to the Government envisaged construction of several masonry forts and block houses besides repair and reconstruction of the roads and embankments in Upper Assam.<sup>34</sup>

Garstin recommended that a small but strong fort should be erected at Rongagara, the headquarter of the second Sebundis; but a temporary godown would suffice at Dibrugarh which was not intended to be a military station. He felt that the shifting of the cantonment to Saikhowa from Sadiya was a wise measure; for with the completion of the proposed roads it would have easier communication with Rongagora and other outposts which would enable it to sustain in an emergency more easily than a cantonment on the other side of the Brahmaputra. However, it would be politic to strengthen the buildings at Sadiya where supplies could not move speedily through the intervention of the mighty Brahmaputra. To command the navigation of the Dibang and to protect the inhabitants in and around Sadiya, he added, that a stronger party must be stationed at the former place and a small one at Sadiya; and that block houses should be built at both the posts, so that these could be maintained during the rains, if attacked, and be under no apprehension of surprise attack or being burnt out as had happened at Sadiya.<sup>35</sup>

At Sibsagar, the new headquarters of the A.L.I., Garstin proposed to have the cantonment for seven companies of troops and the detachment of artilleries on the bank of the river Dikhow. Therein, the military lines and even the bungalows for the officers should be of temporary nature, but the bell of arms, gunsheds, guard and store rooms must be made permanent.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 3 August, No. 95; Garstin to Bude, K. D., Secretary, Military Board, 2 March.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

Saikhowa was to canton remaining three companies of troops. But on account of the various guards and outposts and sickness of the men, the force located, therein, would be much small. Even of these, it would be necessary at times to send out detachments when the post would be very weak, which rendered it necessary to have a blockhouse to enable its occupants to hold out until relieved from Rongagora or Sibsagar. Situated in midst of the territory of the Singphos, close to the Nagas and commanding the route to Ava, the strategical importance of Ningroo\* was great. Garstin recommended the construction of a large blockhouse at this post and two smaller ones at Tazee and Koojoo ; and the latter should be well provisioned so as to sustain a detachment for a few months if suddenly ordered to advance in that quarter.<sup>37</sup>

Jaypur was, hitherto, the key of Upper Assam. Situated on the bank of the Buridihing, and in the midst of tea tracts, this station was on the main road between Sibsagar and Rongagora, and half way between Sibsagar and Saikhowa as well as on the direct route to Ningroo and Beesa. Garstin considered it necessary to have a stronger blockhouse at this post which would also serve the purpose of a Magazine and store room. Instead of sending out detachments to nearby outposts, he suggested that the troops should be concentrated at Jaypur since they could advance to those, if needed, before intimation could reach Sibsagar, Rongagora or Saikhowa.<sup>38</sup>

Garstin recommended not only the erection of several masonry structures but also the opening up of a number of roads so as to admit of a free and uninterrupted communication at all times between the civil stations and military outposts and with one another ; of these, he suggested that a road should be made from the mouth of the river Dikhow to the headquarters of the A.L.I., at Sibsagar. The road which had already been

\* One of the objectives in establishing this post was to give the means of safe retreat to the numerous Assamese then kept in bondage in the northern districts of Burma. The presence of an officer and the detachment, it was hoped, would provide for the security of the refugees who might be able to effect their escape and it would greatly tend towards the maintenance of tranquility all along the frontier.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

cleared from the latter post to the Buridihing should be extended to Saikhowa *via* Dibrugarh and Rongagora. For speedy movement of troops, he further recommended improvement of communication from Saikhowa to Tazee, repair of the bund road from the latter post to Ningroo, and the reconstruction of the old Raja Ali, connecting Jaypur and Sibsagar on the one hand and Saikhowa on the other.

In a subsequent note on 2 March, Garstin drew the attention of the Government of India that the defensive measures for Lower Assam was also not very favourable. The Sebundis, on whom devolved these duties, were called upon so often to send out detachments against the Garos, the Bhutias, the Nagas besides manning the guards at Gowalpara and the Khasi Hills, that it would be extremely difficult on their part to meet any emergency in that extensive frontier unless reinforcement arrived to their succour. And this could be done more speedily from Sylhet, the headquarters of the S.L.I., than from any other quarter. He, therefore, strongly recommended that the roads and bridges between Gauhati and Sylhet should always be kept in order so that troops could be moved up at a short notice.<sup>39</sup>

In view of the urgency in the matter the Governor-General in Council lost no time in sanctioning the military constructions and the lines of communications recommended by Garstin; and for their speedy execution, Lieutenant Splita was appointed the Executive Engineer, Upper Assam.<sup>40</sup>

As advised by the Government of India, Brigadier Littler arrived at Dibrugarh on 13 December, 1839. He proceeded by land to Rongagora, Tingri, Jaypur and thence to Tiphuk, Dangri, Saikhowa and Sadiya.<sup>41</sup> He was glad to report on return that 'perfect tranquility prevailing throughout (Upper Assam) as well as on the surrounding frontier'. The defensive measures contemplated and in progress, he hoped, would be 'fully adequate' to meet any emergency short, of course, a general war. Adverting however to the possibility of some commotion in Muttock, he recommended the retention of the

<sup>39</sup> B.J.P. (Criminal), 1840; 14 July, No. 53; Garstin to Bude, 2 March.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

two Companies of the 36th Regiment, under Captain Lloyd, then in their boats at Dibrugarh, for a few months ; after which they should rejoin the detachment of the same corps under Major Chapman at Bishwanath.<sup>42</sup>

The annexation of Muttock brought the whole of the valley of Brahmaputra under the direct control of the British Government ; but there still remained the Bhutan *duars* a plague spot in the north. While the tribute remained unpaid, oppression, plunder and murder of persons in the *duars* even of those in authority had become an affair of constant occurrence. On 4 January, 1839, the Collector of Kamrup reported the murder of Gambhir Uzir, a Kachari chief of Kulling *duar*, by one Daka Raja under the orders of Tongso Pilo, the viceroy of Eastern *duars*.<sup>43</sup> The Uzir incurred the displeasure of the Bhutia chief by preventing the entry of the criminals into his jurisdiction, and, occasionally, acting in deference to the wishes of the British authorities. 'You know the gentlemen at Gowhatty, but donot know me' so saying the Daka Raja cut him to pieces, plundered his property and carried away his family into the hills.<sup>44</sup> Later, Joradea Moholea, the Thakuria of Buriguma, was robbed and reduced to beggary on the ground that he had aided the British in the seizure of a gang of dacoits.<sup>45</sup> 'The Bhutan Government is actually defunct', remarked Jenkins, 'there is no existing authority to which we can apply for redress of our grievances'.

In the meantime, a study of the elaborate report on Bhutan submitted by Pemberton and the recommendations made by the local authorities had enabled the Governor-General in Council to lay down the policy towards Bhutan.<sup>46</sup> After reviewing the whole situation, on 20 March 1839, Prinsep brought home to the Agent to the Governor-General that the Government of Bhutan, at that juncture, was in such a position as to be unable to make any arrangement that could be depended upon. Pending convulsions in Bhutan, he added, it

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> I. P. C., 1839 ; 27 March, No. 78 ; Matthie to Jenkins, 4 January.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* ; I. P. C., 1839 ; 13 November, No. 73 ; Jenkins to Deb, 8 August.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> I. P. C., 1839 ; 27 March, No. 82 ; Prinsep to Jenkins, 20 March.



was assuredly the right of the British Government to resume the *duars* and to make such arrangements as might render their proper arrangement.<sup>47</sup> Jenkins was however instructed to act with discretion with reference to the means he possessed of permanently occupying the *duars*. If he was unable to hold the whole, he was to select those which could be held easily during all seasons; but if he considered it expedient to occupy all the *duars* he was to do so by announcing his reasons to the Government of Bhutan by proclamation mentioning, therein, that whenever the Bhutia authorities would be in a condition to negotiate, the British authorities in Assam would be ready and willing to bestow on its claims to participate in any benefit or revenue that might be desired.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time, it was made clear to the Agent that these measures were applicable to the *duars* under Tongs Pilo alone, and not to be extended to the Koriapara *duar*; for the Governor-General had some doubts as to the nature of arrangement by the former government with the Towang Raja who was a dependent of the Government of Lhasa.<sup>49</sup> To remove their misunderstanding, Jenkins was however advised to explain to that authority the grounds of the measures adopted and soliciting their intervention for an amicable settlement of the *duar* in question with the Sath Rajas and other chiefs for the protection and security of the British subjects in that frontier.<sup>50</sup>

The attitude of the Government of India, however, took a decisive turn when on 24 April, Madhu Saikia, the Patgiri of the *mouza* Orung, was treacherously murdered by a party of Kampo Bhutias headed by Nirboo Raja, one of the Sath Rajas and a vassal of the chief of Towang.<sup>51</sup> The Patgiri had to pay dearly with his life, for he too had to act against the wishes of the chief in enforcing the new revenue measures since introduced by the Government.\* Lieutenant Scott, Junior Assistant, Darrang,

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 13 May, No. 113; Jenkins, 27 April.

\* Scott reported that in December last, the Bhutias instead of coming down, as usual, sent a deputation consisting of a chief and about twenty others. The former told the Junior Assistant that the Deb of Towang

hastened a party of sepoy against the miscreants; but the latter abandoned their post at Daymara and escaped into the hills. Incessant rain rendered it impossible further pursuit of the fugitives. In a peremptory note Jenkins demanded of the Towang Raja the surrender of the murderers; in default of which he proposed to attach Koriapara *duar* and to close the Charduar to the Kampos after the rains.<sup>52</sup> 'The retainer of the Towang Rajah deprives this chief of any claim to any consideration than the Tongso Pilo Rajah' so came a reply from Prinsep<sup>53</sup>, On 28 August, and the Agent was authorised to adopt measures necessary for the retention of the Koriapara *Duar* after the expiry of the ensuing term and also to repel any attempt at forcible collection of blackmail from Orung until murderers were given up and satisfactory adjustment effected.<sup>54</sup>

The Government of India could not have arrived at this bold decision, but for the clarification made by the Agent with respect to the rights of the British Government, as successor to the former government, over these *duars*. On the authority of some official documents preserved at the residence of a respectable family of Charduar, Jenkins drew the attention of the Governor-General in Council that the former government exercised full jurisdiction over these *duars* and prescribed the articles the Bhutias were entitled to collect. The Barphukan or the Viceroy of Gauhati, exercised his right of placing *chokis* within the *duars* and also of regulation not only the articles to be taken out of these *duars* but also the prices to be paid by the ryots in exchanging products. In cases of arrears of tribute, refusal of surrender of the fugitives or criminals or any breach in the established agreements, the Bhutias were not allowed to enter into the *duars* or to barter their products; and no

had come in person to Ruprae *chang* and hold a meeting to discuss whether they would accept the amount of *posa* as proposed by the Government and later, they came down to ascertain the feelings of the local authorities. Madhu Saikia, who escorted them on their return as far as Daymara, told Scott that he had heard that the chiefs had whispered to one of his followers that they would not take the *posa* and would make some one to suffer for it. I. P. C., 1839; 24 July, No. 9; Scott 16 May.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*; No. 115.

<sup>54</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 28 August, No. 94.

Bhutia was allowed to move from one to another *duar* unaccompanied by the Duar Officer appointed for the purpose.<sup>55</sup>

These were indeed revelations to the President-in Council who now held that the Bhutias possessed no rights on the plains except such as might be derived from the result of a compromise—‘having the power to plunder they agreed to refrain from it on condition of being allowed to share in the produce of certain lands either by the levy of certain dues or through a temporary possession and administration of certain tracts’. Since the Government of Bhutan had failed to fulfil the terms of the agreement, the British Government must assert its right of resumption of the *duars* so absolutely necessary for the suppression of the lawlessness within that tract and on the frontier.<sup>56</sup>

The removal of all disposable troops, including the Sebundis, to eastern Assam consequent upon the outbreak of the Khamtis at Sadiya prevented Jenkins from attaching the *duars* immediately, in spite of the strongest terms in which the President-in Council advocated such a measure. Pending the arrival of the 36th Regiment, then under way to Bishwanath, Jenkins did not venture to precipitate matters in the Bhutan frontier. On 8 August, 1839, he addressed a letter to the Deb Raja summarising therein the past events and the proposed policy of the British Government towards the Bhutan *duars* in Assam.<sup>57</sup> With reference to the arrears of tribute and excesses on the part of the Bhutia officials in plundering and murdering men of authority and responsibility, Jenkins drew his pointed attention of the Deb to the latter’s inability to put down such acts of rapine and lawlessness owing to the anarchy and confusion then prevailing at his headquarters. He was reminded that the *duars* were an integral part of Assam, and held by the Bhutan Government as long as it fulfilled the conditions on which it was allowed to occupy them. The British Government

<sup>55</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 12 June, No. 72; Jenkins to Prinsep, 24 May; *vide* Appendix III.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 13 November, No. 74; Jenkins to Deb Raja, 8 August.

as a successor to the former government could not see the total destruction of the *duars* without taking steps for the redress of the wrongs done to its subjects and secure its own revenue from loss. In conclusion, it was brought home to the Deb :

'Until you have liquidated the arrears due by all the Dooars and satisfied me that you are able to arrange for the better Government of the Dooars and can impose your subordinate officers to conform the ancient customs in their management and also to pay their tribute regularly that I shall retain under my management the two Dooars Boorigoomah and Kullung.'<sup>58</sup>

Neither the Deb nor the Towang Raja cared to respond to the communications made by the Agent to the Governor-General while complaints of aggression continued to pour in at the headquarters. Thereupon, in early October, when the Sebundis were relieved by the arrival of the detachment of Regulars at Bishwanath, the Agent directed Scott to take necessary measures for the retention of the three *duars* on the north of Darrang and to repel any attempt that might be made by the Bhutias to enter into the plains.<sup>59</sup>

The affairs in Bhutan became all the more confused towards the close of 1840. To the scramble for power in the hills there was added a party strife between two chiefs, Durga Deb and Hargobind Katma, for the possession of certain tracts in the *duars* of Bengal.<sup>60</sup> In a letter when the Deb Raja apprised the Agent of the state of affairs in Bhutan, the latter believed that the authorities at Punakha were now inclined to come to a settlement with the British Government and, as such, the deputation of another envoy at this juncture might be attended with a more successful result than was obtained by the late mission. In making this suggestion to the Government of India, Jenkins remarked :<sup>61</sup> 'If our envoy was unable to prevail on the Bootan Government . . . . . I should have no hesitation in immediately occupying all the Dooars, both of Bengal and Assam . . . . . and preparation for that event should be made

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> I. P. C., 1840 ; 20 July, Nos. 110-13 ; 14 September No. 64 ; see also Eden' A ; *Political Mission to Bootan*, Pp. 20-21 ; P. L. I., 1841 ; 5 July, No. 38.

<sup>61</sup> I. P. C., 1840 ; 12 April, Nos. 75-76.

when the officer proposed to be deputed moved up to Bootan.' Anxious to arrive at a settlement, the Government of India readily agreed to the proposal, and Jenkins was authorised on 2 November 1840, to depute a native officer to communicate with the Deb and also to conclude, if possible, the most desirable agreement.<sup>62</sup> Jenkins, however, did not follow up the matter; for in the meanwhile matters drifted from bad to worse in the duars. Consequent upon the oppression of the Bhutias intelligence arrived that the revenue officers of the Buxaduar in a body had left the *duar* and took refuge with their families in the Company's territory.<sup>63</sup> Reports came from Goalpara, a few days later, that a party of the Bhutias had forcibly occupied Ilachijan, a tract then in possession of the Raja of Bijni, plundered the latter's *kutchary* and carried away some of his servants into the hills. In the east, the Charduar Bhutias were also reported to have fortified themselves at Daymara necessitating thereby immediate despatch of a detachment under Scott to that quarter.<sup>64</sup>

The successive acts of aggressions confirmed the belief of the Governor-General in Council that so long as Bhutan continued in her distracted state and anarchy, restoration of the law and order in the *duars* was out of question, and sufferings of the Kachari subjects in the border areas would never cease. Therefore, the British Government would be fully justified in occupying all the *duars* without any further negotiation with the Bhutia authorities.<sup>65</sup> So when in early July 1841, Jenkins sought to reopen the question of deputing a second envoy to Bhutan in the hope of either obtaining the right of farming the *duars* or of settling the feuds of the Bhutia officers through the mediation of the British Government, he was told in unambiguous terms that under existing circumstances the Governor-General in Council saw little prospect of obtaining a valid cession of the rights of Bhutan in the Assam *duars* from any competent authority, and that they were not disposed to depute another agent to that country.<sup>66</sup> 'Fruitless mission of this kind'

<sup>62</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 2 November, No. 24.

<sup>63</sup> P. L. I., 1841; 5 July, No. 38.

<sup>64</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 22 February, Nos. 117-18; 15 March, Nos. 87-88.

<sup>65</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 14 June, Nos. 83-6.

<sup>66</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 26 July, Nos. 81-82.

it was observed, 'would only lead to embarrassments and will not be creditable to the British Government.' Not the authorities at the Fort William alone, the Court of Directors at the Home, in the meantime, accorded their approval to the measures, of late, pursued by the Government towards Bhutan. In a despatch on 11 May, 1841, the Directors observed :<sup>67</sup>

'Independently of the failure of Bootan to fulfil their engagement as to tribute and other matters, their misgovernment and their want of power to control their own officers are significant grounds for considering them to have in strictness forfeited their rights to the possession of the Dooars so as to have their absolute and permanent resumption merely a question of policy.'

Emboldened, thus, by the sentiment of the Court, on 6 September, 1841, the Governor-General in Council resolved on the annexation of the remaining *duars* in Kamrup; and the Agent to the Governor-General was, accordingly, directed to take necessary measures. To strengthen the frontier outposts, he was authorised to raise the Sebundis to eight companies of one hundred men in each. Pending enlistment and training of the recruits, a party of one hundred Sylhet Light Infantry was placed at the disposal of the Agent for services in the *duars*. A proclamation announcing the attachment *duars* was issued at Tambulpur, in Buxaduar, by the Magistrate of Kamrup on 25 December, 1841.<sup>68</sup>

After assuming the management of the *duars*, the Collector of Darrang imposed a hearth and a poll tax at the rate of a rupee and three rupees each respectively in lieu of the exactions in kind hitherto made by the Bhutias. Not only was there a steady increase in the net receipts of the Government, but the revenues were paid with greater ease and without any defalcation. Gradually fugitives were found returning and the ryots expressed a preference for the recent arrangements. The Collector of Darrang made it clear to the Government of India that if the Bhutias were again allowed to exercise jurisdiction in these areas, the whole of the inhabitants would fly and that many who had previously fled were prevented from returning by the uncertainty of British occupation over the *duars*.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> C.D., 1841; 11 May No. 12, Paras, 79-91.

<sup>68</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 6 September, Nos. 69-70; 17 January, 1842, No. 80.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

Sharing these views, the Agent to the Governor-General brought home to the Governor-General in Council that the Kachari inhabitants of the *duars* had always looked upon themselves as the subjects of Assam Government and not of Bhutan, and as such they received protection of the former on several occasions. For a better management of the *duars*, he added, the British Government could never trust the promises of any other agency; division of its authority would be productive of perennial disputes, while a cession of the *duars* would lead to wholesale emigration with attended loss to the Government without much benefit to the authorities in Bhutan.<sup>70</sup>

'From motives alike of policy and humanity' in their proceedings on 20 September 1840, the Governor-General in Council decided not to entertain any proposition for the restoration of the *duars* to the Bhutias under whose rule the unfortunate people were subjected to all the evils of a backward government.<sup>71</sup> It was also observed:

'The tenure in which these Dooars were held by the Bhutias for a certain period of each year gave them no title to claim them as their own territory. The right of Paramountcy always vested with the Government of Assam by whom the rule of the *duars* for certain months of the year was granted to the Bhutias as the price of their forbearance from plundering these and other tracts in the plains.'<sup>72</sup>

The Governor-General in Council therefore, held the view that any pretension to claim that the Bhutias had would be equivalent for the value of *duars* previous to their resumption, which the Government was disposed to grant on condition of their abstaining from encroachments on the British territory, and an engagement to the effect might be made with any responsible party from that Government. Local authorities were, accordingly, advised to make it generally known that the *duars* had been permanently annexed and that its inhabitants were brought under the sole management and protection of the British Government.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 20 September, Nos. 73-74.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

Misgovernment in the *duars* and the failure of tribute had been mainly the grounds, as we have seen, that led to the permanent annexation of the Bhutan *duars* in Assam. Eversince the Government of Bhutan fell into a distracted state, it had failed to do its duties which it owed to its neighbours. Apart from the exaction and oppression of its own chiefs, the *duars* never ceased to be the refuge and harbour for dacoits and escaped criminals whose repeated acts of aggression and pillage made the lives and properties of the border areas wholly insecure ; and no individual with security to himself gave any assistance in bringing the culprits to book.\* Such activities were rife, it must be remembered, for over half a century and it is doubtful even in its palmy days the former government of Assam could effectively check them. No wonder, therefore, after lapse of time, the Bhutias considered it a right of their own to plunder and dominate the helpless inhabitants of the plains ; and any resistance or restriction to their prescriptive rights was visited by the fury and vengeance of these hillmen on the north. The stories of Gambhir Uzir, Madhu Saikia and several others clearly indicate that the invaders had not so much grievance against the individuals as such but against the system which they represented. As to the arrears of tribute,

\* During their period of occupation, from 15 October to 15 June, in the Darrang *duars*, C. Scott, J. A. Darrang, writes, that several chiefs descended down on the plains and 'let loose the whole of their followers amounting at times seven to eight hundred who scattered over the country putting up in any ryots house they pleased quartering themselves in any number without any reference to the means the poor ryot possessed and remaining with each family for such a length of time . . . . . as provisions lasted.'

The *duars* were the resort of all robbers, runaways and 'criminals who with impunity kill as many as they liked or took away anything they desired'. At the expiry of the period, most of them took refuge in the hills. Should, however, any one of them remained and were, later, caught through the instrumentality of some, the informant was sure to be killed or plundered of anything he possessed. Doubtless, life and property in these *duars* were far from being secure ; and a man property, during the rule of the Bhutias, was obliged to appear as the lowest peasant, for even mere suspicion of his being owner of any property would subject him to strict espionage and forcible seizure of whatever he possessed. I. P. C., 1844 ; 20 April, No. 128 ; Scott to Jenkins, 14 January.



according to official figures, it accumulated to the tune of Rs. 45,500.<sup>74</sup> The Government of Bhutan repudiated such claim as untenable. In a letter the Deb Raja pointed out to the Agent that the former Government received from Bhutan as a nominal tribute some horses and articles without any reference to prices and quality. Since these were now put to auction the full amount of revenue was not realised and hence arrears occurred. There can indeed be no rebuttal when the Deb argued that if these articles were 'shamelessly bad why are they not rejected or returned.'<sup>75</sup>

Here we are confronted with the conflict of ideas and interests of two governments of two distinct characters which were irreconcilable. Conscious of the legality of its rights, superiority in power, incapacity of the Bhutias, the British Government could hardly follow the policy of appeasement of the former Government and would allow the continued existence of a plague spot on its borders to imperil the life and property of its own subjects.

<sup>74</sup> Foreign Department Political A, June 1864.

<sup>75</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 14 June, No. 84; see translation of a letter from the Deb to the Agent to the Governor-General.

## CHAPTER TEN

### BACK TO CONCILIATION

The growing insecurity of the south-east frontier prevented Lyons, it may be remembered, from making further advance into Naga Hills. The acts of aggressions subsequently repeated by the Angamis convinced the Government of the urgency of adopting some effective measures to put a stop to such a state of lawlessness in the hills. It was, however, obvious to the local authorities that a temporary incursion by Lyons or any other officer would not serve the purpose ; for it would not be possible on his part to do more than drive the Nagas from their villages only to return on his withdrawal to renew atrocities with greater ferocity for the punishment inflicted upon.<sup>1</sup> Burns remarked : 'that nothing but a severe example of these savages and in their own country will put a stop to their murderous inroads'.<sup>2</sup> But the boggy of a Burmese war was not yet over. The troops under Lyons could not with safety be withdrawn from Cachar, while detachments of the S. L. I. were then engaged against the Marams in the Khasi Hills. There were, in addition, the difficulties of transport and supply in an unknown and inaccessible territory. It was finally decided, as recommended by Burns, that a body of Kacharis 'who could subsist in the hill' should be armed and led into the haunts of the aggressors by a European officer, and that the party so sent should be of sufficient strength as to ensure speedy submission of the Angamis.<sup>3</sup>

The services of Lyons being not available, W. Grange, Sub-Assistant, Nowgong, was to proceed into the hills with a party of sebundis and another of the shams.<sup>4</sup> To serve as

<sup>1</sup> I. P. C., 1838 ; 21 November, No. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* ; Jenkins to Burns, 11 September.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid* ; Burns to Jenkins, 3 October ; *also* Nos. 105-107.

<sup>4</sup> I. P. C., 1839 ; 4 February, No. 60 ; Jenkins to Bigge, 18 December, 1838.

auxiliaries, Burns was also authorized to raise a party of 200 Kacharis. Since the superintendent of Cachar had no ready access into the land of the Angamis, the hill areas on the north of Cachar, which were exposed to the inroads of the Nagas, were placed under supervision of the Agent to the Governor-General; and the latter was to make necessary arrangement and to direct the operations against these tribes.<sup>5</sup>

Towards the close of December, 1838, Grange advanced *via* Semkhar, Berehmah, Balookhimah towards Samugutting and Muhungdijua. In passing through the villages he had obtained valuable information on the internal affairs of the Nagas besides the nature and resources of the region, mineral and vegetable, which were embodied in his lengthy report to the Government.<sup>6</sup> He learnt that the Angamis, who were divided into several clans, were disliked and dreaded by other Nagas as 'tyrants' for their cruelty and domineering nature, and not unnaturally the latter welcomed the advance of the British forces in the hope of reducing their common enemy to submission. Incursions into Cachar, he discovered, proceeded 'from a desire for plunder to obtain grain, cloths, conch-shells, slaves and scalps'.<sup>7</sup> Unless ransomed, the slaves were sold out to the merchants in the neighbouring districts; and the traffic was so lucrative as to encourage their inroads for seizure of slaves. He also came to know that Impuji and Ikari, the chiefs of Khonomah and Mozomah, in alliance with the Nagas of Poplongmai committed the aggressions. But the lack of transport and mainly the failure of expected aid from the Superintendent of Cachar, who could despatch only 36 Kacharis, prevented Grange from marching into the stronghold of the enemies.<sup>8</sup> The endeavours which he later made to come to an understanding with the recalcitrant chiefs for the security of the border areas proved also to be of no avail. The latter's distrust and suspicion towards the foreign invaders kept them aloof; nevertheless, several sardars, mostly the enemies of the Angamis, came in and promised to refrain from attacks on British subjects and also agreed to pay

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> See Butler, J; *Travels and Adventures in Assam*, Pp. 104-5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 14 August, No. 107.

a house tax in acknowledgement of the authority of the Government.<sup>9</sup>

On the failure of Grange to achieve the main objective—the reduction of the refractory chiefs—the Government of India agreed to despatch a second expedition under Grange in November, 1839. The latter was advised, on this occasion, to select a post for stationing a permanent force in that territory for the protection of the friendly Nagas and also to start a *hat* at a convenient place in the frontier to promote friendly commercial intercourse between the Nagas and the people of the plains.<sup>10</sup> The Kachari levy, being found inefficient and unsuitable, was replaced by a party of 100 shams. Captain Brodie, P. A. Sibsagar, was also asked to advance by the lines of the Dhansiri to keep open the lines of communication with Morung and Kacharihat and to be ready to move up to Grange's aid if needed. Simultaneously, Captain Gordon, Political Agent, Manipur, was directed to keep the tribes on the other side of the hills in check and also to act in concert with Grange in putting down the Nagas still unsubdued and dependent on the Angamis.<sup>11</sup>

Difficulties confronted Grange from the very beginning. Troubles arising out of collection and delivery of supplies delayed his departure till the middle of January 1840. On 23rd, he arrived at the first Naga village in the Samugutting hill; and on 1 February, reached the rendezvous appointed for meeting the Manipuris under Gordon.<sup>12</sup> To his utter disappointment, the latter left the post before his arrival presuming the delay in the advance of the Assam party was occasioned by postponement or even abandonment of the expedition.<sup>13</sup> This misunderstanding and failure to effect a junction with the Manipuri force made it impossible for Grange to march against the refractory chiefs. Deterrent punishments were, however, meted out to Poplongmai and Japamah Nagas, the former for killing a porter and the latter for attacking him on return demonstrat-

<sup>9</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 27 February, No. 166; Burns to Jenkins, 15 February.

<sup>10</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 14 August, No. 107.

<sup>11</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 2 October, No. 83; Jenkins to Gordon, 6 September

<sup>12</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 25 May, No. 118.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

ing, thereby, that the English had the power of bringing to book even the strongest member of the confederacy of the Angamis.<sup>14</sup> For the protection of the well-disposed and the encouragement of intercourse between the peoples of the plains and the hills, military outposts were established at Dimapur, Semkhar and Mohungdijua.<sup>15</sup> Summarising the results of the expeditions, Jenkins reported : 'It is gratifying to know that the murderous attacks of the Nagas upon the Cacharee villages entirely suspended past year and that the ryots have been enabled to advanced their cultivation along the Dhansiri to the south much beyond former limit.'<sup>16</sup>

Whatever might be the assessment of the Agent, the hard core of the Angamis remained unsubdued. They were brave in their mountains, adept in their surprise night attacks and most formidable in rolling down stones against the enemy. Their villages might be burnt, their grain could be easily destroyed, but it was not easy to overpower them and still more difficult to meet them in a pitched battle. The unbending attitude of the local authorities to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy, inevitably, changed to one of forbearance and moderation. It was obvious to them that punitive expeditions to seize and punish the aggressors was both unsound and inhuman. For the impenetrable jungles and mountain retreats afforded so much facilities to the offenders that their apprehension was a task next to impossible. Such expeditions followed by gross barbarities involving the innocent with the guilty in one indiscriminate slaughter, arson and rapine, served only to increase retaliatory raids of the unfortunate victims. The instructions issued by Lieutenant H. Bigge, P. A. Nowgong, to Grange, on the eve of latter's departure for the hills clearly indicated the altered policy towards these tribes. Grange was advised, on arrival, to explain to each chief

'that they proceed from no wish to deprive them of their rights etc. or from a desire to derive any further benefit than what arise from a free intercourse with them by traders and others ; but that each be personally held responsible for the peaceable conduct of

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

their own tribe and will be liable to be attacked and severely punished should any recurrence of late outrages take place in which his tribe would be proved to have been the aggressor'.<sup>7</sup>

He was not to resort to hostilities, but only as the last resort when all other measure had failed. It was brought home to Grange that the customs and usages of these backwards tribes were just the reverse of those of the advanced races in India. Therefore, their acts should not be judged by the same standard as if committed by a people possessing a higher degree of civilization.<sup>18</sup>

There was, already, a definite turn in the policy of the Government of India towards the hill tribes in the North-East Frontier. From past experience it was evident to them that further the detachments were pushed forward not only were they removed from their sources of supply and support but they entangled themselves with several tribes and their intricate problems which resulted in nothing but jealousy and suspicion to be followed by disaffection and hostilities. Instead of following them to their hills and fastnesses, it was felt expedient to remain on the defensive and to bring them to reason by friendly intercourse and the removal of the causes which had occasioned their hostilities. The rôle of the Government should be that of a peacemaker and not of conqueror.<sup>19</sup> No wonder, therefore, when in early April 1840, Jenkins sought to despatch an expedition against the Dusanees for the murder of a family of Garos, the proposal did not receive the approval of the Government.<sup>20</sup> It was feared that in course of the operations the innocents would suffer along with the guilty, and that great evil was likely to be inflicted on the whole tribe, to avenge the outrage committed by a few.<sup>21</sup> 'The indiscriminate use of military force' it was observed :

'on these distressing occasions may inspire the barbarian inhabitants with a dread of the power of the British Government, but its

<sup>17</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 1 January, No. 112; Bigge to Grange, 26 November, 1839.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> I. P. C., 1839; 5 June, Nos. 86-88.

<sup>20</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 27 April, Nos. 143-44.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

exhibition should be reserved for great and rare occasions which may justify the adoption of measures of general retribution.<sup>22</sup>

His Lordship in Council enjoined upon the Agent that such expeditions should hereafter be most sparingly used and cautiously planned, and whenever the painful necessity arose, an expedition should be conducted with an ample force and under officers of ability and experience.<sup>23</sup> It appears that the Governor-General was perforced to express these sentiments by the rash conduct of Mr. Driver, the Sub-Assistant, Lakhimpur. To punish the Hill Miris who had been committing aggressions in the Dhemaji *mouza*, in March 1840, the latter penetrating into the hills forced the inhabitants to flee and burnt their dwellings to the ground.<sup>24</sup> On his return, he was entrapped in a difficult pass by the neighbouring villagers. He, however, succeeded in scaling the heights, driving them from their positions and killing the chief and several others. Driver himself was severely wounded besides the loss of the Havildar, the Naik and six sepoy.<sup>25</sup> An unfortunate incident of this nature could not but move the Governor-General in Council. 'The defence of our subjects', it was brought home to the Agent,

'and the punishment of those who inflict wanton injury (upon our subjects) are no doubt duties incumbent upon the Government, but care should be taken to discriminate between the innocent and guilty . . . . if in some instances violent measures cannot be avoided still it might be hoped that something might be effected by kindness and conciliation particularly after the frequent proof that our neighbours have lately had our superior strength and resources and after they have become convinced of our determination to maintain our position and defend all those who are subject to our rule.'<sup>26</sup>

It was learnt from a subsequent report from Captain Davidson, P. A., Goalpara, that the unfortunate Garo family, referred to above, was put to death on account of the common charge of witchcraft, the existence of which was firmly believed by the credulous Garos.<sup>27</sup> They looked upon the death of such

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 28 April, No. 85; Driver to Jenkins, 11 March.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 7 September, No. 95; Davidson to Jenkins, 22 July.

persons as necessary for their own safety, and, therefore, they considered it their duty to execute them. Davidson believed that the accused family had been publicly tried for the offence, found guilty and executed in consequence. It would be, therefore, futile to send a military force to make a demand of the murderers, for the later composed of the whole of the male inhabitants of the Dusanees.<sup>28</sup> He said : 'we may burn their villages, may kill the inhabitants, make them prisoners, but after all we can obtain no useful result.'<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding these humane sentiments and the conciliatory policy laid down by the authorities in Calcutta, Jenkins continued to advocate retaliatory measures against the refractory tribes. He believed that the offenders were fully aware of the fact that they deserved punishment, but the sense of immunity engendered by their inaccessibility in the hills and fastnesses prevented them from coming to terms and emboldened them to renew their attacks.<sup>30</sup> Except, therefore, by a display of superiority of force, there was no other means to reduce them to submission. 'The most humane and efficacious punishment we can inflict upon the hill tribes is the burning of their villages and the destruction of their hoarded corn.' 'When once they were made to feel', he added, 'that we can effect this they would seldom repeat their attack upon the people.'<sup>31</sup> The renewal of outrages in 1839, convinced the Agent that if the perpetrators were allowed to go unpunished, the Garos would relapse into that state of savagery from which they had been rescued by the untiring efforts of Scott.<sup>32</sup> He would not like to be deterred from pursuing such a measure which might be necessary for the protection of the British subjects and for reclaiming these primitive tribes from their backwardness merely for the apprehension of a few casualties on one or other side. For he strongly felt that 'the cause of humanity would be better served by relieving them from their chiefs and habits'.<sup>33</sup>

The Government of India, however, remained firm and never

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> I. P. C., 1840 ; 17 August, No. 85 ; Jenkins, 28 July.

<sup>31</sup> I. P. C., 1840 ; 7 September, No. 95 ; Jenkins, 10 August.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*



ceased to enjoin upon the Agent to the Governor-General to inculcate in his subordinates the expectations of the Government that they would resort to force to gain redress for border forays or for the seizure of the offenders only after the failure of every moderate and peaceful attempt to obtain compensation for injuries done. In 1841, when the Akas abducted twice several Assamese ryots from Balipara in Darrang, the Government of India turned down the proposal of the Agent, to attack the village of the Akas for the release of the captives.<sup>34</sup> In a subsequent note when Jenkins brought home to the Government that there was no alternative other than coercion to put a stop to the aggressions of this tribe, the latter reluctantly agreed. On 23 September 1841, the Agent was directed to detach such an armed force into the hills as might be necessary for the liberation of the captives and might preclude all chances of opposition on the part of the Akas, and that the officer in-charge of the troops should be advised in strongest terms, it was added, to avoid all unnecessary violence and to endeavour, if possible, to effect the object of the expedition by negotiations with the chiefs of the tribe. Further, it was hinted to Jenkins to induce the latter to give some hostages for their future good conduct for a short period; their temporary residence amongst advanced people of the plains, it was hoped, might possibly lead to the establishment of better understanding with the latter and wean them, gradually, away from their habits of plunder and outrage on the British subjects.<sup>35</sup>

The expeditions conducted by Grange merely suspended the inroad of the Angamis, and it was evident to the local authorities that peace and security in the hills could not be ensured until the subjugation of the paramount chiefs. With that object in view, in July 1840, Captain Gordon, Political Agent Manipur, suggested the construction of a high road across the hills, gradual reduction of the tribes in the course of opening it and the establishment of a number of permanent military posts in their territory.<sup>36</sup> Bigge, P.A. Nowgong, opposed the very project of constructing a highway through the territory of the Nagas ;

<sup>34</sup> I.P.C., 1841 ; 19 April, Nos. 80-81.

<sup>35</sup> I.P.C., 1841 ; 27 September, Nos. 95-96.

<sup>36</sup> I.P.C., 1840 ; 3 August, No. 93 ; Gordon to Jenkins, 23 April.

because there was practically nothing in the trade\* of the intervening territory as to warrant the huge expenses of the road which he felt was not indispensable to put a stop to the incursion of the Nagas.<sup>37</sup> He held the view that the expedition of Grange had prepared the mind of the Nagas; that no more coercion would be necessary to complete their submission. He volunteered himself to proceed to the land of the Angamis on a peace mission, passing leisurely from village to village, endeavouring to induce the chief by presents or other conciliatory measures to enter into agreements to abstain from attacks and to open a friendly intercourse with British subjects.<sup>38</sup> Even the Agent to the Governor-General considered it desirable to take advantage of the impression already made upon the Angamis to endeavour to bring them into friendly intercourse and then to proceed to make any arrangement which might be considered expedient or convenient.<sup>39</sup> A proposal of this nature could not but receive the approval of the Governor-General in Council who were no less anxious to arrive at a settlement with the Nagas by peaceful means. Jenkins was informed that although the Government did not rule out altogether the necessity of repressing all attempts of these tribes to resume their predatory habits, yet they considered it 'a far more satisfactory proof of wise and efficient management of the British functionaries in Assam that these tribes should be reclaimed by kind and gentle treatment instead of a resort to severity and chastisement.'<sup>40</sup> The object might be obtained' it was pointed out, 'by maintaining a friendly and frequent intercourse with the Naga chiefs, by periodical visits to their principal places of residence and by encouraging them to frequent the fairs and markets that might be judiciously established on the frontier of their territories where they barter the products of their own hills for other commodities of which they stand in need.'<sup>41</sup>

\* Bigge reported that the only article of trade that finds its way from that side of the hills was a kind of chequered cloth manufactured in Manipur, Sylhet and adjoining districts.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*; Bigge to Jenkins, 20 June.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>39</sup> I.P.C., 1840; 3 August No. 93; Jenkins, 14 July.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*; No. 94.

<sup>41</sup> I.P.C., 1841; 12 April, No. 80.

In December 1840, Bigge set out on his mission. On his way to Dimapur he stayed for a few days at Golaghat where a fair was held in which Nagas were seen bartering their cotton, for salt, dried fish, dogs, fowls, ducks etc.<sup>42</sup> He won over the Gasinga Phukan, the chief of the Rengmas, 'a shrewed and sensible man' who agreed to pay a small amount of tribute of ivory as an acknowledgement of British authority; for that would ensure his security against the attacks of the Lhotas on the other side of the Dhansiri.<sup>43</sup> The chief prayed for restoration of the lands in the *mouza* Morung which were said to have been bestowed on his family by the former government for the services rendered by them at the time of the insurrection of the Moamarias.<sup>44</sup>

Later, Bigge advanced into the land of the Angamis with a firmness combined with consideration for their prejudices and there was nothing to excite the Nagas whose strongholds he reached without any opposition. At Khonomah, he was visited by all the chiefs save Impuji and Ikari; although both of them sent their near relatives to wait upon him and with whom Bigge entered into engagements for the security of the frontier.<sup>45</sup> River Dhansiri was recognized as the boundary between the territory of the Nagas and the British Government which the chiefs agreed not to trespass except for friendly intercourse with the subjects of the British Government. He encouraged them to carry on barter trade in salt at Dimapur or at any other place they might prefer.<sup>46</sup>

To conciliate the Rengmas, Bigge advised the Government of India to grant the lands claimed by their chief. He proposed the collection of a nominal tribute from this tribe, but exaction of any revenue or entering into formal agreement with the Angamis was out of question; 'the tribe was too rude to understand written treaties and too poor to pay tribute'. Instead of these, he suggested that by frequent and friendly intercourse the existing treaty should be made permanent and that earliest oppor-

<sup>42</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 1 March, No. 55; Bigge to Jenkins, 3 January.

<sup>43</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 19 July, No. 104; Bigge to Jenkins, 7 June.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

tunity be availed of to depute another officer to keep up the friendship recently established. One of the most important objective of the next mission should be, he added, to put a stop to the traffic in slaves which was then carried on at Beren, and which he considered as the greatest incentive for the incursion of the Angamis. The territory of the Lhota Nagas, Bigge suggested, should also be visited by the said officer who should be authorised to distribute presents to the chiefs and others from whom he should receive assistance or with whose conduct he may otherwise be satisfied, and endeavours be made by all means possible to induce this tribe to have commercial relations with the people of the plains. Finally, he suggested, that the boundary disputes, another cause of aggression and retaliation, between the territory of the Nagas and Manipur should be settled, that frontier posts should be increased and that a road constructed from Samugutting to Meapeaghur, near Dimapur.<sup>47</sup>

The judgment and ability with which Bigge conducted his mission earned for him the approbation of the Government.<sup>48</sup> His measures towards the Rengas were approved; but the fact of their placing themselves under the protection of the Government, it was pointed out to the Agent, would not justify an attempt to introduce police regulation upon them; for such a measure would be strange and incompatible to them, while their habits and feelings would be little understood by the officers of the Government. Any aggression or depredation which they might commit on other tribes should, of course, be open to immediate correction on the part of the British functionary; but he should leave them to deal with all offences committed by individual of the tribe against one another and within their own limits according to their own customs and usages. Although realisation of any tribute was considered by Bigge as not important, the Governor-General in Council considered it expedient that some acknowledgement 'however trifling and however rarely made' should be required of them to show their subjection

\* Infact, they had little knowledge of the nature and value of money. Bigge reported, that they never saw coins till he distributed amongst them a few pieces which by boring holes they suspended these to their brass earrings.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 19 July, No. 105.

to the British Government.<sup>49</sup> If the Agent considered it inexpedient at that moment, he was advised to insist upon that proof of fidelity at the earliest favourable opportunity ; for it appeared to the Government that the only method by which they could expect to maintain peace and tranquility amongst these tribes would be 'in the introduction of our protection authority, in the increase of their confidence in our good will towards them and in the certainty of our protection against the aggression of their neighbours.'<sup>50</sup> Finally, the local authorities were directed to make all endeavours to open trade between the Nagas and the people of the plains not so much in the hope of increasing its volume and variety, but with a view to inducing these tribes to settled and peaceful pursuits as well as to give inducements to the immigrants of other classes into that country possessing that degree of industry and speculative enterprise as would be required to the full development of its potentialities.<sup>15</sup>

The Nagas in the east of the river Dhansiri, like the Angamis, were also divided into a number of warring clans ; it was not an uncommon occurrence that the inhabitants of one of the village to be attacked and ruthlessly slaughtered by those of another indiscriminately not in one place but all along the frontier affecting not unoften the peace of the adjoining plains. Although some of the chiefs, hitherto, acknowledged the authority of Raja Purandar Singha, the latter failed to check internecine strife amongst the tribes nor to prevent their incursions into his own territory.<sup>52</sup> On the resumption of Upper Assam, these Nagas came under the sphere of British influence, but the tribal feuds showed no sign of abatement. In early 1840, Brodie, P.A. Sibsagar, had to depute Mr. Strong, his Assistant, to enquire into a long standing quarrel between the Nagas of Namsang and Borduar.<sup>52</sup> Brodie went personally into the hills in the following

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> B. J. C., (Criminal), 1840 ; 9 April, No. 18.

The exactions and oppressions of the tax-collectors under Purandar compelled many ryots to immigrate into the areas, known as *khats*, granted to the Nagas in return for a nominal tribute in kind. Raja's endeavour to collect arrears from the refugees or from a desire to bring all under assessment drove the Nagas to commit acts of aggression on the bordering districts.

year and settled a similar dispute between the chiefs of Jabaka and Banfera. He availed himself of the opportunity to enter into engagements with Mooloong and Chengnoi, the two powerful chiefs in the neighbourhood.<sup>53</sup>

In March 1841, some people of the plains were killed by the Nagas of the *duars* Terro and Kapang. This was followed, a few months after, by another murder on the Dhodar Ali\* for which the Mooloong chief was held responsible.<sup>54</sup> Since 1840, Brodie had been pressing on the Government of India to lay down 'authoritative rules' to be followed towards these tribes in case of outrage amongst themselves and on British subjects having intercourse with the Nagas, but the attitude of the Government was then one of non-intervention towards these tribes. While admitting that the British Government had legally no right of interference in their internal affairs, Brodie emphasized, 'we have a right to protect our own subjects from the outrages within our own boundaries, to exact reparations for injuries done and to take security for good conduct'. As in cases of the Garos, he suggested to the Government to make small demands of fines from the offending parties that could be easily paid either in cash or in kind, and in the event of the chiefs not coming down in time, he proposed to advance into the hills with a party of A.L.I., and force them to come to terms. On the repetition of outrages the Government of India had to accept Brodie's recommendations. The latter was directed to proceed to the hills and to take such measures as might lead to the prevention of similar atrocities in future and to put an end to the system of 'exterminating warfare' amongst these rude tribes.<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, in January 1842, Brodie commenced his tour in the hills between the rivers Dikhow and the Buridihing. He proceeded to Mooloong and compelled its chief to pay a fine for the outrage recently committed and to enter into an agreement for his future good conduct. He visited Tablung, Jaktong,

<sup>53</sup> *Selection of Papers regarding the Hill tracts between Assam and Burma*, Pp. 286-87.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*; Brodie to Jenkins, 15 September, 1841.

\* An important highway in the south of the district of Sibsagar which was supposed to have been constructed by the *Dhods* or *lazy pykes*.

<sup>55</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 25 October, Nos. 74-75.

Jabaka, Banfera, Kulung, Paniduar and Borduar and entered into engagement with the chiefs of each under which they agreed to abstain from outrages in the plains, to be responsible for the surrender of offenders within their respective territory, to discontinue hostility with each other, leaving the British Government to punish attacks made upon themselves and, finally, to abstain from selling Naga children as slaves which was said to have been practiced even under the rule of Raja Purandar Singha.<sup>56</sup>

About the same time, Captain Vetch, P.A. Lakhimpur made a similar tour in the villages occupied by the Nagas and the Singphos in the east of the river Buridihing. Ill health prevented Vetch from staying long in the frontier. Nevertheless, his visit renewed the intercourse with tribal chief, prevented the remnant Khamti insurgents to create disorder or to enter into the district and did much to extend the influence of the British Government by enforcing on the chiefs to refer disputes amongst themselves or with their neighbours to the British authorities.<sup>57</sup>

The expeditions under Grange, Bigge and Vetch never failed to produce a revulsion of feeling in the mind of Jenkins. He also felt the desirability of repeating these visits, although he did not rule out, altogether, the necessity of retaliatory measures in case of aggression on British subjects. 'I have no doubt,' he remarked :

'that by keeping up our intercourse with the Naga chiefs and taking any notice of breach of engagement into which they have entered into with us, we shall not only put a stop to the outrages upon our ryots on the plains . . . . but we shall suppress these continued disolating wars between the tribes which alike prevented the increase and civilization of the population'.<sup>58</sup>

To suppress internecine strife amongst these warring tribes and to redeem them from their utter backwardness, Jenkins considered it necessary to encourage Christian Missionaries to carry on their activities in these hills. Gordon pointed out that

<sup>56</sup> *Selection of papers etc* ; Pp. 256-75 ; Brodie to Jenkins, 9 April, 1842.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid* ; Pp. 275-83 ; Vetch to Jenkins 8 June, 1842.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid* ; Jenkins to Bushby, 18 June, 1842 ; also I. P. C., 1841 ; 12 April, No. 79.

the land of the Angamis afforded a fruitful field for missionary labours ;<sup>59</sup> but it was at Namsang, a village near Jaypur, early seeds were sown by Reverend Bronson for the spread of the Gospel amongst the Nagas.<sup>60</sup> As was usual, after learning the dialect of the tribes, in early 1840, Bronson ventured to reside in their midst and started therein a school for the young and the old.<sup>61</sup> 'It was difficult indeed to maintain a school amongst such wild people, because the people refused to gather at a given hour and their untamed habits were not easily subjected to school rules and discipline . . . . but (the Naga) finally came to the missionary and were soon made acquainted with the rudiments of learning.'<sup>62</sup> Bronson sought to impart the Nagas lessons in industrial arts in addition to the Bible. He solicited the Government, through the Agent, to offer them facilities for improving the production of tea and salt ; only by such training, he pointed out, could their morals and economy be improved and they themselves be brought more and more into the touch with the Government. 'I conceive by a cooperation with that gentleman' Jenkins also wrote, 'we may hope long to see the civilization greatly advanced amongst the Nagas and our supremacy gradually extended over the hills.'<sup>63</sup>

With its declared policy of religious neutrality, the Government of India, felt embarrassed to recognise and aid an institution established with the primary object of proselytising activities. Nevertheless, as a very special case 'for objects of practical utility' connected with the welfare of the Nagas, on 11 May 1840, a monthly grant of rupees one hundred was made to Bronson.<sup>64</sup> In spite of it, the hopes entertained by the local authorities did not materialise. Towards the close of the next year, ill health and the loss of one member of his family, compelled the missionary to terminate his activities and to quit the hills.<sup>65</sup> Bronson, however, left a deep impression in the

<sup>59</sup> I. P. C., 1840 ; 3 August, No. 93 : Gordon to Jenkins, 23 April.

<sup>60</sup> I. P. C., 1840 ; 11 May, Nos. 128-29.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Sword, V. : *The Baptists in Assam*, Pp. 61-63.

<sup>63</sup> I. P. C., 1840 ; 11 May, Nos. 128-29 ; Bronson to Jenkins, 11 April.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> I. P. C., 1841 ; 22 November, No. 124 ; Jenkins, 8 November.



minds of the Nagas, whose name is held in respectful remembrance in these hills.

On 30 December, 1841, there had arrived the most welcome message to the Agent; that Thagi Raja, the chief of the Akas, who had committed so many incursions in Charduar had unconditionally delivered himself up to Lieutenant Scott, J.A., Darrang.<sup>66</sup> This was, of course, the result of negotiations, which the latter carried on with the insurgent prior to his warlike measures against the Akas under the orders of the Government on 23 September last. The unexpected surrender of the chief was a surprise to the Agent to the Governor-General. Without awaiting for the approval of the Government of India, he directed Scott to allow the chieftain to return to his hills after entering into such an engagement as might deter him from committing or encouraging his tribe to commit further aggression.<sup>67</sup>

The atrocities committed by the Akas since 1835, undoubtedly, called for severe measures of retribution; and in these, it was not unlikely that Thagi Raja was personally involved. In spite of this, Jenkins was not inclined to take such a measure against him; that would be a clear breach of faith on the part of British Government since the chief would not have surrendered without some assurance of personal safety by the agents who had brought him in. The infliction of any punishment or even his detention in confinement, Jenkins feared, would be followed by the resentment of his more daring followers in the higher hills who would likely to unite with the Kampos, still at feud with the Government, in attacking the border villages, the defensive measure for which were extremely inadequate.

Promptly Scott entered into an agreement with the chief under which he bound himself and his tribe in most solemn manner possible to abstain from aggression on the British subjects.<sup>68</sup> The proceedings of the Agent to the Governor-General earned for him the highest appreciation of the Governor-General in Council who were no less anxious to arrive at a

<sup>66</sup> F. P. P., 1842; 30 March, No. 111; Jenkins, 5 March.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*; Jenkins to Maddock, F. H., 23 January.

settlement with that redoubtable chief. Jenkins was reminded that the Government 'ever felt the expediency no less than humanity of treating these uncivilized races with the greatest forbearance, and had preferred for the correction of their barbarous habits on the conciliatory deportment of the local officers . . . . than on the exhibition of our superior strength in the extreme measure of retributive justice'.<sup>69</sup> To attach him to the cause of the Government, a stipend of rupees twenty a month, as recommended by the local authorities, was sanctioned on 30 March, 1842.<sup>70</sup>

The agreement with the Thagi Raja was the augury of an era of peace and good will with the Akas; a similar settlement with their neighbours, namely the Charduar Bhutias, was the need of the hour. The stoppage of the blackmail and the interdiction of their entry into the plains hit these hillmen hard, since they drew their supplies mainly from the fertile plains in the south\* But the guards at the passes, exposed as they were and too far from support, were liable to be cut off at any moment by an intrepid and ever watchful enemy. 'The only way we would give protection to the several villages' reported a frontier official, 'would be to have a guard in each, which is out of question'.<sup>71</sup> Small wonder that the Bhutias were seen prowling in the villages in the guise of beggars extorting grains and other requirements. The ryots did not dare to refuse and to complain to the local authorities; for such an act was sure to be visited by the fury and rapine of the revengeful highlanders.<sup>72</sup>

While the chances of entering into a settlement with the refractory chiefs continued to be remote, the prohibitory measures, obviously, served to increase the excesses of the hill-

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*; No. 112.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, Nos. 114-16.

\* Scott presumed that the unconditional surrender of Thagi Raja was occasioned by the preparations which he made for the invasion of the hills; but the more plausible reason was the acute scarcity of grain due to the closure of the *duars*. The party of Bhutias which had approached Scott in early January, 1841, told him that they were so much hard-pressed for the last two years that they had gone without food while others were obliged to live upon roots and herbs of the jungles. I. P. C., 1841; 12 April, No. 75; Scott to Jenkins, 15 January.

<sup>71</sup> I. P. C., 1841; 12 April, No. 75; Scott to Jenkins, 15 January.

<sup>72</sup> F. P. P., 1844; 20 April, No. 127.

men on the helpless ryots. To mitigate the evils, there remained no other alternative for the Government than to come down and to relax the severity of the measures. In April 1841, therefore, on the suggestion made by the local authorities, a party of the Bhutias were admitted into the plains and to carry on barter trade at market set up for the purpose.<sup>73</sup> Not only similar facilities were, extended to other chiefs of the *duar*, but prospects of restoring their earlier favours were held out to them on their agreeing to desist from aggression on the British subjects.<sup>74</sup> In early 1844, on the overtures made by the representatives of the Sath Rajas and also of the chief of Towang, Gordon, P.A. Darrang, lost no time in entering into an engagement binding the chiefs to forgo all claims on the Koriapara *duar* in return of a payment of rupees five thousand.<sup>75</sup> Soon afterwards, the P.A. was interviewed by Darzee Raja on behalf of the Bhutias of Rupraigaoon, who had been declared outlaws since the murder of Madhu Saikia, the Patgiri of Orung, in 1839. Expressing utmost regret at the displeasure of the Government, the chief categorically denied that his tribe had any connection with or control over the supposed murderer of the late Patgiri. Justice and equity demanded, he added, that the whole tribe should not be penalised for the crimes of a few. Influenced by these argument, Gordon agreed to come to terms on condition of their renouncing all claims, like the Sath Rajas, over the *duar* in lieu of a payment Rs. 1740 in cash.<sup>76</sup> 'I have always considered it derogatory to our Government' remarked Gordon in defence of his measure,

'yielding to such demands, but the custom of several of the Hill tribes drawing their supplies from the plains and receiving a share of the revenue having long been sanctioned, I am, therefore, induced to advocate the system of granting an allowance to the

<sup>73</sup> I. P. C., 1841 ; 12 April, No. 75.

<sup>74</sup> F. P. P., 1843 ; 12 August, No. 107 ; Bigge to Jenkins, 27 June.

<sup>75</sup> Lieutenant Scott, J. A., Darrang, made an enquiry as to the value of the supplies which the Bhutias were accustomed to receive from the *duars* and ascertained that it amounted to Rs. 5911-12. Deducting from it Rs. 966-15 as the value of articles offered to the Rajas, he fixed their claims at Rs. 4944-13 or Rupees five thousand. F. P. P., 1844 ; 20 April, No. 127.

<sup>76</sup> F. P. P., 1844 ; 20 April, No. 127 ; Gordon to Jenkins, 13 January.

chiefs in lieu of the blackmail . . . . ., thereby, purchasing their good will and forbearance towards the subjects of the Government which will materially tend to the happiness, security and prosperity of the latter, and eventually to the civilisation of these rude and barbarous tribes.<sup>77</sup>

Reluctantly the chiefs agreed pledging by a solemn oath to abide by the terms and to assist the Government in the event of any incursion into the plains. To put a stop to the wandering habits of the Bhutias under the pretence of purchasing or begging grains etc. Gordon set up *hats* at Orung, Loharbari and Balipara. He never failed to point out to these frontier tribes the advantages of trading with the plains in the hope of reviving the trade with China by a route which had been closed for many years. The higher authorities in Calcutta were also convinced of the necessity of continuing the policy of appeasement, of course, in an altered form; for without it they could hardly expect the goodwill of the hillmen towards the people of plains so indispensable for the peace and security of the extensive frontier.

In the east, Captain Hannay in his expeditions into the Mishmi Hills against the insurgent Khamtis failed to seize Towa Gohain, the principal offender; but he succeeded in apprehending several others and in breaking up the party of the rebels.<sup>78</sup> It was therefore not difficult on the part of Vetch, later to induce the remaining chiefs to make their surrender and to come to terms. They were settled at Chunpura on condition of their obeying the local authorities defending the ryots of the district against the inroads of the Singphos and the Mishmis and desisting from trafficking in slaves.<sup>79</sup>

The forbearance and moderation exhibited by the local authorities kept the frontier undisturbed and prepared the ground for reclaiming the tribes from their utter backwardness, and gradually making them useful neighbours to the people of the plains. Hill chiefs were made to feel that they were now constantly under surveillance, that they were not safe even in their inaccessible wilds and that a friendly intercourse with the

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> I. P. C., 1840; 12 June, Nos. 84-5; P. L. I., 1840; 3 July, No. 49.

<sup>79</sup> F. P. P., 1843; 18 November, Nos. 164-67; 20 January, Nos. 61-66.

British Government would earn for them high dividends while their acts of aggression would be followed by measures of severe retribution. The Duflas who had, hitherto, been so troublesome, had entirely refrained from aggressions for the last few years and were quietly bartering their hill produce for grains, cloths etc. in the plains. The Abors, the Miris, the Mishmis—all peacefully settling and trading along the frontier. The Thagi Raja, the terror of the north, showed an inclination to settle in the plains and to carry on peaceful pursuits.<sup>80</sup> The security of the north was so much ensured, towards the close of the period under review, that Jenkins ventured to remove the guards at the frontier.<sup>81</sup> The cessation of internecine strife and freedom of passage to all alike to and from the markets brought down the Abor Nagas who had never been to the plains for the purposes of trade.<sup>82</sup> Even the Angamis whose traffic, hitherto, consisted only of the slaves, were seen resorting to the *hats* at Dimapur. In the south-east, several Singphos were reported to have engaged as blacksmiths by the European entrepreneurs; while Ningroola, the remnant of Dufla's family, settled himself with his followers for the purpose of cultivating tea.<sup>83</sup> Security, peace and prosperity were now in sight; and at no distant future, Jenkins fondly hoped, the whole of the eastern districts 'from having been never ceasing causes of watchfulness, expense and anxiety will begin to add to the productive resources and wealth of the province ..... and will contribute to our military strength and political supremacy.'<sup>84</sup>

It would be too much to expect of these primitive tribes, some of whom lived and glorified war for ages, would at once abandon their past habits and would renounce war, all the more when their vital interests were at stake. The tranquility of the frontier was, therefore, a lull before the storm, as will be seen in our next volume.

<sup>80</sup> F. P. P., No. 167; also *Selection of papers etc.*, Pp. 256-60; Jenkins to Bushby, 18 June 1842.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 1843, 12 August, No. 161; Jenkins, 29 July.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; also I. P. C., 1841; 12 April, No. 79.

<sup>83</sup> F. P. P., 1842; 30 March, No. 111; Jenkins, 5 March.

<sup>84</sup> *Selection of papers etc.* Pp. 256-60; Jenkins to Bushby, 18 June, 1842.

## Appendix I

List of the Nine Dooars or Pass Tracts on the southern frontier Zillah Kamroop. (*Revenue Proceedings, Bengal, 2 August, 1836, No. 35.*)

Nos.	Names of Dooars.	Remarks.
1.	Mowrapoor ...	In 1824 Rajah Sadoo Sing a Casheeah was appointed by Mr. Scott. He continued till 1827, when having failed to pay the <i>Jumma</i> 500 Narainy Rupees and 40 Coolies per annum he was removed and a Bengalee named Oomesh Chunder appointed on a lease of 3 years who held it to 1831 when Ballit Sing, an Assamese, who was Rajah under the Burmese, was appointed and has remained in-charge ever since. He is an Assamese of the Dooars. Except Sadoo Sing no Casheeah has held this Dooar these 50 years.
2.	Bholagong ...	Rajah Anil Sing an Assamese of the Dooar was found in-charge in 1824. He was confirmed and retained charge till 1829, when he also fell into arrears, <i>Jumma</i> 500 Narainy Rupees gradually increased to 1828 and 20 Coolies and was displaced. Oomesh Chunder succeeding him with a 3 years lease and assessment 1270 Narainy Rupees. On the lease expiring his brother Gooroodoss succeeded and is still in-charge. No Casheeah had had charge of this place for 60 or 70 years at least.
3.	Burdooar ...	This Dooar was in 1824 found to be in-charge of Rajah Chutter Sing, a Casheeah of Nunklow; <i>Jumma</i> Narainy Rupees 500 and 80 Coolies. He continued till 1826, when he died, and Teerut Sing succeeded; <i>Jumma</i> 2250 Narainy Rupees and 80 Coolies, he remained till 1829, when Teerut Sing having rebelled headed an insurrection in the Casheeah Hills and murdered several Europeans and a number of Natives; the Dooar was held <i>Khas</i> and Muhadur Burroa an Assamese of rank appointed Manager for 1829; in 1830 and 1831

Nos. Names of Dooars.	Remarks.
	<p>Mirza Bunde Allee held it, <i>Jumma</i> 2635; and for 1832 and 1833, Muhadur Burrooa was again appointed, <i>Jumma</i> 2,725, Narainy Rupees and Coolies as before. In 1834, the settlement was made with a boy named Rujan Sing, Rajah of Nunklow, successor to Teerut Sing, and has since, continued; the <i>Jumma</i> having been increased by me to its present amount.</p>
4. Pantan ... ..	<p>In 1824 Rajah Lalchand, a Casheeah of the Dooar, appointed by the Burmese was found in-charge and had been so for a few years. He continued till 1826, when he died and Jubber Sing, a relation, succeeded; <i>Jumma</i> 1,000 Narainy Rupees and 40 Coolies. He held it till 1829, when having joined the Casheeah insurgents he was proclaimed a rebel and the Dooar held <i>khas</i> under Muhadur Burrooa, who retained it till his death in 1834, when it having been ruined by Casheeah in-road and inundations, his son Gungaram Burooa obtained a lease of it for 5 years on its present <i>Jumma</i>. For 30 or 40 years before the Burmese invasion this was held by Assamese Rajahs. N. B. Jubber Sing afterwards made submission was restored to his Hill territory in 1829, and (in) 1830 was murdered soon afterwards by his brother who headed the second insurrection in 1831.</p>
5. Chhuygong ... ..	<p>An Assamese Rajah of the Dooar named Nayan Sing was found in-charge on our entering Assam, and had been so from the days of the Assam Rajah's; <i>Jumma</i> Narainy Rupees 700 and 30 Coolies afterwards increased to 1,000 Rupees. He held charge till his death in 1833, when no relations turning up to succeed Jaynarain, a half Bengallee and half Assamese, got charge for one year and in 1835, Moorareekanth Rajkhawa an Assamese was appointed on the present <i>Jumma</i> and is still in possession. No Casheeah has had charge of this Dooar for at least 30 years.</p>
6. Bogoyee ... ..	<p>Rajah Koondah Sing, an Assamese of the Dooar, was in-charge before and during the Burmese invasion and continued till 1827, <i>Jumma</i> 800 Narainy Rupees and 20 Coolies; having fallen greatly into</p>

Nos.	Names of Dooars.	Remarks.
		<p>arrears an Assamese named Beejoyram, late Chowdree of Baroontee, paid up the balances and got charge; he resigned in 1828 and Muhadutto Sing, Rajah of Lookee, succeeded and held it till 1834 (<i>Jumma</i> the same) when he resigned and Govindram Burrooah succeeded for one year and <i>Jumma</i> Furruckabad Rupees 1211.11—On its expiration Rujun Sing, Rajah of Burdooar and Nunklow, got charge on the present assessment. This Dooar has not been under a Casheeah Rajah for 60 years; the family of Roopnarain and Mahudutto Sing have rented for all that time.</p>
7.	Boko ... ..	<p>In 1824 Roopnarain Sing, an Assamese, was the Rajah in-charge, having succeeded his father who had been so from the Assam Rajahs time; he continued with only a slight suspension till his death 1834, <i>Jumma</i> 1,000 Narainy Rupees and 20 Coolies; a Casheeah named Ooroo was then appointed and is still in-charge prior to this no Casheeah had been placed over it for 50 or 60 years.</p>
8.	Bongong ... ..	<p>Rajah Roopnarain Sing obtained charge in 1824; he has also had it under the Burmese. He remained till his death in 1831—<i>Jumma</i> 2450 Narainy Rupees and 20 Coolies. Anil Sing of Bholagong succeeded, but being incompetent and having fallen into arrears Ronaram Burrooah, an Assamese, got charge and still holds it, on present assessment. This Dooar was in Roopnarains family now extinct for about half a century—except the three last years of the Burmese rule when a Casheeah named Obeiah Sing held it; but he disappeared on our entering Assam and the old Rajah was appointed.</p>
9.	Looke ... ..	<p>This Dooar was in 1824 and 1825 held <i>khas</i>. It was then put under Sing Dutto, an Assamese, who together with his father had been the Rajahs under the Burmese and Assam Governments, <i>Jumma</i> 4,428 Narainy Rupees, and 30 Coolies. On his death (in) 1830, his brother Mohadutto Sing was appointed Rajah, <i>Jumma</i> the same; he has continued in-charge ever since. Some 50 years ago this</p>



*Nos. Names of  
Dooars.*

*Remarks.*

family were Casheeah's, but then became Hindoos and have managed this Dooar from time immemorial.

( Signed ) A. BOGLE  
*Acting Collector*

/ True Copy /  
( Signed ) F. JENKINS  
*Agent to the Governor-General.*

## Appendix II

Translation of a Petition from Chand Manick, Rajah of Moleem, addressed to Captain Lister, Political Agent, Cossyeeah Hills. (*Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 24 November, 1835, No. 17).

The *Des Doomreya* in the Country of Assam was in possession of my ancestors from time immemorial till the occupation of it by the Burmese in 1825. On their retreat before the British Troops by whom they were expelled, on which the British authorities took possession of it and have ever since retained it.

Doomreya was held by my ancestors in fief from the Rajah of Assam, on condition of the Rajah of Moleem for the time being repairing annually to Assam and paying 30 *Kuttra* Rupees as a *salamee*.

That the Government of the District was carried on by a Petty Rajah and six Sirdars who were nominated by my predecessors and removeable at pleasure on consideration of the former paying 1000 *Kuttra* Rupees and the latter 100 *Kuttra* Rupees each annually. The petty Rajahs and Sirdars also conjunctly furnished 60 Bullocks annually for the *khas* lands belonging to the Raj which were cultivated free of expense by the *Ryuts*—they also supplied 20 He-Goats annually for *Poojah*. In addition to the above income, each Weaver in the District contributed to the Rajah a piece of coarse cloth 4 cubits long annually.

About a year after the British authorities were in possession, an Aumeen was sent who measured the *Des*, when the Revenue was settled by Mr. Scott, and a man named Mehador Buroowa, an Assamese, put in charge by him. On hearing this, my Uncle Bur Manick my immediate predecessor, but who from old age has resigned in my favor, sent four of his *Cossya Muntries* (Ministers) to Mr. Scott to assert his claim to the place. Immediately his *Muntries* arrived at Gowahutty, some Assamese (his enemies) told that Gentleman that they had come with hostile intentions; when Mr. Scott without enquiry into the truth of this information, put the *Muntries* into irons and confined them. The treatment the *Muntries* so unjustly received deterred him from going to Mr. Scott personally.

About six or seven years ago, when Mr. Scott was on his route from Nungklow to Cherra, he sent Burjoorain and Nor Sing two Interpreters to my uncle who said that Mr. Scott had promised that if he went and had an interview with him, the *Des* should be restored to him. He was ready to go, but the former treatment of his *Muntries* having exasperated his subjects and *Muntries*, and they having no reliance on this promise, they prohibited his going, and told him, if he

attempted to do so contrary to their wishes, that they would cut him down; on which account he did not go. Three or four days after this, the massacre at Nungklow took place and the Poonjee of Moleem having been taken by the troops under your command, he fled with all his family.

Some time after this a Jemadar of Sepahees presented a *Purwanna* to my Uncle purporting to be from Mr. Scott and represented that if my Uncle went to Mr. Scott, *Des Doomreya* and all his Hill possessions should be restored to him. On the good faith of this promise he agreed to accompany the Jemadar, who immediately seized and sent him to Mr. Scott at Nungklow, by whom he was confined in Irons and a demand of 3,3000 Rs. as a fine and two of my Cousins to remain with him as Hostages made. For fear of his life and to obtain his liberty, he agreed to these conditions and gave a written agreement for the former and delivered our Cousins Ooksan and Oojoy to Mr. Scott as Hostages, on which he was released. The Hostages always were present with Mr. Scott and Oojoy died whilst with him at Assam.

On Mr. Robertson's arrival at Chirra, I presented a petition to have *Doomreya* restored to me. This Gentleman promised to enquire into the whole business, but it was my ill fate that he went away after remaining only a short time, and before investigation could be made. After him Captain Jenkins the Agent arrived and to him I again represented my claim. This Gentleman did not make full enquiries, but after a summary one, gave me a *Purwanna* that I might have half the *Des*; but as the whole of the *Des* had been always in our possession, I was unwilling to accept only the half, and, therefore, refused his proposal and prayed that if the whole was made over to me, I would willingly pay the same amount of revenue as the present holder does for it, but to this the Gentleman would not accede. I now appeal to you. I am poor, your power is great. It is very unjust that we should be dispossessed of an Estate which has been hereditary in our family, without any cause. I have no document to show that the *Des* has been in the possession of our family, all affairs with the *Cossyas* are carried on verbally, and papers have never been considered necessary. The only document I have is Captain Jenkin's *Purwanna*, offering me half of the *Des*.

In conclusion your poor petitioner humbly prays that you will cause a full enquiry to be made as to the justice of my claim, and that you will assist me in recovering possession of my Estate—Dated 29th Assin 1242 B.S. corresponding with 14th Octr., 1835 A.D.

/A True Translation/  
 /Signed/Henry Ingles,  
 Assist. Poll. Agent, Cosseeyah Hills.  
 /True Copy/  
 /Signed/ F. G. Lister, Captn.  
 Poll. Agent, Cosseeyah Hills.

### Appendix III

Rights of the Assam Rajas over the Bhutan Duars (*Foreign Department, Political Proceedings*, 1839, 12 June, No. 72).

It appears from old decisions of the Bur Phukan under dates as per margin that in the First case *A* the Bhooteahs had fallen in arrears

A.D.	A.S.	N.S.	
1739	1661	<i>A</i>	of tributes and were made to settle accounts and threatened
1749	1661	<i>B</i>	with the <i>Doars</i> being shut if they did not pay in the arrears
1784	1193	<i>C</i>	

as they had agreed.

They are also made to pay the revenue of Jhar Talook they had bought from a Talookdar who has no right to sell the Surgdeo's lands.

From *B* it appears, that the sirdars of Bijnee made excuses for disturbing *Chokees* the Assam Government had thought proper to set up in the *Doar* against the Dhings(?) and Benals(?) and the Bur Phukan asserts his right to order the Rajkhowah to make what arrangements may be necessary (*in case the Bhutias*) make any disturbance at the *chokees*.

It appears from the agreement then taken about the *Chokees* that the Choudries, Putwarris and Talookdars of Bijnee were ordered in and obliged to give assent to the agreement. I (*can see*) also from the tenor of the document that the Bhooteahs were prohibited from taking the *Doar* officers into the passes, the expression is 'to the *Ba Doar*' and that they have taken they 'are to let go'.

The Bur Phukan also regulated what things were to be taken from the *Doar* and what rate the ryots were to be paid at in exchanging products.

The Bur Phokun also received the right to the Assam Government to kill Rhinoceros and Elephants in the *Doars*. Further the Bhooteahs were prohibited from taking any articles from certain mahals which is to be presumed were considered not to be a portion of the *Doars*.

30 *Pykes* of the *Doars* were besides to be stationed at three *Ghauts* to the *Ba Doar* who were excused revenue, but if they did not attend they would have to pay their revenue; all this being agreed to, the Bhooteahs were to come and go as in former times; but if they do not abide by their agreements they will not be allowed to come into the *Doars* or to barter their products and all Bhooteahs passing from one *Doar* to the other were to be accompanied by *Doar* Officers appointed for this purpose.

By the third document *C* it appears, 23,463/ *poorahs* 3 *Coons* of land were peremptorily resumed on the peal of Bola Teklah Burooah from the *Doars* Bijnee, Chapagooree and Gurkholah which had been usurped by the Bhooteahs.

SIGNED/ F. JENKINS  
Governor-General's Agent.

## GLOSSARY

- Abor*, disobedient, uncontrolled.
- Agar*, a valuable wood from which oil is extracted for manufacture of perfumes.
- Barphukan*, Ahom Viceroy posted in Lower Assam.
- Batta*, discount.
- Bohoteah*, an Assamese subject who was bound to render personal service to his overlord.
- Borgohain*, a minister of the Ahom Government.
- Bori*, controlled, obedient.
- Borkapor*, a heavy cloth worn usually in winter.
- Buragohain*, the seniormost minister of the Ahom Government.
- Chapprassi*, a peon.
- Chauth*, one fourth of revenue ; blackmail collected by the Maharattas.
- Chokey*, a frontier outpost.
- Doar* or *Dooar*, a mountain pass ; a region adjoining to a hill.
- Desh*, a territorial division.
- Durbar*, an assembly, a parliament.
- Dao*, a sharp edged cutting instrument.
- Doobhashee*, an interpreter.
- Doloi*, a superintendent of temple, a headman.
- Dufla Bohoteah*, an assamese subject inhabiting in the outskirts of Dufla Hills who was required to serve the Dufla chiefs with their requirement of personal service and produce.
- Gamcha*, a towel ; a small waist cloth.
- Genna*, forbidden or taboo.
- Gohain*, a title usually given to the decendants of the Ahom kings.
- Gossain*, a spiritual guide.
- Harkara*, a messenger.
- Hat*, a periodical market.
- Istimrany*, land paying rent in perpetuity.
- Jathee*, a spear ; a lance.

*Jemadar*, one who is in-charge.

*Jingma Changga*, a popular assembly of the Garos.

*Jumma*, total revenue assessment.

*Jumming*, an extensive cultivation in which a tract is cleared of jungle and cultivated for a few years, after which the land is allowed to remain fallow for a period to regain its fertility.

*Kabuliat*, an agreement.

*Katakee*, an envoy ; a messenger.

*Kekoradola*, a royal palanquin.

*Khas*, revenue collected directly by government.

*Kutchary* or *Cutchary*, a court of justice.

*Khat*, an estate.

*Khunbao*, a Naga chieftain.

*Laskar*, a headman of the Kachari or Jayantia tribe.

*Lingdow*, a hereditary priest of the Khasis.

*Mal*, revenue.

*Malgoozar*, one who pays rent or revenue.

*Matharakha*, blackmail prevalent amongst the Garos.

*Mithun*, a specie of Indian bison.

*Morung*, a communal centre ; a house in which the bachelors of a clan sleep.

*Mauza*, a small revenue jurisdiction.

*Marwari*, a merchant from Rajasthan.

*Munjeet*, a kind of dye.

*Muntree*, a minister.

*Nazzar*, a present.

*Nazzarannah*, tributary.

*Omlah* or *Amlah*, an officer.

*Parwana*, an order or authorization.

*Patgiri*, a revenue officer.

*Phor*, a shield.

*Posa*, personal service or produce payable to the hillmen.

*Punji*, spikes of hardened bamboo placed on the ground to impede the passage of an enemy.

*Pyke*, an Assamese ryot whose duty was to render service to the king at fixed periods of the year.

*Rubakari*, revenue proceedings.

*Sarbakar*, superintendent.

*Sanjatee*, a frontier official.

*Sardar*, a chief.

*Sebundy*, an irregular native sepoy.

*Sezwal*, an officer employed for collection of revenue.

*Sayrat* or *Sair*, customs, tolls and other variable duties.

*Thakaria*, a minor fiscal officer.

*Thana*, a police station.

*Zaminder*, a hereditary collector of revenue.

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On	page	22 line	37 read	possess	for possesses
„	„	33 „	17 „	objection ( <i>sic</i> )	„ objection
„	„	49 „	16 „	ultimatum	„ ultimatum
„	„	51 „	1 „	with a	„ with
„	„	57 „	19 „	council	„ council
„	„	59 „	10 „	an	„ and
„	„	67 „	4 „	religious	„ religion
„	„	68 „	9 „	number	„ member
„	„	84 „	11 „	thoroughly	„ throughly
„	„	85 „	36 „	introducing	„ introducing
„	„	92 „	35 „	one lakh	„ a lakh
„	„	95 „	29 „	allege	„ alleged
„	„	104 „	3 „	belligerents	„ belligerants
„	„	111 „	14 „	occasionally	„ occassionally
„	„	113 „	1 „	acquiesced	„ acquieced
„	„	144 „	3 „	succeeded	„ succeed
„	„	„ „	30 „	sparsely	„ sparcely
„	„	169 „	13 „	1841	„ 1840
„	„	181 „	5 „	shrewd	„ shrewed
„	„	183 „	19 „	uncommon	„ uncomman
„	„	„ „	25 „	or	„ nor

