THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER OF INDIA

1865-1914

D. P. CHOUDHURY

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY

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TO MY PARENTS

CONTENTS

PREFACE

THIS book is mainly based on a thesis which I submitted in 1970 for the Ph. D. degree of London University. The thesis was written in uncommon difficulties, and now it is a pleasure to see it in print. It owes much to a number of people. I am grateful to Dr. Amitabha Mukhopadhyay, Professor and Head of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, and Dr. Bratindra Nath Mukhopadhyay, Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University, without whose kind help it would have been difficult to publish this book. I am indebted to Professor K.A. Ballhatchet, who supervised my work at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and taught me the technique of historical research. I am also grateful to Dr. Sachindra Kumar Maity of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, for helping me tide over difficulties; to the library staffs of the India Office Library, Public Record Office, School of Oriental and African Studies, and British Museum, London, of Cambridge University, Cambridge, and of the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, for their unfailing assistance; and to the University of London for providing me with useful research grants. My thanks are due to the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, for undertaking the publication of this essentially research work. It would have been impossible for me to do research in London without the constant encouragement I received from my parents, Sri Kiron Kumar Choudhury and Srimati Mahamaya Choudhury, and to them I dedicate this book.

A word is necessary on some of the source materials. The Bell Papers at the India Office Library are the most important single source of information on the actual course of the Indo-Tibetan boundary negotiation during the Simla Conference. I have extensively used them as none has till now. Also a close study of the relevant maps is essential for dispelling a few current misconceptions about the frontier. The maps enclosed at the end of this monograph are based on Crown-copyright records in the Public Record Office and the India Office Library and Records, England, and they appear by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

INTRODUCTION

THE purpose of the present work is to analyse British policy on the north-east frontier of India between 1865 and 1914. The period under study shaped the policy which culminated into what is called the McMahon Line. Until recently the concept of the north-east frontier of India did not have a precise geographical connotation. In the nineteenth century and even in the early twentieth century this term often meant the tribal areas of Assam and sometimes even the northern border of Bengal. We shall use it here only to mean the tribal area in the eastern Himalaya which stretches from the western boundary of Bhutan to the tri-junction of India, Burma and Tibet, and lies between the Brahmaputra valley in the south and the highlands of Tibet in the north. It roughly corresponds to the present Arunachal region of India. Scenically this is one of the most magnificent countries in the world with the rich natural splendours of eternal snow on the high Himalayan range, deep gorges, torrential rivers, dense forests teeming with wild life, and many colourful, warlike tribes. It is more varied and possibly more impressive than the far-famed north-west frontier of India.

But until very recently it remained relatively unknown to the outside world. The only reason was that, unlike the north-west frontier, it was never in the past a gateway of invasions into the heartland of India. From the remote past, waves of invasion had come into India through the north-west frontier. Any central power in northern India had to take this fact into account, and we find a kind of balance of power between India and Central Asia resting on the hinge of the north-west frontier. While some like the Imperial Guptas succeeded in repulsing the invading hordes, others like the Mauryas, Kushanas and Mughals extended their sway far beyond the north-west frontier. But whenever the central power in India was weak, the foreign invaders forced their way through the frontier. During the British period also the importance of the north-west frontier continued due to the Russian advance in Central Asia. But the north-east frontier of India has never in the past enjoyed so great an importance in the long drama between India and Central Asia, since there was no com-

parable pressure of a hostile power behind it. Hence the government's main concern on this frontier until the early years of the twentieth century was local in character, namely that of maintaining peaceful relations with the frontier tribes by means of a policy of non-interference. Although economic and military measures were often applied against offending tribesmen, the British never tried to occupy and directly administer the tribal country. This policy might have continued well into the twentieth century, had not the frontier suddenly awakened to a Chinese threat from the north in the last years of Manchu rule in China. The frontier problem underwent a fundamental change, assuming a hitherto absent international character. Consequently the British parted with their earlier policy which was not suited to meet the new situation. They decided to bring the area under a sort of political control. This new policy ultimately led to the negotiation of an Indo-Tibetan boundary in 1914 during the Simla Conference.

The Chinese threat was however short-lived because of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 and the subsequent expulsion of the Chinese from Tibet. But today India faces a second and far more serious Chinese threat on this frontier, and it is likely to continue for a long time. China and India have already fought a frontier war in 1962. In his Romanes Lecture in 1907 Curzon said, "Frontiers are indeed the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace. . . ."[1] In view of the present tension on India's north-east frontier we can reasonably say that the weight of this comment has not diminished in spite of the passage of more than half a century.

The India-China quarrel over this frontier has recently aroused a great interest in the history of this frontier and elicited a spate of writings on the subject. But often these writings are sadly inadequate. These are mostly confined to the events which took place in 1910-14 consequent to the rise of Chinese threat on this frontier. These events have no doubt a direct bearing on the present international character of the problem. But a study of them alone cannot provide us with a full view of the history of this frontier. Nobody can properly understand this frontier without a fair knowledge of the tribes of the area — their ethnic origin, migrations, economic life and relations with the plains. When the

[1] G. N. Curzon, *Frontiers*, Oxford, 1907, p. 7.

British came into contact with this frontier on the annexation of Assam, they faced serious tribal problems which mostly arose from the contacts between the tribesmen and the plains. As we shall see later, the measures adopted by the British in the beginning to meet these problems resembled in essence those which had been devised by their Ahom predecessors. The tribal problems were strictly speaking local in character, and it was not until the appearance of a Chinese threat in the twentieth century did the British face an international problem here. But in tackling the international problem, the government had to bear in mind their experience of the tribal people. The reason why they took certain measures rather than others apparently more effective to meet the Chinese threat lay at least partly in the history of British relations with the tribesmen. Thus no realistic attempt to understand the history of this frontier can afford to ignore the tribesmen and the problems which they posed for the government.

But, even when writers confine themselves to a study of the events of 1910-14, they either do not go into the details or, worse still, misinterpret them. Needless to say, these details and their correct interpretation are important for a clear understanding of the intricate history which lies behind a very delicate international issue of our time.

CHAPTER I

THE PEOPLE AND ECONOMY OF THE FRONTIER

THE north-east frontier of India is the homeland of a number of hill tribes. A brief study of these tribes is essential for an understanding of the present subject. But to give a realistic idea of tribal life during the period under study solely on the basis of nineteenth century accounts is extremely difficult if not impossible. These accounts are not only inadequate but are often not corroborated by later accounts. Those who wrote them were not trained anthropologists. They were descriptive instead of analytic and sometimes depended on guesswork or current popular ideas instead of on personal observation. Moreover, many of them were openly contemptuous of the tribesmen — an attitude which may have stood in the way of an objective appraisal of tribal life. In fact the first reliable reports on the tribes could not be obtained before 1911-14 when the whole frontier was subjected to extensive and systematic exploration and surveys undertaken by the government. Yet they are not by themselves fully adequate for our purpose. Hence we are to supplement them with later accounts. We are thus compelled to depend mostly on the accounts written towards the end of the period under study or even after it.

Even today our knowledge of these tribes is far from adequate and it is difficult to make any general observations on the basis of this knowledge. Yet an attempt in this direction is perhaps called for to provide us with the necessary perspective. In the following pages we have dealt with seven principal tribes.[1] But as yet we are not absolutely sure that these seven divisions are realistic and that no other divisions exist. But these seem to be the most likely divisions on the basis of existing knowledge. Alastair Lamb suggests that the tribes east of Tawang were divided by the British administrators into five major groups for administrative

[1] We have actually dealt with eight tribes but of them, as we shall see, the so-called Miris of the hills are not believed to be different from Daflas.

reasons, namely the Akas, Daflas, Miris, Abors and Mishmis.[2] This is a suggestion of doubtful validity. Firstly, these divisions were not invented by British administrators. The names of these groups are mostly Assamese in origin ; this suggests that an idea that these tribes belonged to some major groups may have existed even before the advent of the British in Assam. Secondly, we cannot rule out the possibility that these divisions were a reflection of the realities of tribal life. As we shall see, these tribes lived in some given areas on the frontier and as yet we do not know of any major tribal divisions which cut across these rough geographical divisions. Moreover there do not seem to have been marriage relations between the major tribal groups, or if they at all existed they must have been very limited. Also the languages the major groups spoke were perhaps largely unintelligible to each other.

Though these tribes were different from each other in many respects, they had some very broad affinities. Broadly speaking these tribesman had a Mongoloid origin and their languages probably belong to the Tibeto-Burman stock. Most of them seem to have migrated to their present homeland from outside. Almost all the tribes were divided into clans which were in many cases exogamous. There were also class divisions in some tribes which were sometimes rigid especially when the slaves were concerned.[3] Excepting the Monpas of Tawang, their religion was animistic. The Monpas were more or less Buddhists of the Tibetan variety. With a few exceptions, these tribes practised shifting cultivation of the slash-and-burn type called *jhum*. And the political system which they had was, except in Tawang, hardly more than mere village organization. Though village headmen are known to have existed, the authority of a chief seems to have varied from tribe to tribe and possibly largely depended on the personality and wealth of the chief.

In our followlng analysis we shall take up the tribes from the west to the east, the westernmost being the Monpas and the easternmost the Mishmis. The Monpas[4] live in the Tawang area

[2] A. Lamb, *The China-India Border*, London, 1964, p. 21.

[3] These class divisions seem to indicate that these tribal societies did not exist in an ideal, egalitarian state of nature, though excepting perhaps the slaves and their descendants, the other members of these societies more or less enjoyed equality.

[4] The Monpa or Monba is a Tibetan name which means 'people of the low country'.

which occupies about 2,000 sq. miles of the north-east frontier. It is wedged in between Bhutan in the west and the country of the Akas and Mijis in the east. To the south it is bordered by the plains of Assam, while on the north it is separated from Tibet by the Himalayan range averaging 15,000 feet in height which takes its origin in the great snowpeak called the Gori Chen. In Tibetan Tawang is called Monyul, i.e., the low country. Geographically this area is divided into three sections by subsidiary mountain ranges. The upper section lies north of the Se La range — so called after its most important pass — which also, like the range in the north, rises from the Gori Chen. It runs south-west and merges into the eastern Bhutanese frontier. This range forms the watershed between the Tawang Chu and the Dirang Chu or Digien river. The famous monastery of Tawang is situated in the upper section. The middle section lies between the Se La and another range — rather a low one — which branches off from the Bhutanese border at lat. 27°15′ and runs south-east, finally merging in the plains of Assam. The latter range forms the watershed between the Phutang Chu or Tenga river and the Nargum Chu.[5] The lower section lies south of this range. The upper section is entirely occupied by the valley of the Tawang Chu which flows west to join the Manas in Bhutan. The middle section comprises the valleys of the Dirang Chu, Phutang Chu and their tributaries, the waters of which flow east into the Bhareli river. The lower section is formed by the valley of the Nargum Chu which flows south into the Brahmaputra in Assam.[6]

As yet we do not have any information whether the Monpas north of the Se La range form one or more groups. But south of the range several groups of Monpas have been mentioned. J. P. Mills, Adviser to the Governor of Assam for Tribal Areas and States, who visited the area in May-June 1945, refers to the following groups living south of the Se La: the Sherdukpens

[5] General Staff, India, *Military Report on Presidency and Assam District*, Vol. II, Simla, 1931, p. 2.

This report seems to have made a mistake in the section which deals with Tawang. It uses the name Miri where it should have mentioned Miji, since it was the Mijis—and not the Miris—who together with the Akas lived immediately east of the Monpa area.

[6] General Staff. India, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

of Rupa and Shergaon, the Northern Monpas of Dirang Dzong in the Dirang Chu valley, the Southern Monpas of Kalaktang in the south, and the Eastern Monpas of But, Rahung, Kudam and Khona.[7] These names were however rarely used during the period under study. One rather comes across repeatedly the names of three groups of Bhutias living in this area. They were the Charduar Bhutias, Thebengia Bhutias and Kuriapara Duar Bhutias. It is difficult to identify them since no group bearing any of these names is known to exist today. These seem to have been misnomers by which groups of Monpas had been known to the Assamese in the plains and were later used by the British also. However we can make an attempt, with some degree of accuracy, to identify them. The Charduar Bhutias seem to have been the inhabitants of Rupa and Shergaon[8] who later came to be known as the Sherdukpens.[9] The Thebengia Bhutias seem to have lived in the villages of Tembang, Konia and But which were situated north of Rupa and a little east of Dirang Dzong.[10] We have seen that two of these villages — Konia and But — were inhabited by those whom Mills calls the Eastern Monpas. So it seems that the Eastern Monpas were probably called the Thebengia Bhutias. This conjecture seems to be confirmed by Mackenzie's reference to the Thebengias as the 'most easterly tribe of Bhutias'.[11] It is far more difficult to identify the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias than the Charduar and Thebengia Bhutias, since no clear information is available to us on the area inhabited by the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias. As we have succeeded in identifying the Charduar and Thebengia Bhutias with two of the four groups of Monpas mentioned by Mills, the Kuriapara

[7] J. P. Mills, 'A Preliminary Note on the Senjithongji of Balipara Frontier Tract, Assam', *The Journal of the Indian Anthropological Institute*, Vol. II, New Series, Calcutta, 1948.

The name Khona has also been differently spelt as Khonia, Khoina and Konia.

[8] R. Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam*, Shillong, 1942, p. 301. This book will be subsequently mentioned as *History*.

[9] R. R. P. Sharma, *The Sherdukpens*, Shillong, 1961, p. 1; C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. XII, Calcutta, 1931, p.100.

[10] Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, Calcutta, 1931, p. 101.

[11] A. Mackenzie, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884, p. 19. This book will be subsequently referred to as *History*.

Duar Bhutias seem to have been either of the two remaining groups — the Southern Monpas of Kalaktang or the Northern Monpas of Dirang Dzong. If they were the same as the Northern Monpas, they seem to have been later known as the Sherchokpas who lived in the Dirang Chu valley under the control of the Tawang monastery.[12]

The Sherdukpens however are the only group not only south of the Se La but in the whole of Tawang about whose life and society some detailed information is available at present. The principal villages of the Sherdukpens — also called the Senjithongjis — are Senthui and Thongthui, commonly known in the plains as Shergaon and Rupa respectively.[13]

The Thongs and Chhaos are the two main classes of the Sherdukpen society. According to a Sherdukpen tradition, the Thongs — the higher class — are the descendants of a common ancestor, Japtang Bura, who came from the north with a large retinue of porters and servants. The Chhaos — the lower class — are the descendants of the porters and servants. But a different legend, told to Mills at Rahung, has it that a woman of Khona married a bear of Thongthui and gave birth to Japtang there. Both the Thongs and Chhaos are divided into a number of exogamous clans. No inter-marriage is allowed between the Thongs and Chhaos. Thus clan exogamy and class endogamy are the general rule. But there are cordial relations between the two classes. There are no restrictions on inter-dining between them. There does not seem to be any difference in their ways of life, nor is there any demarcation of areas for the classes within the village.[14]

The sort of administration which prevailed in Tawang during the period under study was certainly something more than mere village or tribal organization as we shall later see in the case of the tribes living further east. But Tawang administration was not uniform everywhere in the area, particularly south of the Se La range. North of the range it was carried out by a council of six named the *Trukdri*. They were the *Kenpo* or Abbot of the Tawang

[12] Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, Calcutta, 1931, p. 100.

[13] Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 1; J. P. Mills, ' A Preliminary Note on the Senjithongji of Balipara Frontier Tract, Assam'.

[14] Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 7, 49-50; J. P. Mills, 'A Preliminary Note on the Senjithongji of Balipara Frontier Tract, Assam'.

monastery, another high Lama, two monks known as *Nyetsangs* who corresponded to the stewards in the Tibetan monasteries, and the two dzongpons of Tsona Dzong,[15] a well-known centre of Tibetan administration, north of what was later to become the Indo-Tibetan boundary.[16] The presence of the Tsona Dzongpons on the *Trukdri* clearly indicates the influence which Tsona had in Tawang. Moreover, Tsona Dzong owned considerable property at Tawang.[17] But, in spite of this influence of Tsona, the Tawang monastery seems to have dominated the administration of the area, since four out of the six members of the *Trukdri* were monastic representatives. Moreover, Pandit Nain Singh — an intrepid Indian explorer in the employ of the Survey of India — who undertook a daring journey in 1874-75 from Ladakh to Assam through Tibet and Tawang, believed that the Tawang monastery was independent of both Tsona Dzong and Lhasa. South of the Se La, Senge Dzong was owned by Tsona. With this exception, Tsona did not have any influence south of that pass. Here the area was under the control of the Tawang monastery which used to send monk representatives to Dirang Dzong in the Dirang Chu valley and Taklung Dzong near Kalaktang (or Khalaktang) ; they looked after the interests of the Tawang monastery in these areas.[18]

We do not know what was the character of village organization in the areas under the control of either Tsona Dzong or the Tawang monastery. The only thing that we know is that the villages were probably loosely governed by headmen called *jouri* subordinate to the higher authorities.[19] Some information is however available for the independent Sherdukpen area. Rupa and Shergaon seem to have been jointly ruled by a council of seven headmen who, in early times, were called the *Sath Rajas*.[20] Every

[15] A dzong was roughly speaking a Tibetan administrative centre or fort or both, and the dzongpon was the officer in charge.

[16] F. M. Bailey, *Report on an Exploration on the North-East Frontier*, 1913, Chap. VII, Simla, 1914. This report will be subsequently mentioned as *Report*. A. Lamb. *The McMahon Line*, London, 1966, p. 302.

[17] Bell to McMahon, 3 February 1914: Bell Papers.

[18] Capt. H. Trotter, 'Account of the Pundit's Journey in Great Tibet from Leh in Ladakh to Lhasa, and of his return to India via Assam', *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 47, London, 1877; Balley, *Report*, Chap. VII; Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

[19] General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[20] Also spelt as *Sat Rajas*.

villager could attend the council and in village affairs each man had a vote.[21] Recently Sharma has given us a few more details about the Sherdukpen village organization. According to him, in each village, there is a village council consisting principally of the Thik Akhao (village chief) and the Jung Me (the village council members). The Thik Akhao presides over the council which settles quarrels and disputes. The council also looks after the important village affairs.[22] Though Sharma's account possibly relates to the present day organization, something of the sort may well have existed fifty years ago.

East of the Sherdukpens lies the country of the Akas. The Akas call themselves Hrusso. The name Aka, given to them by the plains people, means 'painted' in Assamese and seems to have been used because of their custom of painting the face with a mixture of pine-resin and charcoal.[23]

The Aka country is bordered on the west by the land of the Sherdukpens, on the east by the Dafla area, on the south by the plains of Assam and on the north by the Miji territory. But the Mijis are so closely related to the Akas that they and the Akas were regarded by Dalton as kindred clans.[24] The Akas are said to believe that in early times they lived in the plains from where they were driven out by Krishna and Balaram.[25]

The two clans of the Akas, the Kutsun and Kovatsun, have been known in the plains for a long time as the Hazarikhowas and Kapaschors respectively.[26] The Akas practise clan exogamy and

[21] General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

[22] Sharma, *The Sherdukpens*, pp. 69-70.

[23] R. S. Kennedy, *Ethnological Report on the Akas, Khoas and Mijis and the Monbas of Tawang*, p. 7, quoted in V. Elwin, *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, London, 1959, p. 438 footnote; R. Sinha, *The Akas*, Shillong, 1962, pp. 3-4.

[24] E. T. Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, p. 37; Sinha, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

[25] Revd. C. H. Hesselmeyer, 'The Hill-Tribes of the Northern Frontier of Assam', quoted in V. Elwin, *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 438.

Krishna and Balaram mentioned here were probably the two famous brothers of ancient Indian legends.

[26] E. T. Dalton, p. 37; Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.

The names 'Hazarikhowas' and 'Kapaschors' have been differently spelt like Hazarikhawas, Hazarikhoas, Kappa-chors, etc.

tribal endogamy. Tribal endogamy, however, does not exclude the Mijis who freely intermarry with the Akas.[27] The slaves of the Akas, called the *Khulo*, were not integrated in society. They formed a separate class outside it. A slave remained a slave all his life, married only a slave girl and transmitted his slavery to his children. Even the remote descendants of a slave could hardly hope to get rid of the stigma of slavery.[28]

Since early times the Akas seem to have had a chief for at least each of the two main clans — the Kutsun and Kovatsun. This chief was called *Raja*.[29] Village affairs were settled in open council and matters concerning the whole tribe were settled by a council consisting probably of the representatives of different villages. Every free man had the right of speech and lots were cast in cases of doubt.[30] It is not clear to us what was the relation between the Raja and the village council. Perhaps he influenced the council decisions to a considerable extent.

East of the Akas live the Daflas who, according to Elwin, call themselves Bangni — a word which simply means 'man'.[31] But according to Professor Furer-Haimendorf, they call themselves Nisu or Ni — the latter word meaning 'human being'.[32] They live mainly in the valleys of a number of rivers and tributaries which finally flow into the Subansiri.[33] The Daflas have for a long time been in a state of flux which has led to frequent migrations from one to another area, particularly to a north to south movement. The causes of these migrations are not yet known.[34]

The Daflas are divided into three groups of clans who are considered to be the descendants of a common legendary ancestor. Each group is subdivided into phratries and exogamous clans.[35]

[27] Sinha, *op. cit.*, pp. 51-53.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.

[29] Hesselmeyer, 'The Hill-Tribes of the Northern Frontier of Assam', quoted in V. Elwin, *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 439-40; General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[30] General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

[31] V. Elwin, *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*, Shillong, 1958, p. 434.

[32] C. von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis and Their Neighbours*, London, 1962, p. 7.

[33] B. K. Shukla, *The Daflas*, Shillong, 1959, p. 1.

[34] Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, p. 8.

[35] C. von Furer-Haimendorf, *Ethnographic Notes on the Tribes of the Subansiri Region*, Shillong, 1947, p. 1; C. von Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, pp. 7-8.

Though tribal genealogy, language, religion and material culture seem to suggest that the Daflas are a homogeneous people, a closer examination reveals that they are the product of a fusion of at least two different ethnic groups. The majority of the Daflas are marked by palæo-Mongoloid features — a round, flat face with a broad, snub nose, high cheek bones, eyes lying in flat sockets, comparatively short, stocky stature, and a yellow-brownish skin complexion. Very different from this type, though fewer in number, are those who have an oblong face, a prominent, often hooked nose, deep-set eyes, comparatively high stature and ruddy complexion. The first type is found mostly among the Daflas of lower social status while the second among the leading families.[36]

It seems that formerly the Daflas were divided into two classes and probably in early times they did not intermarry. These were called the *Gute* and *Guchi.* The *Gute* were of higher social status than the *Guchi.* But this class division is largely blurred today.[37] Such was the flexibility of the Dafla society that children of slaves, by virtue of talent and initiative, could in time acquire wealth and become free men of good social status. A hereditary slave class was unknown in the Dafla society.[38]

There was no tribal organization worth the name among the Daflas. No village headman or tribal elders exercised authority over the entire village. A Dafla village was not a social or political unit. The real unit was the household comprising several families living together. Feuds took place not between one village and another but between one household and another. Even members of the same clan did not necessarily act in a spirit of solidarity. Indeed feuds between clan members were not unusual.[39]

Some groups of tribesmen who inhabit the lower Kamla valley and the hills extending between the Apa Tani country and the Subansiri have been usually called the Miris or Hill Miris. But these names are misleading for two reasons. First, they suggest that these people are ethnically related to the Miris of the plains. But they have little in common with the plains Miris who possibly

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Professor Furer-Haimendorf probably means by 'phratry' a subdivision of the group and by 'clan' a sub-division of the 'phratry'.

[36] Furer-Haimendorf, *Ethnographic Notes*, p. 3.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, p. 9.

[39] Furer-Haimendorf. *The Apa Tanis*, p. 9, and *Ethnograpphic Notes*, p. 4.

migrated from the hill villages of the Abors. Secondly, they suggest that these people are different from their neighbours, the Daflas. But the same economic and social pattern which is found among the Daflas living to the west and north of the Apa Tanis also prevails among the so-called Miris of the hills. The distinction which is thus drawn by a wrong nomenclature between these Miris and the Daflas is arbitrary. There are no significant cultural differences between them, and though there are some linguistic distinctions from one region to another the dialects they speak are mutually intelligible. An overall linguistic uniformity is clearly discernible between them. The Hill Miris call themselves Gungu and claim a close genealogical connection with the Daflas. The linguistic, social and cultural affinities with the Daflas seem to confirm this claim which however explicitly excludes the Apa Tanis who, though surrounded by the Daflas and Miris, represent an entirely different society culturally and economically.[40]

In many respects the Apa Tanis are unique among all the tribes of this frontier. Almost surrounded by the Daflas they live in a single, small valley of about twenty square miles. The valley is drained by a small river, the Kele, and accommodates a large population. The people depend on a meticulous system of irrigation and exploitation of all the available arable land, the like of which does not exist anywhere in the neighbourhood.[41] In spite of being surrounded by the Daflas, the Apa Tanis' ways of life and their awareness of a basic distinction with their neighbours set them apart from the Daflas. Also the language they speak is unintelligible to their neighbours. In sharp contrast with the Dafla villages where the population is in continuous flux and where a Dafla may at any moment sever his connection with the village of his birth and migrate elsewhere, the Apa Tani villages present a picture of singular stability and permanence. It is believed that the Apa Tanis have possibly lived in their present habitat for many generations.[42]

[40] Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, pp. 9-10, and *Ethnographic Notes*, pp. 5-6. A. Bentinck, Asst. Political Officer, Abor Expeditionary Force, to India, Foreign Dept., 23 April 1912: P. S. S. F., Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912. In subsequent reference this report will be mentioned as *Report*.

[41] Elwin, *Myths of the North-East Frontier*, p. 433; Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, pp. 4, 12-13. For Apa Tani agriculture, see pp. 21-22 below.

[42] Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, pp. 4, 61.

According to an Apa Tani tradition, the ancestors of the Apa Tanis came from a country in the north situated near two rivers called Supupad-Pudpumi. But this legendary country is not identifiable today. However, it is believed that they crossed the Subansiri from north to south before reaching the present Apa Tani country.[43]

Ethnically the Apa Tanis appear to be akin to their Dafla neighbours. The same blending of two different ethnic groups is noticeable among them as is found among the Daflas, with this difference that the non-palaeo-Mongoloid type is more frequent among the Apa Tanis than among the Daflas who are predominantly palaeo-Mongoloid. This ethnic distinction seems to correspond to a horizontal division of the Apa Tani society into two classes — the *mite* or the higher and the *mura* or the lower class. The palaeo-Mongoloid type is predominant in the *mura* class in which slaves obtained from outside, especially from the Dafla country, must have been absorbed. The other type is found mainly among the *mite*, particularly the leading *mite* families.[44]

The class division into the *mite* and *mura* is rigid. Neither wealth, nor prowess, nor wisdom can alter it. The superiority of the *mite* in the social hierarchy, in spite of whatever his material position is, goes unquestioned and the two classes are exogamous. The Apa Tanis believe that originally all the *mura* were the slaves of the *mite*. But today this class distinction is largely obscured by the wealth and personal influence of individuals of the *mura* class.[45]

An Apa Tani village consisted of a number of quarters inhabited by specific clans. An Apa Tani clan was a very real social unit the members of which acted in complete solidarity. Often a number of clans shared a common *nago* — a kind of shrine — which served as a bond of unity between those clans who usually supported each other in dealing with outsiders.[46]

Unlike a clan an Apa Tani village was not a compact unit though it was far more close-knit than a Dafla village which was just a loose collection of households. An Apa Tani village lacked a centralized authority. But village affairs were conducted in an

[43] *Ibid*, pp. 5-6.

[44] *Ibid*, pp. 6-7, 10-11, 75.

[45] *Ibid*, pp. 73-74; Elwin, *Myths of the North-East Frontier*, p. 433.

[46] Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, pp. 65, 69.

informal manner by a council of clan representatives or *buliang*. The *buliang* were not village headmen vested with any supreme authority. Their duty was to uphold tribal law by arbitrating in matters of public interest according to the customs of the tribe. They did not constitute a tribal government which could organize all the villagers for a concerted action. The limitations of their authority became obvious when large sections of the tribe opposed each other in a dispute. But the Apa Tanis did not allow any dispute to go too far and cause widespread violence in their small valley. Having lived together in a small area for generations and evolved a prosperous and stable life in sharp contrast with that of their neighbours, the Apa Tanis knew too well the value of peaceful coexistence. The even tenor of life in the valley depended on the assumption that treaties of non-aggression (dapo) existed permanently between all the villages though none remembered when they had been made.[47]

East of the Daflas live the Abors who nowadays prefer to call themselves Adis. The origin of the word 'Abor' has been interpreted variously. According to one interpretation, it is Assamese in origin meaning savage, independent or hostile. In spite of this derogatory meaning of the word the tribesmen accepted this name and used it themselves probably because they borrowed it from the plainsmen during their contacts with the latter without being aware of the meaning of the word. A second explanation is that the name is an Assamese adaptation of an original Adi word which has since fallen into disuse. A third interpretation is that it may have some connection with Abo, the first man, according to Adi mythology, to whom they trace their origin. The Assamese used the word in two senses. In the wider sense it meant independent, unruly, savage and so on, and as such it applied indefinitely to almost all the hill tribes on both sides of the Brahmaputra valley. In its narrower sense it meant particularly the hillmen living between the Subansiri and the Dibang. Today it is used only in the second sense.[48]

Broadly speaking the Abor country is bounded by the Subansiri on the west, the Dibang on the east, the Himalayan range on the

[47] *Ibid.*, pp. 67-69, 100-01.

[48] S. Roy, *Aspects of Padam-Minyong Culture*, Shillong, 1960, pp. 1-5; G. D.-S.-Dunbar, 'Abors and Galongs', *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. V, Calcutta, 1915, pp. 1-2.

north and the Brahmaputra valley on the south. The Abor villages are however concentrated mainly on both banks of the Dihang (or Siang as the Abors call it) and the Yamne.[49]

Almost through the middle of the Abor country runs the Dihang which is called the Tsangpo in Tibet. Though at present we know that the Tibetan river Tsangpo and the Dihang are the same river, this was not known for a long time. The final direction of the Tsangpo proved a great puzzle to many in the nineteenth century and even at the beginning of the twentieth century. None knew whether it eventually flowed into the Yangtse, Mekong, Salween, Dihang, Dibang, or Lohit, or even the Irrawaddy. Even when strong evidence had been gathered as to the identity of the Tsangpo with the Dihang, especially by the Indian explorer, Krishna, better known as A. K., who travelled widely in Tibet in 1879, doubt persisted for many years. Besides its final direction, the Tsangpo presented another problem. The river, assuming that it flowed into the Dihang, was known to be at an altitude of nine to ten thousand feet in south-east Tibet where it entered impenetrable mountain masses, while it debouched into the Assam plains at a height of about five hundred feet above sea-level. Some important questions arose : how did the river lose its tremendous height between these two known points which were only about 120 miles apart in a straight line ; were there great falls on the river which surpassed the Niagara, or only a series of rapids? These puzzles about the Tsangpo continued to trouble the geographers till Captain F.M.Bailey of the Political Department brought fresh information after his travels in Tibet in 1913 which set at rest these problems finally.[50]

The Abors are divided into different groups, such as Padam, Minyong, Pangi, Shimong and others.[51] Each Abor group seems to be divided into clans and sub-clans.[52] Clans are exogamous unless there is a rapid growth and spread of population to different parts which leads to the violation of clan exogamy.

[49] Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 7; G. D.-S.-Dunbar, *op. cit.*, p. 2; General Staff, India, *Military Report on Presidency and Assam District*, Vol. II, 1931, p. 92.

[50] Lt.-Col. F. M. Bailey, *No Passport to Tibet*, London, 1957, pp. 15-23; Lt.-Col. F. M. Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam*, London, 1945, pp. 7-14.

[51] Roy, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

[52] For example see the division of the Padams and Minyongs as given in Roy, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-215.

But sub-clans are strictly exogamous even now. The Abor society does not allow any matrimonial or sexual relation between a free member of the society and a slave or *mipak*. But if such a relation is proved, it may be recognized by the society as a marriage with the downgrading of the free partner to the status of a *mipak*.[53] This position of the slaves appears to indicate a certain degree of rigidity in the Abor society unlike the flexibility of the Dafla society in this respect. Dunbar held that the rule once a slave always a slave had very few exceptions among the Abors.[54]

The Abor village is the only political unit, neither the clan nor the tribe. The village affairs are conducted by the village council called the *kebang*. The members of the council are chosen on their personal merits. Some of them are *gams* (headmen) who represent particular clans, while others do not represent any clans but are selected for their influence and debating powers. Usually each clan has one *gam* of its own, but cases of clans having more than one or none are also not uncommon. Though the *kebang* manages all matters of common interest, Dunbar points out that it is only the voice of the leading *gam* which carries real weight in the community.[55]

Early writers on the Abor country hardly drew any distinction between the Abors and the Gallongs. Even as late as 1960 Sachin Roy, in his excellent book on the Abors, mentioned the Gallongs as one of the Abor groups.[56] But as early as 1915 Dunbar had clearly distinguished the Gallongs from the Abors. And the recent monograph of L.R.N. Srivastava is the first attempt to give us an idea of the different aspects of the Gallongs as a separate tribe.[57] The Gallong area is roughly bordered by the Abors in the east, the Hill Miris in the west, the Abors in the north and the Brahmaputra valley in the south. The Siyom is the biggest river in the Gallong country.[58]

[53] Roy, *op. cit.*, pp. 215, 228.

[54] G. D.-S.-Dunbar, 'Abors and Galongs', p. 60.

[55] Roy, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223; G. D.-S.-Dunbar, *ibid*, p. 39; General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, pp. 109, 123.

[56] Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

[57] G. D.-S.-Dunbar, *op. cit.*, L. R. N. Srivastava, *The Gallongs*, Shillong, 1962.

[58] Srivastava, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

The village council is the highest organization in a Gallong village to which all cases of common interest are referred. The council's decision is binding on the parties concerned.[59]

To the east of the Abors live the Mishmis of the Dibang and Lohit regions. It is customary to divide the Mishmis into three broad groups or tribes : the Idus (of whom the Bebejiyas of the Ithun valley are a sub-group), the Taraons or Taroans (also called the Tains) and the Kamans. They are called by the plainsmen Chulikattas or Chulikatas, Digarus and Mijus respectively. The Idus also seem to have been called Mithus and the Bebejiyas Mithuns.[60]

We shall first take up the Idus of the Dibang and next the Mijus and Digarus of the Lohit, since geographically these are two distinct areas. The Dibang valley, lying north-west of the Lohit and east of the Dihang, is the homeland of the Idus. To the north it is separated by a watershed from the Nagong Chu and Chimdro Chu. In the south it extends as far as the confluence of the Lohit and the Dibang. The principal rivers of the area are the Dibang (or Tallan as the Idus call it), its tributaries and the Sisseri.[61]

The Idus have legends of migration which seem to suggest that they came to their present habitat from the north.[62] But Mills is of the opinion that the Idus represent an early wave of immigrants from Burma from whom the Digarus split a long time ago and were the first Mishmis to enter the Lohit valley,[63] Mills' view seems to be confirmed by the close relations between some clans of the Idus and Digarus.[64]

The Idus are divided into a number of exogamous clans. They do not have social classes based on birth, wealth or occupation.

[59] Srivastava, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

[60] V. Elwin, *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 297 footnote, and *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*, pp. 436, 439; General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

[61] T. K. M. Baruah, *The Idu Mishmis*, Shillong, 1960, pp. 1-3; General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-34, 136.

[62] Baruah, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13. A note on the Mishmis by T. P. M. O'Callaghan, Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, in *Census of India*, 1921, Vol. III, Assam, Part I—Report, Appendix B, p. xii.

[63] J. P. Mills, 'The Mishmis of the Lohit Valley, Assam', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXXXII, London, 1952.

[64] Baruah, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

There is however a social difference between a free man and a slave. Intermarriage is forbidden between the two.[65] The Idus have practically no tribal organization worth the name. The cooperative spirit of the Abors or Apa Tanis is absent among them.

The Lohit valley lying south-east of the Dibang is the homeland of the Digarus and Mijus. The main river of the valley is the Lohit, and its principal tributaries are the Tidding, Delei and Dou. The Mijus live on the upper reaches of the Lohit and the Digarus live to the west of them on the lower reaches.

According to Mills, most of the Mijus claim to have come from the Kachin country or Burma, while most of the Digarus migrated south from the Idu country where they must have been established for a long time after leaving Burma. He thinks that the Idus represent an early wave of migration from Burma and that the Digarus — the first Mishmi immigrants in the Lohit valley — broke away from the Idus about five hundred years ago and migrated to their present homeland. The Mijus entered the Lohit valley after the Digarus. To substantiate his view Mills points out that the Digaru language is almost identical with that of the Idus, while the Miju language is different from the Digaru.[66] But the Mijus and Digarus, though inhabiting distinct areas and speaking different languages, are similar in appearance, have the same habits and customs, and share a common culture which differs considerably from that of the Idus. Also the division between them is not sharp. Many clans have branches in both groups and Mijus become Digarus and vice versa easily and frequently. Intermarriage between the two groups is common.[67]

Mills believes there were people of a reasonably large number in the Lohit valley even before the arrival of the Mishmis. He calls these people 'aboriginals' to distinguish them from the Mishmi immigrants. The Mishmis did not drive out the 'aboriginals'. The latter were absorbed among the former, or rather the 'aboriginal' and Mishmi cultures fused together to evolve the present

[65] Baruah, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

[66] J. P. Mills, 'The Mishmis of the Lohit Valley, Assam'. Elwin also supports Mills' view. He says that the Taraons or Digarus have legends of migration from Burma. See Elwin, *Myths of the North-East Frontier*, pp. 436, 439.

[67] J. P. Mills, *ibid* ; General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

culture of the Lohit valley which, as Mills suggests, is basically the very old, undisrupted one of the 'aboriginals' though modified by the immigrants. The 'aboriginals' no longer from a separate group in customs and language from the Mijus and Digarus; they are now, according to geographical location, part of either group.[68]

The Mishmis of the Lohit valley, like the Idus, have hardly any village organization, and in this respect the Mishmis do not seem to be different from the Daflas with whom, as we have seen, the household rather than the village is the true unit of the society. The Mishmi village is only a loose collection of houses without village chiefs. However men of wealth and personality tend naturally to acquire influence in the community.[69] We shall later come across mention of some Mishmi chiefs who were possibly men of such wealth and influence.

It now remains for us to examine a question of vital importance. It is about the ethnic origin of the tribes. In the context of present India-China dispute over this frontier, it is necessary to find out how far this area ethnically relates to Tibet. We have seen that the people of this frontier themselves have legends of migration to their present homeland. The question therefore arises about the location of their earlier home. As we have seen, some of the traditions of migration current among the hillmen seem to indicate that they came from the north across the Himalaya. But on the basis of these legends it is hard to build a uniform theory of migration from the north, across the Himalaya, since these legends do not always point to migrations from Tibet. For instance, the Akas claim migration from the plains, the Lohit Mishmis from Burma, and in the case of many Dafla clans it is not clear to us from available information whether they trace their origin to or across the Himalaya. However an objective study of the problem can hardly rely on the tribal legends alone. A scientific approach in this respect should take into account evidence of cultural and other affinities between these people on the one hand and the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions on the other from where they may reasonably be assumed to have migrated. Though any generalizations in this respect, based on the meagre amount of research that has yet been done in the field, will probably be a risky venture, yet this is one

[68] J. P. Mills, *ibid.*

[69] *Ibid.*

thing which we cannot possibly avoid in the present study. We shall first take up the Monpas of Tawang, since, of all the people of this frontier, they live under a deep Tibetan influence. Next we shall deal with the other tribes as a whole.

The problem of the ethnic origin of the Monpas has been complicated by the predominance of Tibetan influence in their life. This fact has tended to obscure that strictly speaking they are Bhutanese and not Tibetan in origin. In 1875 Nain Singh was the first man to bring reliable and first-hand information about Tawang.[70] He found that the Monpas resembled the Bhutanese and differed from the Tibetans in language, dress, manners and appearance. When in 1913 Bailey visited Tawang on his way back to India after his travels in Tibet,[71] he found that in customs, language, dress and method of building, the Monpas resembled more the people of Bhutan and Sikkim than those of Tibet.[72] He found the Monpas inhabiting the upper part of the Nyamjang valley north of what is now the Indo-Tibetan boundary.[73] Perhaps only from Le and Trimo northward — both the places lying north of the present Indo-Tibetan boundary — did the Monpas look more like the Tibetans in appearance,[74] though the Tibetans of Rang, a village further north, bore a great resemblance to the Monpas in dress and language.[75] The findings of both Nain Singh and Bailey about the similarities between the Monpas and Bhutanese were confirmed many years later in the military report on Assam published in 1931. According to that report, "Their (i.e. the Monpas') language, houses, bridges, etc., are Bhutanese in type, they may therefore have a common origin with the eastern Bhutanese. . . ."[76]

Besides the similarities between the Monpas and Bhutanese, indicating a possible Bhutanese origin of the former, the Monpas in some areas of Tawang seem to have tribal blood in them. In their facial appearance 'there are distinct traces of the admixture of, if not of descent from, a primitive eastern

[70] See p. 6 above
[71] See Chap. V below
[72] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. VII.
[73] *Ibid*, Chap. V.
[74] *Ibid*, Chap. VII.
[75] *Ibid*, Chap. V.
[76] General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Himalayan hill tribe'.[77] Cultural evidence found by Mills also points to the same fact. He found that the Sherdukpens and the Eastern Monpas spoke the same language and decidedly belonged to the same stock, though they were different in religion. The Sherdukpens were Buddhists while the Eastern Monpas, like the so many other tribes to the east, were animists. But Mills believed that the Sherdukpens also were animists formerly. Hence he emphasized the importance of studying the religion and customs of the Eastern Monpas in order to discover the basic culture of the Sherdukpens overlaid by Buddhism.[78] The obvions inference from Mills' account is that in Tawang Tibetan ways of life along with Buddhism were superimposed on the native culture of the Monpas who were non-Tibetan in origin and, therefore, the present pervasive Tibetan influence in Monpa life cannot by itself be an unquestionable evidence of the Monpas' supposed Tibetan origin. It is highly likely that the Monpas were originally non-Tibetan in stock but were exposed to Tibetan influence from the north which seems to have grown weaker as it travelled south and east of the Se La.

As regards the tribesmen east of the Monpas, none has shown more clearly than S. Roy that they are not Tibetan in origin. Though he has done this with special reference to the Abors, he regards the Abors as part of the same broad culture pattern which also covers the other tribes east of the Monpas. According to him a careful study reveals that these tribesmen have far greater affinity with those living in the hills south of the Brahmaputra than with the people of Tibet. In this light the Himalayan range seems to form a cultural divide. The difference between the two cultures on either side of the Himalaya are all too obvious. To the north of the Himalaya Tibetans live in houses built of stone and wood, dress in elaborate woollen clothes covering the entire body and wear felt hats and boots. To the south the tribesmen live in bamboo huts with a life of three or four years at the most, and their dress consists of short coats or jackets with loin cloth for men and skirt for women, leaving the thighs, legs and feet bare. There are no permanent separate structures for religious performances south of the line. Village gates with hanging carcasses of

[77] General Staff, India, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[78] J. P. Mills, 'A Preliminary Note on the Senjithongji of Balipara Frontier Tract, Assam'.

sacrificed dogs or fowl, and scaffolds for immolating *mithuns* (*bos frontalis*) are the only visible signs of any sacred performance. But on the other side the most majestic structures are the Buddhist monasteries, and beautifully painted *manes*, *chortens* and *kakalings*,[79] prayer flags and prayer wheels abound all over the land. In the south the priests are not distinguished from the laity. In the north they are the most privileged class and are conspicuously distinct in their red or yellow robes. The Tibetans are Buddhists while the tribesmen in the south are animists. In the north the Tibetan craftsmen excel in the manufacture of wooden articles. The tribesmen in the south display great skill in cane and bamboo work. And in all the major features in which the tribesmen of the south differ from the Tibetans of the north, they seem to resemble closely the people of the trans-Brahmaputra hills. This is a strong evidence against the implicit assumption which has so far been maintained that the Brahmaputra proved a culture-barrier between the tribes to the north and south of it. In the past there was probably a continuous homogeneous tribal world in Assam stretching across the Brahmaputra valley. But the establishment of powerful states in the valley drove like a wedge in that tribal world and broke it into two. Before it happened there does not seem to have been any barrier to free movements of the tribesmen from the one to the other side of the river.[80] What then is the value of the tribal legends of migration from the north? Perhaps we can best answer this question as Professor Furer-Haimendorf has done in the case of the Apa Tanis. Dismissing the suggestion of the Apa Tanis' Tibetan origin and pointing out their close affinities with the trans-Brahmaputra Nagas, he says, "these memories (i.e. Apa Tani legends of migration from the north) can only relate to the last stages of a population movement which may well have changed its course more than once."[81] The Tibetan attitude towards these tribesmen also seems to suggest that they are not of the Tibetan stock. Bailey says that the common Tibetan name for the tribesmen like Akas, Daflas, Abors, Mishmis, etc., living on the

[79] A *mane* is a stone shrine in the shape of a wall with sacred inscriptions. A *chorten* is a *stupa*-shaped structure where prayers are held on occasions. A *kakaling* is a stone gate which it is an act of merit to pass through.

The above definitions are taken from Sharma. *The Sherdukpens*, pp. 77-78.

[80] Roy, *Aspects of Padam-Minyong Culture*, pp. 259-263.

[81] Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, p. 6.

southern border of Tibet, is *Lopa*.[82] And according to him, "The term Lopa meant to the Tibetans what barbarian meant to the Greeks. . . ."[83]

We are now to consider the economic life of the hillmen. It was different from that of the plainsmen. And in no respect was this difference more marked than in the method of agriculture which was the most important economic pursuit in the hills. The method of cultivation which was typical on the frontier was quite primitive and was known as *jhum* cultivation. Professor Furer-Haimendorf found this method in existence even a long time after the period under study. He wrote, "Shifting cultivation of the slash-and-burn type is the only kind of tillage practised by such tribes as Mishmi, Abors, Miris and Daflas, and one can travel for weeks in the Eastern Himalayas without ever encountering any other method of cultivation."[84] This method of cultivation consisted of clearing and burning the jungle and undergrowth of a hillside. Crops were then raised on the clearing for two or three years in succession. Then the land was left fallow to recover its fertility and, during this period, cultivation was shifted to some freshly cleared land. This was a wasteful method as it seriously denuded the hillsides of jungles which were necessary for the prevention of soil erosion.

But in the Apa Tani country a very remarkable exception — possibly the only exception at the time — was to be found to the general pattern of jhuming. The first detailed picture of the Apa Tani agriculture has been provided by Professor Furer-Haimendorf. Though he visited the area in 1944-45 — about thirty years after the period under study — yet, since the area was in isolation, there is little reason to suppose that any great change occurred during the intervening years to alter the traditional Apa Tani method of agriculture.[85] As he found, there was no trace of shifting cultivation in the Apa Tani country. The Apa Tani villages were surrounded by carefully irrigated rice fields which extended right up to the foot of the hills surrounding the Apa Tani valley. The Apa Tani methods of irrigation, soil preparation, classification of fields for different varieties of crops and a meticulous attention to every

[82] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XI.
[83] Bailey, *No passport to Tibet*, p. 74.
[84] Furer-Haimendorf, *The Apa Tanis*, pp. 3-4.
[85] *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

crop testified to highly specialised agricultural activities. "The agriculture of the Apa Tanis is thus not only of interest as the basis of an economy different from that of all surrounding populations, but it provides us also with an example of an elaborate and most efficient system of soil exploitation developed by a people cut off from the material development of Indian high civilization.... Indeed, to come from the land of these cultivators (i.e., the neighbouring Daflas and Miris) of frequently shifted hill-fields, carved as it would seem haphazardly from the jungle and abandoned again after one or two years, into the Apa Tani valley with its purposeful order and evidence of the loving care bestowed on virtually every square yard of ground is like jumping thousands of years of man's development and stepping from an age of barbarism into an era of a highly developed civilization."[86]

Since settled agriculture was the mainstay of Apa Tani economy, land was naturally highly prized among the people. The influence and social prestige of an Apa Tani depended largely on the size of his holding. In this respect the Apa Tanis differed fundamentally from their neighbours who lacked the concept of private ownership of land. Besides the private land, there were two other categories of land — clan land and common village land. The private lands comprised practically all the cultivated lands as well as house-sites and sites for granaries. The clan lands consisted of pastures and forests where the members of the clan alone had the right to hunt. In the Apa Tani valley there were only a few and comparatively unimportant tracts which were owned by all the clans of a village. These were common village lands and were used as pastures. Also on the edge of the valley there were large forests claimed by individual villages. These were used as hunting grounds.[87]

Among the Apa Tanis the ownership of land was clearly known. There was a clear distinction between pastures and hunting grounds owned by a clan or village, and the privately owned fields or gardens. The Daflas on the other hand, who were *jhum* cultivators, did not recognize, barring a few exceptions, permanent individual rights in land. Whoever cleared a piece of jungle gained by virtue of his initial effort the right to cultivate the land for the next

[86] *Ibid*, pp. 13-16, 24-34.
[87] *Ibid*, pp. 16-24.

period of cultivation which extended rarely beyond three years. When the land reverted to jungle, this right lapsed, and consequently there existed no permanent proprietary rights in land.[88]

The hillmen supplemented their poor economy by hunting, fishing, rubber-tapping and elephant-catching in the land at the foot of the hills north of the Brahmaputra. But during British rule this land was affected by the expansion of tea plantation and creation of reserved forests. This twin process seems to have exercised an adverse effect on the economy of the tribesmen. And, indeed, as we shall see later, British claims on this land became the most fruitful source of tribal outrages.

By the beginning of the twentieth century thousands of acres were taken up by tea plantations in Darrang and Lakhimpur — the two districts facing the frontier. Since the entire district of Darrang and the North Lakhimpur Subdivision of the district of Lakhimpur lay north of the Brahmaputra, all the tea gardens in these areas were also north of the river — probably near or at the foot of the hills. The first tea plantation in Darrang seems to have been opened in 1854 at Balipara. In Lakhimpur the cultivation of tea was first undertaken by the government in 1835 at Sadiya. By 1901 there were 137,829 acres of tea gardens in Darrang and 21,272 acres in North Lakhimpur Subdivision.[89] Once these lands were brought under tea cultivation they were presumably closed to the hillmen, though in at least some of them the hillmen must have had free access formerly.

Similarly they lost access to the forests which were declared as Reserved Forests. Once a reserve was declared, it became a punishable offence under the Assam Forest Regulation, 1891, to hunt, shoot, or fish, or to fell or cut any tree, or to collect any forest-produce in the Reserved Forest.[90] The first reserves in Darrang were possibly gazetted in 1874. In Lakhimpur the first reserved forest seems to have been created in 1887. By the beginning of the twentieth century there was a considerable area of reserved forests in Darrang and North Lakhimpur. In 1901 the total area

[88] Furer-Haimendorf, *Ethnographic notes*, p. 57.

[89] B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905, pp. 136, 252; B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Lakhimpur*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 168, Appendix, p. 14.

[90] The Assam Forest Regulation, 1891: *The Eastern Bengal and Assam Code*, Vol. 1, Calcutta, 1907.

of reserves was 321 sq. miles in Darrang and 29 sq. miles in North Lakhimpur.[91]

Trade had an important place in the tribal economy. One striking characteristic of trade on this frontier was the absence of any through traffic between Tibet and the plains except by two routes. The more important of these routes was the Tawang route that passed via Tawang and Tsona Dzong. Much less important was the Lohit Valley route which linked Assam with the Tibetan region of Zayul. The tribesmen living in the northern parts of the frontier traded with Tibet and those living in the southern parts traded with the plains. When in 1911 Bailey travelled from China to Assam through the Mishmi country, he found the tribesmen living near the plains going south to obtain their supply of salt which was rare in the hills, while those living near Tibet were going north for this necessary commodity.[92] This horizontal stratification among the tribes was observed even as late as 1944-45 by Professor Furer-Haimendorf during his tours in the Subansiri region. He found that the tribesmen living in the northern and southern parts of the frontier obtained salt and iron from Tibet and the plains respectively, and that the dividing line between the Indian and Tibetan spheres of trade influence ran in a north-easterly direction, roughly midway through the Subansiri region.[93] Recently Lamb has likened this stratification to three layers which seems to have been possible.[94] One layer of tribes had contact with the plains, another with Tibet, and the one between the two had no contact with the outside world.

The cause of this stratification was economic. The tribesmen living near Tibet or the plains would not allow the interior tribes to have an outlet in either direction, since both were interested in maintaining their lucrative position as intermediaries in the trade between the interior tribes and the outside world. Consequently, there were numerous barriers on the frontier which blocked free movement of trade. The only two exceptions seem to have been the Tawang and Lohit routes. These trade blocks seem to have been particularly prominent in the Abor country. "The entire

[91] *Progress Reports of Forest Administration in Assam*, 1874-75, 1886-87, 1900-01. The map of the province enclosed in the last report shows the total area of reserves.

[92] Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam*, p. 142.

[93] Furer-Haimendorf, *Ethnographic Notes*, p. 58.

[94] Lamb, *The China-India Border*, p. 22.

country consists of a series of what may be called trade blocks, one tribe after another insisting on being the sole intermediary, and regarding with the utmost jealousy even the passage of strangers through their territory."[95] In the Dibang valley also there were trade blocks.[96] Such obstacles often forced trade into circuitous routes, and sometimes even in the opposite and unnatural direction. For instance, the Pangis, who inhabited the left bank of the Yamne within view of the plains, were compelled to trade northward.[97]

The British realized that the remedy for this harmful phenomenon of tribal economy lay in establishing trade centres in the hills and in constructing roads which would afford easy and safe passage to the trade centres in the hills as well as to the plains. These measures, it was felt, would lift the curtains which blocked trade with the plains, and would eventually lead to normal relations with the tribes through regular trade contact. In 1912 the Local Government proposed the establishment of a trade post in the Abor country to be held for at least several months in the year by a guard of 100 rifles.[98] Later they further suggested that the best means by which the Political Officer could acquaint himself with the important villages in his charge, and establish friendly relations with them was unobstructed trade. For this purpose, the trade post, which had been sanctioned by the Government of India, should be gradually moved forward into the Abor country along with the extension of a road. This process should continue until at least Riga was reached ; short of that, British control would only touch the fringe of the Abor country and the existing barriers would continue against through trade with the plains.[99] The construction of a road in the Siyom valley also was strongly recommended by Dundas in 1914 for the removal of trade blocks.[100] It

[95] Dundas' tour diary of the Abor Survey Party, March 1913; Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 2076 P., 7 May 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914.

[96] General Staff, India, *Military Report on the Dibang Valley*, Simla, 1919, p. i; Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 8211 P., 10 September 1919: P. S. S. F. Vol. 74 (1914), 999/1920.

[97] Bentinck, *Report*, P. S. S. F., Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[98] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 69 P. T., 7 July 1912: P. S. S. F., Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[99] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., 2076 P., 7 May 1914: P. S. S. F., Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914.

[100] Dundas' note, 17 February 1914: P. S. S. F., Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914.

was expected that an outpost in the Dibang valley would open the whole valley to through trade.[101] But in spite of all the talk of removing the trade barriers, they seem to have continued. As late as 1919 several trade blocks maintained by the Abors were reported.[102]

Trade with the plains was important in tribal economy. Annual fairs were held at different centres. Three important centres were Udalguri, Daimara and Sadiya. Udalguri and Daimara were situated in Darrang.[103] Fairs at these two places were chiefly attended by the Monpas of Tawang and, in less numbers, by the Akas and Daflas. The Udalguri fair was far more important than the Daimara fair. The latter was visited principally by those Monpas who were at the time called the Charduar Bhutias. The Sadiya fair was held in Lakhimpur and was attended by the Daflas, Abors and Mishmis.

No accurate figures for the volume of this trade, during the early years of British administration in Assam, are available, since registration of this trade was often faulty at the beginning. But the method of registration slowly improved over the years. Trade at Udalguri and Daimara was registered by the frontier *mauzadars* or revenue officials, but at Sadiya the trade statistics seem to have been gathered from the traders. The figures furnished by the *mauzadars* were probably reliable to some extent, but little reliance could be placed on those collected from the traders, since they could hardly be expected to disclose the state of trade in which they were interested. The government knew that this system of registration was defective and that more reliable figures could only be obtained if paid agents were employed for the purpose. But they were probably reluctant to incur the expenditure which, they may have thought, would be more than the worth of the result. Another cause of erroneous figures, particularly for the exports from the plains to the hills, was a common practice among the hillmen. They used to dispose of their merchandise — especially the heavy articles like wax, rubber and blankets — at the fairs where it was not impossible to record at least somewhat approxi-

[101] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 8211 P., 10 September 1919: P. S. S. F., Vol. 74 (1914), 999/1920.

[102] General Staff, India, *Military Report on the Dihang Valley*, Simla, 1919, p. 2.

[103] The exact location of Daimara fair is a little uncertain. It was either within or just north of Darrang.

mate figures for these imports from the hills to the plains. Then they dispersed all over the country, buying commodities of their own use, and returned to the hills by the nearest passes without again assembling at any given centres. Consequently much of the exports from the plains to the hills escaped registration. This explains the frequent preponderance of the figures for imports from the hills over those for exports from the plains. In spite of such defects, the method of registration, which slightly improved by 1908, was claimed to have recorded the important elements of the frontier trade. In 1912-13 a further improvement seems to have been introduced when paid trade registrars were stationed at Orang and Behali in Darrang, and at Sadiya in Lakhimpur. Trade by the Tawang route was recorded by two frontier *mauzadars* and the paid registrar of Orang. Trade with the Akas and Daflas — who visited both Darrang and Lakhimpur — was recorded by the registrar posted at Behali, and by six *mauzadars* in Darrang and one police officer in Lakhimpur. Trade with the Abors and Mishmis was registered by the registrar stationed at Sadiya and by the police officers of the frontier outposts in Lakhimpur. From May 1913 trade registration was placed under the control of the Deputy Commissioners concerned and the Political Officer, Sadiya. Returns were sent by the registrars to their offices where they were checked and consolidated for submission to the Director of Land Records and Agriculture. Since April 1903 and April 1904, figures for trade in timber and rubber respectively were supplied by the Forest Department. The trade in forest produce was registered by local forest officers and consolidated returns were received from the Deputy Conservators. We can reasonably assume that the statistics were accurate since the Forest Department began furnishing them.

Of the exports from the plains to the hills, the more important were iron, salt, rice, silk and cotton piece-goods. Among the principal imports from the hills were ponies, cattle, salt, blankets, caoutchouc and a famous febrifuge called the Mishmi *tita* which was mainly available in the Mishmi hills. Caoutchouc was by far the most important import in the trade with the Akas, Daflas, Abors and Mishmis. The supply of rubber often fluctuated due to a variety of reasons such as inter-tribal feuds, border troubles, fluctuation in the price of rubber in the plains, and a likely exhaustion of the submontane rubber forests.

The following specimen figures are available in some of the contemporary reports. They cannot be accepted as accurate because of defective trade registration as mentioned above and because the figures for the Abor, Mishmi, etc., Hills related not only to the trade with Abors and Mishmis but also to that with Hkamtis, Singphos and Nagas who fall outside the scope of the present work. However they give us at least a rough idea about the volume of frontier trade during the period under study.[104]

TOTAL IMPORTS INTO ASSAM FROM

	TAWANG	AKA AND DAFLA HILLS	ABOR, MISHMI, & C. HILLS
1899-1900	Rs. 19,240	Rs. 100,079	Rs. 84,905
1900-1901	Rs. 13,518	Rs. 96,551	Rs. 76,083
1901-1902	Rs. 26,134	Rs. 27,188	Rs. 106,540
1902-1903	Rs. 9,181	Rs. 28,301	Rs. 33,602
1903-1904	Rs. 75,328	Rs. 35,144	Rs. 125,858
1904-1905	Rs. 27,838	Rs. 42,793	Rs. 212,360

TOTAL EXPORTS FROM ASSAM TO

	TAWANG	AKA AND DAFLA HILLS	ABOR, MISHMI, & C. HILLS
1899-1900	Rs. 16,786	Rs. 17,341	Rs. 5,183
1900-1901	Rs. 17,068	Rs. 16,710	Rs. 2,280
1901-1902	Rs. 10,503	Rs. 2,740	Rs. 2,673
1902-1903	Rs. 10,200	Rs. 6,617	Rs. 4,094
1903-1904	Rs. 10,580	Rs. 18,971	Rs. 1,859
1904-1905	Rs. 15,069	Rs. 16,690	Rs. 3,365

[104] *Reports on the Trade between Assam and Adjoining Foreign Countries*, 1876-1914; D. P. Choudhury, 'Economic Life in the North-East Frontier of India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Quarterly Review of Historical Studies*, Vol. XI (1971-72), No. 3, Calcutta.

CHAPTER II

THE POLICY OF NON-INTERFERENCE (UNTIL 1911)

BEFORE the British annexation of Assam, the Ahom rulers seem to have pursued a more or less definite policy in their relations with the tribes of the north-east frontier. This policy appears to have been one of conciliation backed by a display of force when conciliation failed. They tried to prevent the tribesmen from harassing the plains by granting them a subsidy, called *posa* in Assamese, which was expected to provide them with part of their subsistence. But it was no absolute guarantee against tribal raids. The hillmen might at any time descend on the villages in the plains, and carry off captives and property. Punitive expeditions to punish the guilty hillmen are known to have been sent by the Ahom government.[1]

A word of explanation is necessary about the *posa*. The hillmen's dependence on the adjacent plains for some necessaries of life seems to have been a common history of both the north-east and north-west frontiers of India. Dr. C. C. Davies has rightly said, "So long as hungry tribesmen inhabit barren . . . hills, which command open and fertile plains, so long will they resort to plundering incursions in order to obtain the necessaries of life."[2] This observation in respect of the north-west frontier tribes applies equally to their counterparts on the north-east frontier. Like the Pathans and Baluchis, the tribes of the eastern Himalaya on the Assam border also could not fully depend on their barren hills. Like the former, the latter also periodically descended on the plains villages for loot. The weakness of the later Ahom rule may have encouraged the hillmen to put forward a claim on these villages. It was most probably to meet the demands of the turbulent tribes

[1] G. D.-S.-Dunbar, 'Abors and Galongs', *Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. V, pp. 15-16; E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1926, pp. 124, 126, 152-3, 157-8, 183; S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, 1771-1826, Gauhati, 1949, pp. 31-34.

[2] C. C. Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, Cambridge, 1932, p. 179.

that the Ahom rulers introduced the *posa* system. They arranged that some peasant families should pay their annual contributions — in cash, or kind, or both — to the tribesmen instead of to the state. This payment to the hillmen was called the *posa*.[3] This was not an uncertain exaction, the amount of which would vary according to the rapacity and strength of the different hordes, but a definite revenue payment. Obviously the *posa* had its origin in tribal extortions to prevent which the Ahom rulers had introduced this system. Their British successors also recognized this original character of the *posa*. When the British annexed Assam they found the custom in force which virtually recognized the tribesmen's claim to a share in the produce of the plains.[4]

On the annexation of Assam, the British did not stop the *posa* system, but they introduced an important change. During Ahom rule the hillmen appear to have collected the *posa* directly from the plains villages. But the new administration entered into agreements with the different tribes under which the latter were to receive their subsidies directly from the government. The reason for this change seems to have been the desire of the British to prevent the hillmen from annually descending to the plains villages for the collection of the *posa* directly from the villagers, since this custom often led to friction between the villagers and the hillmen.[5] The aim of the agreement was to earn the goodwill of the hillmen and thus prevent them from breaking the peace of the plains. For instance, Captain Gordon, Assistant Agent to the Governor-General, who was responsible for a number of such agreements in 1844, wrote to Major Jenkins, Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier, "I have always considered it derogatory to our Government, yielding to such demands, as were extorted from the Assam Rajahs, 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 Chiefs or Rajahs in lieu of the 'Black Mail' and thus although leaving them nominally independent making them really dependent upon our

[3] Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 7, 21.

[4] Gordon to Jenkins, 13 February 1844: I. P. F. P., April 1844, No. 131; India, Army Headquarters, *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*, Vol. IV, Simla, 1907, pp. 160-161; I. O. Memo, B. 68.

[5] For instance, see Mackenzie, *History*. p. 22.

bounty, and thereby purchasing their goodwill, and forbearance towards the subjects of Government, which will materially tend to the happiness, security and prosperity of the latter . . . ." Major Jenkins recommended Captain Gordon's suggestion which met with the Government of India's approval. By 1860 most of the important tribes were in receipt of annual subsidies from the government with two notable exceptions, the Abors and Mishmis. No formal agreement was ever concluded with the Mishmis nor did they receive subsidies during the period under study.[6] But formal agreements were concluded with the Abors in the 1860s when they expressed their willingness to come to terms with the government. In 1858 the Abors attacked a village about six miles away from Dibrugarh because the villagers had refused to pay the tribute which the Abors had demanded of them. In 1861 another Abor outrage took place about fifteen miles from Dibrugarh. To defend the plains from such raids the government began to consider a scheme of military preparation when the Abors, possibly apprehensive of retaliation, made overtures for reconciliation. Their overtures were favourably received by the government and there were formal agreements with different Abor groups in 1862-66. Under all these agreements the Abors were granted subsidies.[7] Regarding this system of paying subsidies to the frontier tribes, British policy does not seem to have been essentially different from Ahom policy. The only difference between the two systems lay in the arrangement for paying the subsidies. During Ahom rule the hillmen seem to have collected their allowances directly from the villagers, while during British rule they did so from the government.

It is difficult to say how the British chose the tribal chiefs who

[6] Gordon to Jenkins, 13 February 1844; Jenkins to India, Foreign Dept., 20 February 1844; India to Agent, Governor-General, N.-E. Frontier, 20 April 1844: I. P. F. P., April 1844, Nos. 130-132; Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 16, 18, 19, 21-24, 27-29; I. O. Memo. B. 180; C. U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1909, pp. 144-45, 236, 239, 244-45, 297-98.

Though the British paid subsidies to the Daflas in continuation of the *posa* which the latter had enjoyed during Ahom rule, Aitchison does not mention any formal treaty between the government and the Daflas. The I. O. Memo. B. 180 also mentions that there was no formal treaty with the Daflas though they received subsidies from the British.

[7] P. P. C., August 1863, Nos. 28-43; I. F. P., Pol., June 1866, No. 52; Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 37-45; Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, 1909, pp. 245-252.

represented the hillmen in these agreements. Some of them may have been known in the plains. In other cases the British seem to have depended on the intelligence of the Miri intermediaries called *Kotokis* or *Khotokis* whom they employed in establishing contacts with the tribesmen.[8] For instance, Major Bivar, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, who was responsible for concluding two Abor treaties in 1862, seems to have relied heavily on these Miri middlemen. He wrote, "These Khotokies are men who, from their intimate acquaintance with tribes, are made use of to communicate with them when necessary, and are sent into hills as occasion requires." The reason for this reliance on the Miri middlemen was that, "On the Abor side the Meerees are intimately acquainted with the Abors, with whom at times they intermarry : these people, the Meerees, have great influence, and the advantage of commanding the services of a few of their chief men is politically expedient."[9]

The payment of annual subsidies was not the only constituent of British tribal policy. Like their Ahom predecessors, the British realized the need for backing the policy of conciliation by military power. They became particularly aware of this need in the 1860s.

In 1865 Captain Comber, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, complained that whenever the Abors received their subsidies, they demanded more and their demeanour was so insolent as to sorely try the patience of any official. He believed that the policy of conciliation had been misunderstood by the tribesmen who were probably attributing it to the government's weakness. He was afraid that, having been thus encouraged by the government's liberal treatment, the tribesmen would sooner or later put forward exorbitant demands which would finally disrupt the existing peaceful relations with them.[10]

Colonel Hopkinson, then the Agent to the Governor-General and Commissioner of Assam, supported Captain Comber's view and sharply criticised the policy which relied on paying subsidies to the hillmen. He believed the policy of conciliation had failed. "It appears to me, therefore, that it would be easier to defend our

[8] These Miri middlemen had in all likelihood been employed by the Ahoms for similar purposes.

[9] Major Bivar to Assam, No. 146, 27 November 1862: P. P. C., August 1863, No. 37.

[10] Capt. A. K. Comber to Col. H. Hopkinson, No. 19P., 22 April 1865: I. F. P., Pol., July 1865, No. 80.

present policy if we were to cease to call it a 'Conciliatory Policy', and instead to let it be known for what it really is, viz., a system of 'Black Mail', which may be stigmatized as undignified, or even pusillanimous, for us to adopt, but which would be recommended by its expediency as being efficacious in keeping the Abors quiet so long as they were mastered by their cupidity, and their demands did not reach a higher limit than we could afford to gratify rather than provoke their hostility . . .

"Placed upon such grounds, our policy would be intelligible and hardly obnoxious to the charge of failure, while as a 'Conciliatory Policy', pretending to have obtained the good will of the Abors . . . it would stand condemned the first time they came down to put one of our defenceless villages to the sword, and show themselves the same bloody savages they always were." He argued that the payment of subsidies alone was not enough unless it was backed by military power ; "gold has never yet prevailed in the long run where there was not iron in reserve to support it, and on this frontier an appeal to the sword is a contingency for which we must ever be prepared". Hence he urged upon the government the need for military preparedness to meet any tribal outrage.[11] He seems to have been more in favour of coercion than of conciliation. He held, "I believe that in our ability to coerce them (i.e., the hillmen) where conciliation fails, and in their absolute conviction that we can coerce them if they go too far . . . lies the most durable guarantee for their good behaviour". He also wanted that the British "must cease to regard them (i.e., the hillmen) as aliens, or even as enemies, but acknowledge them as subjects, seek to establish ourselves among them, to extend our influence over them, and bring them under our control and within the pale of civilization."[12] In other words, he wanted that the tribal area should be occupied.

The Bengal Government did not admit Hopkinson's idea that the subsidies were nothing but blackmail. They pointed out. "The essential difference between 'Black Mail'and the annual allowances... is this: that in the one case the forbearance of the savage tribe is made by them conditional on payment of the

[11] Col. H. Hopkinson to Bengal. No. 91, 9 May 1865: I. F. P., Pol., July 1865, No. 80.

[12] Col. H. Hopkinson to Bengal, No. 394, 30 October 1865, and No. 401, 4 November 1865: I. F. P., Pol., June 1866, No. 38.

stipulated aliowance, and in the other the payment of the allowance is made by us conditional on the good conduct of the tribe. The one is initiated in an aggressive spirit, the other in a spirit of conciliation." Hopkinson's charge that the policy of conciliation had failed was also refuted by the Bengal Government. They held that enough time had not elapsed for correctly assessing the effect of the policy. "It is not to be expected that these tribes, who have so long been hostile to us, and have incessantly kept up a system of predatory attacks upon our frontier. will suddenly conceive. or even profess, a confiding and firm friendship for our officers. It is of the very nature of the policy adopted that it should require time to enable it to bear fruit." So sure were the Bengal Government of the soundness of the policy that they thought that any fresh outbreak of tribal outrage would be due not to "any internal faultiness of the policy itself" but to the inadequacy of the subsidies. So the Assam Government was advised to find out if the hillmen had a reasonable claim to better terms and, if so, to make arrangements for meeting such claims. However, the Bengal Government did not completely ignore the importance of military preparedness which, they indicated, would received attention.[13]

The Governor-General, John Lawrence, was not in favour of increasing the subsidies, as had been suggested by the Bengal Government, but wanted proper military preparedness to support the policy of conciliation. "The system of money payments alone will not do ; it must be combined and backed up by a show of material power, or it will fail . . . we must increase allowances, because a Tribe breaks their Engagements, and asks for more than we have hitherto given . . . it will not do to buy off such scoundrels."[14]

Accordingly, the Government of India, though in favour of conciliation and "expenditure of any reasonable sum annually", advised the Government of Bengal that "care must be taken to avoid the impression that the expenditure will be increased in proportion to the threatening attitude of the tribes. . . . His Excellency in Council observes that this point is the more to be

[13] Bengal to Assam, No. 3721, 10 June 1865: I. F. P., Pol., July 1865, No. 80.

[14] Lawrence to Beadon, 13 July 1865: John Lawrence Papers, Letters to the Lt.-Governor of Bengal, 1864-7.

attended to inasmuch as the behaviour of the tribes is alleged in some quarters to be overbearing, if not insolent.

"It must never be forgotten that, while the Government of India acquiesces in the use of all such means of maintaining security on the border, these can only prove effective if combined with arrangements calculated at once to overawe and restrain these tribes from attacking our subjects. The better prepared we are in this respect, the further will our pacific policy be removed from the chance of being misunderstood." Though the Government of India thus fully supported Hopkinson's idea of military preparedness, they did not favour his suggestion of occupying the tribal country. "It is out of the question to attempt the occupation of the Abor Hills . . . .

"Our object should be, not to extend the frontier, but to consolidate the portion of territory already in our possession and to secure its good administration. If at any time it may be found necessary to advance into the hills beyond our border as a punitive measure, our troops should remain so long as is necessary for the attainment of this object, and no longer."[15]

In 1868, W. W. Hunter, Assistant Magistrate and Collector, Beerbhoom, publicly brought the charge that the only discernible tribal policy which the government had was one of "fitful and violent exertions of armed force". Instead of armed reprisals, he advocated an enlightened policy of conciliation.[16]

In view of the tribal policy which had already been adopted by them, the Government of Bengal claimed that Hunter's charge was based on ignorance, Hunter was a young officer of six years' service, "of which only four years had been passed in India. and only three years in the actual work of administration, and that in districts very far from the frontier. . . ." The Bengal Government held that instead of having been what he condemned, the tribal policy was in accordance with what he advocated. To substantiate their view, they drew attention to a memorandum which had just been prepared by A. Mackenzie, Officiating Junior Secretary to the Government of Bengal. This memorandum, it was

[15] India, Foreign Dept., to Bengal, No. 613, 14 July 1865: I. F. P., Pol., July 1865, No. 82.

[16] W. W. Hunter, Political Dissertation prefixed to *A Comparative Dictionary of the Languages of India and High Asia.* London, 1868.

claimed, embodied for all future reference a history of the govenment's tribal policy.[17]

According to Mackenzie, the government's policy had been one of fair dealing. "While maintaining a force strong enough to punish any wanton aggression, we have refrained from creating unnecessary foes. and have scrupulously made good to the hillmen all that of which we deprived them by assuming the government of Assam. We have, however, made them clearly to know that the payment of their dues is contingent on their good behaviour." Mackenzie however admitted the possibility of tribal outrages any time in spite of such a policy. "It is the work of time to make such savages understand a policy, of conciliation . . . . punishment for any outrage must be, and usually has been, summary and severe. But our aim. as a whole, has been conciliatory." Regarding the alternative policy of permanent occupation and direct management, he said that this could not be applied on this frontier. It "would only bring us into contact with tribes still wilder and less known, nor should we find a resting place for the foot of annexation till we planted it on the plateau of High Asia. And then ?"[18]

The policy which was thus outlined by the end of the 1860s was essentially a policy of non-interference. The tribal country was not to be occupied. The tribesmen were not to be interfered with and their allowances were to be paid regularly so long as they did not disturb the peace. Military means were to be applied only when there was a breach of the peace. Having taken this final shape, this policy was never seriously questioned during the rest of the nineteenth century. As we shall see later, it was only when extensive British economic interests in Assam were threatened by tribal exactions that the prudence of this policy was challenged and a change in the government's tribal policy was demanded at the turn of the twentieth century.[19]

The policy of non-interference was taken further by the intro-

[17] Bengal to India, Foreign Dept., No. 739, 14 June 1869: I. F. P., Pol., July 1869, No. 252.

[18] Memorandum on the North-East Frontier of Bengal, 1869: I. F. P., Pol., July 1869, No. 253.

[19] See pp. 94-97. Not only in tribal policy but a.so in the policy for frontier protection, concern for British economic interests in Assam played its part. See pp. 150-152.

duction of the Inner Line on the northern border of Darrang and Lakhimpur. The purpose behind this measure was to prevent friction with the tribal people. The government's decision in this matter was based on two principal considerations. The first was the troubles which had already erupted on the Naga hills border between the Nagas and the tea planters. The second was a similar danger which, the government feared, was latent in uncontrolled contacts between the hillmen and the speculators in caoutchouc in the rubber producing districts. Although the friction between the tea planters and the Nagas took place outside the area covered by the present study, it deserves a brief mention here since it was one of the two main factors responsible for the introduction of the Inner Line.

In the early days of tea-planting there seems to have been "a great desire to acquire lands in the remotest and most jungly part of the country, as being supposed to be best adapted for tea-cultivation ; and no anxiety was exhibited at that time on the part of the local officers to check the tendency. Accordingly . . . much tea-planting has extended beyond our settled village boundaries ; several (i.e., tea gardens) . . . have, from their position in the Naga border land, given rise to difficulties with the Nagas, which . . . have forced the Lieutenant-Governor to consider the question of having a strictly defined boundary between the settled districts of Assam and the lands occupied by Nagas outside our ordinary jurisdiction."[20] When the Lieutenant-Governor wanted to know if there was a definite boundary in Assam beyond which no planter could go, Colonel Hopkinson, Commissioner of Assam, informed him that "generally speaking, there does not exist in any of the districts of Assam any definite boundary beyond which tea-planters may not go."[21] Probably the absence of such a boundary, which could serve as the final limit to all expansion of tea plantation, was responsible for very close contacts between the European tea planters and frontier tribes. In such a situation the government seems to have been afraid that "any indiscreet European settler may involve the Government any day in a frontier war" In order to control such a dangerous situation, the Lieutenant-Governor

[20] Bengal to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3491, 31 October 1871: I. F. P., Pol., May 1872, No. 19.

[21] Bengal to Assam, No. 2733, 13 June 1871; Assam to Bengal, No. 1100 T., 20 July 1871: I. F. P., Pol., May 1872, No. 18.

sought the application of an Act of 1870 to Assam which would provide the government with powers of summary legislation.[22] The reason why he asked for such powers was that "There will sometimes in times of excitement, or when partisan feelings are aroused, be considerable difficulty in legislation either in the Governor-General's or in the Bengal Council."[23]

The Governor-General in Council thought that as a preliminary to the application of the Act of 1870 to Assam, some boundary line should be defined "beyond which the jurisdiction of the British Courts shall not at present be extended". It was however not to be considered as the boundary up to which active administration must necessarily extend. "Although officers need not necessarily actively govern up to the boundary, yet they will know that they must not attempt to govern beyond it . . .

"Beyond that line the tribes should be left to manage their own affairs, with only such interference on the part of frontier officers in their political capacity as may be considered advisable. . . . No European planter should be permitted to accept any grant beyond the line or under a tenure derived directly from any Chief or tribe." It was hoped that the definition of some such line would put an end to the expansion of tea plantation towards the tribal country, "that indefinite. slow, but certain advance to dangerous and exposed positions", which had brought about friction with the hillmen. The Lieutenant-Governor was asked to report what line of jurisdiction he proposed.[24] The Commissioner of Assam was accordingly asked by the Bengal Government to determine this line.[25] Thus a boundary line was found in any case a necessity whether to stop the expansion of tea plantation in the tribal country or to apply the Act of 1870.

When the application of the Act was being considered, its need was further emphasized by another problem. In the rubber producing districts of Assam it was the practice of the government to lease out the rubber *mahal* (i.e., the right to buy the rubber pro-

[22] 33 Vic., Cap. 3.

[23] Bengal to India, Foreign Dept., No. 4209, 5 September 1871: I. F. P., Pol., May 1872, No. 17.

[24] India, Foreign Dept., to Bengal. No. 282P., 30 January 1872: I. F. P., Pol., May 1872, No. 26.

[25] Bengal to Assam, No. 1160, 20 February 1872: I. F. P., Hev., January 1873, No. 11.

duced in the district) by annual auction. Very little of the rubber however came from within the settled revenue limits ; much was brought by the hillmen from their country lying beyond British jurisdiction ; "but, practically, the farms let out in each district have been held to include, not only the right to buy the India-rubber produced in the districts, but also foreign caoutchouc, i.e. India-rubber collected in and imported from territory to which the British, civil and revenue, jurisdiction has not been extended." This system worked well until the independent European speculator came in "with his parade of law for the Government . . . arguing that we cannot let out what is not properly ours."[26] Apparently the speculators disputed the claim of the lessees of the rubber *mahals* to a monopoly of the rubber brought from outside the British territory.

The government now faced a potentially dangerous situation. Major W. S. Clarke, Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, was afraid that the hillmen might be cheated by the speculators and this could lead to tribal disturbance.[27] The Government of India also realised that "if speculators are allowed to advance into the hills, to take advantage of the ignorance of the tribesmen, and, perhaps, even to buy up from them the right of collecting forest produce, the difficulties which have arisen from the unrestricted extension of tea-planting on the frontier may be expected to recur in a new and even more dangerous form".[28] The Lieutenant-Governor believed that the situation could be brought under control only by extending the Act of 1870 to Assam and by passing necessary regulations under that Act.[29]

Thus the extension of the Act of 1870 to Assam was advocated to solve both the problems arising from tea plantation and rubber trade on the tribal borders of Assam. "This would enable the Lieutenant-Governor to deal with questions which cannot con-

[26] Bengal to India, Agriculture, Revenue & Commerce Dept., No. 2153, 27 May 1872; Extract from I. F. P., Rev., No. 180R, 24 July 1872: C. I. P. D., 1872, No. 91.

[27] Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, to Assam, No. 22.6 April 1872; Assam to Bengal, No. 121, 22 April 1872: C. I. P. D., 1872, No. 91.

[28] Extract from I. F. P., Rev., No. 130R., 24 July 1872: C. I. P. D., 1872, No. 91.

[29] Bengal to India, Agriculture, Revenue & Commerce Dept., No. 2153, 27 May 1872: C. I. P. D., 1872, No. 91.

veniently be submitted to the procedure of the Councils of the Governor-General or of the Local Government, such as the rights of Europeans who go beyond the civil boundary to obtain India-rubber or elephants, or to purchase tea land or coal mines, &c."[30]

As we have seen the Governor-General had already asked for the definition of a boundary line before applying the Act of 1870 to Assam. He had been waiting for a report on the subject when he was requested by the Bengal Government to extend the Act to Assam in order to solve the difficulties of the rubber trade. He was of the opinion that it would have been best if this line had been first defined, because it would then have given a precise idea of the territorial extent to which the Act was to be applied. But under the pressing circumstances he agreed to the extension of the Act to Assam, leaving the boundary line to be defined later. But at the same time he pointed out that it would be desirable "at once to define the line of the ordinary jurisdiction to be exercised by the officers of Government; to declare distinctly that Government will not be responsible for the protection of life and property beyond that boundary line; and to require that the movements of British subjects beyond that border be subject to certain restrictions, or even it might be, in the case of Europeans, forbidden altogether." The Lieutenant-Governor was also asked to prepare early the draft regulations which he wanted to pass under the Act for the control of the rubber trade.[31]

On being requested by the Government of India to approve the extension of the Act of 1870 to a number of Assam districts including Darrang and Lakhimpur, the Secretary of State passed a resolution in the Council of India on 19 September 1872 sanctioning the application of the Act with effect from 1st January 1873.[32]

On the basis of a draft regulation submitted by the Government of Bengal, the Government of India sanctioned the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation I of 1873 under the Act of 1870 with

[30] Bengal to India, Foreign Dept., No. 6343, 20 November 1872: I. F. P. Rev., January 1873, No. 10.

[31] Extract from I. F. P., Rev., No. 180R., 24 July 1872: C. I. P. D., 1872. No. 91.

[32] India, Foreign Dept., to the Secy, of State, No. 4. 29 July 1872: C. I. P. D., 1872, No. 91; Secy. of State to India, No. 91, 24 September 1872: P. D. I., 1872, Vol. 15.

effect from 1 November 1873.[33] While approving the regulation, the Secretary of State commented that its main purpose was "the demarcation of a definite boundary between the territory within which we are to exercise formal and plenary jurisdiction, and that within which we are not to interfere, except politically . . . such a demarcation may possibly be regarded by the wild tribes as a kind of tacit pledge on our part not to interfere beyond a line so drawn, though it will of course be the duty of your frontier officers to dispel as far as possible, such an impression."[34] This regulation empowered the government to draw an Inner Line in any of the districts to which the Act of 1870 had been extended; to prohibit British subjects or any person from going beyond the line without a pass issued by the district authority concerned; to confiscate any rubber, wax, ivory or other jungle produce found in the possession of any person guilty of violating this regulation; and to prohibit any person, except the original inhabitants of the districts concerned, from acquiring any interest in land or the product of land beyond the Inner Line without official sanction. The government could even extend the last prohibition to the original inhabitants of the districts. This regulation also provided for the protection of wild elephants. These restrictions were by nature so restrictive that they not only checked the expansion of tea plantation into the tribal country and the undesirable contacts between the ignorant tribesmen and sharp speculators in caoutchouc; they also seem to have restricted the hitherto free contacts between the hills and the plains. The Inner Line was declared in September 1875 and March 1876 in Lakhimpur and Darrang respectively.[35]

North of the Inner Line another line was laid down. It was called the Outer Line which was virtually the limit of political control. It was possibly regarded at the time as the limit of British territory. As we shall see later, there was confusion in official thinking as regards its precise status, but it was certainly not an

[33] India, Foreign Dept., to Bengal, No. 140R., 5 August 1873: I. F. P., Rev., August 1873, No. 7; India, Foreign Dept. Notification No. 139R, 5 August 1873: I. F. P., Rev., August 1873, No. 6.

[34] Secy. of State to India, No. 154, 16 December 1873: I. F. P., Rev., January 1874, No. 12.

[35] India Foreign Dept. Notification No. 2427P., 3 September 1875: I. F. P., Pol., September 1875, No. 272; India Foreign Dept. Notification No. 631P., 8 March 1876; I. F. P., Pol., March 1876, No. 517.

international boundary as Lamb would have us believe.[36] The confusion in official thinking was not eleared until 1911. The Outer Line was demarcated in 1875 as far east as the Baroi river (lat.27°, long. 93° 20′). Beyond that point it was not demarcated; there it followed "a readily recognisable line along the foot of the hills as far as Nizamghat". In spite of the absence of demarcation in this part of the boundary, this was a reliable geographical definition, since the hills arose "like a wall from the valley". Beyond Nizamghat there was no Outer Line. The only line in existence there was the Inner Line.[37]

The government's tribal policy was not as successful in securing peaceful relations with the tribes as they might have expected.[38] In 1874 the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang observed that the plainsmen suffered bullying at the hands of the hillmen regularly but that they did not complain, since they were more afraid of the hillmen's revenge than confident of the government's ability to protect them.[39] In 1877 the Deputy Commissicner, Lakhimpur, informed the Chief Commissioner that the Abors claimed an extensive area of about 600 square miles between the Brahmaputra and the foot of the hills. In this tract "the Abors are, in fact, the real masters . . . and persons residing within the tract can, if they only settle with the Abors, do pretty much as they like. Should proof of this be asked for. I would say that not a fisherman can enter the northern rivers flowing into the Brahmaputra to fish, or a boat put to on the north bank, for fear of Abor plunderers. Even forest revenue is levied by the Abors on boats, &c., made on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, while Government does not touch a farthing on this account, although the trees are all cut in its own territory, or what ought to be so." The Deputy Commissioner further pointed out, "It is notorious that the Abors consider, and give out, that these payments (i.e. annual subsidies) . . . were exacted by force of arms ; and it is undeniable that but

[36] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 313. See pp. 170-71, 173-75.

[37] I. O. Memo. B. 180.

[38] S. Gupta is of the opinion that British policy led to the establishment of peace and tranquility on the frontier. But contemporary evidence does not seem to support this view. See S. Gupta, *British Policy on the North-East Frontier of India*, 1826-1886, p. 134, Oxford thesis, 1848.

[39] Dy. Commissioner, Darrang, to Assam, No. 119, 17 April 1874: I. F. P., Pol., June 1874, No. 226.

too often the payments have been received with contumely and insult to the Government officers by whom they were made."[40] The Chief Commissioner did not want that, as a remedy, the government should at once occupy the plains up to the foot of the Abor hills, since such a step would be very costly. But he thought a show of military strength was absolutely necessary. He recommended that a military party should be sent through the plains at the foot of the Abor hills to assert the government's rights to the tract which, though beyond the Inner Line, was within British territory,[41] But the Government of India declined to permit the proposed step on the ground that it would involve considerable expense without any permanent and tangible advantage, They did not consider it worth while to undertake military expeditions "which leave no permanent mark behind them, and the results of which cease with the withdrwal of our troops"[42]

It seems that as a consequence of this attitude on the part of the government, a large area of the plains was gradually depopulated, while those who remained had to suffer tribal blackmail, and "acts of oppression and wanton damage", of which they seldom dared complain for fear of tribal reprisal, and for which they could still more seldom hope for redress.[43] Sometimes even people living within the Inner Line were compelled to pay blackmail.[44] Such sufferings of the common people did not however bring about an official rethinking of the tribal policy. As we have observed above, this policy was seriously questioned only when British capital was threatened by tribal balckmail. It seems as though the govern-

[40] Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, to Assam, No. 50C., 25 March 1877: I. F. P., Pol., August 1877, No. 312.

The claim of the Abors was contrary to the treaty terms concluded between them and the government in the 186 Os according to which the government's territory extended to the foot of the hills. See Aitchison, *op. cit*, Vol. II, 1909, pp. 245-252.

[41] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 1211, 28 April 1877: I. F. P., Pol., August 1877, No. 310.

[42] India, Foreign Dept., to Assam, No. 1722P., 18 July 1877: I. F. P., Pol., August 1877, No. 317.

[43] Williamson to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, No. 19G, 4 April 1907: E. B. A. P. P., November 1907, No. 17; Bentinck, *Report*: P. S. S. F., Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[44] Manager, Meckla Nuddee Saw Mills Co. Ltd., to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, 16 January 1907: E. B. A. P. P., November 1907, No. 10.

ment had come to look upon tribal behaviour as a matter of routine and probably intervened only when the hillman committed serious outrages.

One would naturally ask why the hillmen were troublesome in spite of the government's efforts to secure peace, A study of the causes of trouble on this frontier shows an essential difference between them and those on the north.west frontier. One potential cause on the north-west frontier was Afghan intrigues, either instigated directly from Kabul with the full cognisance of the Amir, or carried on by his local officials.[45] No such political cause was present on the north-east frontier. The only country that could play the role of Afghanistan on this frontier was Tibet. But apart from occupying an analogous geographical position, Tibet was quite dissimilar to Afghanistan. The conflicting Anglo-Afghan interests, which were largely responsible for Afghan intrigues among the Pathan tribes, were in their turn due in a large measure to Afghanistan's prominent place in the Anglo-Russian rivalry in Central Asia. But Tibet did not enjoy an equally important place in the Great Game. Hence the chances of conflict of Anglo-Tibetan interests and consequent Tibetan intrigues among the border tribes were never so serious as in the case of Afghanistan. And, even if there were ever any serious Russian threat in Tibet, as Curzon seems to have believed, it was effectively nullified by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Tibet could, of course, assume important a place in Anglo-Chinese relations as Afghanistan in Anglo-Russian relations, if China proved as serious a threat to British interests in India and Central Asia as did Russia. But except for a brief period from 1910, China's position in Tibet was not considered by the British as a source of great danger. Secondly, while Afghanistan had common religious bonds with the tribesmen of the north-west frontier whom she could easily incite with a call for *Jihad*, the Buddhist Tibetans had no such ties with the non-Buddhist tribes of the north-east frontier.

Economic factors were primarily responsible for tribal unrest on the north-east frontier. Of these the most important was the dispute between the hillmen and the government regarding the possession of the land at the foot of the hills north of the Brahmaputra. This land

[45] C. C. Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, p. 180.

was of major importance in the economic life of the tribes, since it provided them with forests for hunting and rubber-tapping, land for cultivation and grazing and rivers for fishing.[46] There was of course no formal evidence in support of the hillmen's claim to this land. But occassionally one comes by some circumstantial evidence in their favour. For instance, after the annexation of Assam the hillmen were found to be in occupation of villages south of the sub-montane tracts.[47] Most probably, taking advantage of the weakness of the later Ahom rulers, the tribesmen had committed this encroachment and asserted their claims to rights more or less definite over lands lying in the plains.[48] Early accounts of north-eastern Assam also show that the tribesmen were in the practice of hunting in the forests, and fishing and gold-washing in the rivers at the foot of the hills.[49] All these indicate that they enjoyed an effective power in this tract before the British annexed Assam. Consequently, British expansion in the Brahmaputra valley directly clashed with the tribesmen's interests in this tract.

When in the 1860s the Abors entered into agreements with the government, the latter demanded that the Abors must recognize that British territory extended upto the foot of the hills. The Abors at first strongly resisted this demand and claimed all the land from the Brahmaputra to the foot of the hills as their own. It was only after patient persuasion that they accepted the British demand.[50] But the Abors did not honour the treaties. They per-

[46] Not much direct and systematic evidence is available concerning the utility of this tract in tribal economy. We can only glean some inormation from casual and scattered evidence. For example, see Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, to Assam, No. 50C., 25 March 1877: I. F. P., Pol., Augusg 1877, No. 312; Mackenzie, *History*, p. 24; Capt. Maxwell's Report on Aka expedition quoted in Reid, *History*, p. 269.

[47] D. K. Mukherjee, *Final Report on the Land Revenue Resettlement of the Darrang District*, 1927-33, p. 8.

[48] Mackenzie, *History*, p. 7.

[49] Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3923-J., 9 September 1907: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1261/1908.

[50] Major Bivar to Assam, No. 146, 27 November 1862: P. P. C., August 1863, No. 37.

sisted in their old claim to the land.[51] One Abor tribe even ate their copy of the treaty to show their contempt for it.[52]

The demarcation of the Inner Line as the northern boundary of effective British administration in Darrang and Lakhimpur was a great blow to the tribesmen's interests in the land at the foot of the hills. When the government decided to fix this line in Darrang south of the Aka country, the Kapaschor Akas refused to recognize the line between the Bhareli and the Khari Dikrai rivers. They claimed an extensive tract on the Bhareli which was cut off by the proposed alignment.[53] This demand was in the long run responsible for the trouble in the winter of 1883 when the Akas seized the Balipara *mauzadar*, Lakhidhar Kolita, and successfully raided Balipara.[54] They bore him a grudge as they had seen him always accompanying the government officers at the time of the survey and demarcation of the Inner Line ; hence they held him chiefly responsible for demarcating the Inner Line "as near the hills as feasible." The Inner Line and the gazetting of forest reserves within that line at once precluded the tribesmen from their pursuits of livelihood in the land at the foot of the hills. They were deprived of what they considered their ancient rights to catch elephants and tap rubber in the forests at the foot of the hills, Their grievance was further accentuated by the officers who rigidly enforced the forest rules in the reserves, and even threatened the hillmen with the loss of their right to a path to the plains which ran through what was now a government forest.[55]

The Abor outrages of 1893 which led to an expedition against the Aborsin 1894 were also due to this disputed land at the foot of the hills. The Abors of Membu, Padu, Silluk and Dambuk used to cultivate a tract of country between Pasighat on the Dihang and Nizamghat on the Dibang. The Abors claimed

[51] For instance see p. 78 for the Abors' claim to 600 sq. miles.

Further, in 1881 the Government of India admitted that the Abors had entirely ignored their treaty obligations and openly asserted claims to the land north of the Brahmaputra as their own. See India to the Secy. of State, No. 149, 19 December 1881: I. F. P., Pol., December 1881, No. 146.

[52] I. O. Memo. B. 180, Comber to Hopkinson, No. 19P., 22 April 1865: I. F. P., Pol., July 1865, No. 80.

[53] Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 25, 367; A. A. R., 1911-12, p. 80.

[54] Reid, *History*, pp. 269-%70; Mackenzie, *History*. pp. 367-8.

[55] Mackenzie, *History*, p. 367; Reid, *History*, pp. 269-70.

this land as their own and objected to British subjects entering it. But the government refused to recognize their claim since the land lay in the plains below the foothills, This attitude of the government provoked the Abors who murdered some sepoys at Bomjur on 27 November and at Kherimpani on 23 December, 1893. After the Abor expedition of 1894 the Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, told the Abors that the land in question lay in British territory. But no action was taken to enforce this claim of the government. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the Abors did not take the government's claim seriously and continued to enjoy undisputed possession of the land.[56] Conseqently, when on a latter occasion some members of the Padam settlement of Sibiya on the Dibang cultivated that land, the independent Padams of Membu kidnapped eleven of them. though the settlement of Sibiya having been a tax-paying village, was entitled to cultivate that land which the government had declared as its own territory after the Abor expedition of 1894.[57]

While the government was thus denying the tribal claim to the land at the foot of the hills, the general poverty of the tribes was probably pressing them to move down towards the plains in search of new land. Besides Bomjur, there appears to be no record of Abor settlement in the plains before 1897-98. But since then some Abors settled on the Lali, Dihang and Poba rivers between the Inner Line and the foot of the hills, But the Local Government, in its anxiety to avoid friction with them, thought it necessary to impose certain restrictions on them. It was laid down that the hillmen could settle in the plains only outside the Inner Line, provided they settled on sites previously approved by the government, paid poll-tax, and behaved well. While some settlers paid the tax grudgingly, others refused to accept the above terms and claimed the land as their own.[58] During 1898-99 some Abors attempted to settle in the plains without permission. They erected houses and started shifting cultivation north of the Sibiya river on the left bank of the Dihang. They claimed that since the land

[56] Williamson to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, No. 196, 4 April 1907: E. B. A. P. P., November 1907, No. 17.

[57] E. B. A. A. R., 1906-07.

[58] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3923-J., 9 September 1907: P. S. S. F., Vol. 13 (1910), 1261/1908.

was outside the Inner Line, it belonged to them and not to the government. Consequently, the Assistant Political Officer visited the place and expelled them by force.[59]

Obviously the root of all these troubles was the land at the foot of the hills. While the government claimed all land up to the foot of the hills as British territory, the hillmen were not prepared to accept this claim. However with the steady extension of administration up to the Inner Line, the tribesmen seem to have probably reconciled themselves to the hard fact and come to look upon that line as the limit of British territory, But for a long time they refused to admit that all land even beyond that line was also British. Conscquently, they refused to submit to the government's orders as long as they were beyond the Inner Line. The Inner Line thus seems to have been indirectly responsible for some troubles, though it had been introduced to prevent them.[60]

As we have seen the government's desire to avoid troubles arising from the rubber trade on the frontier was one main reason why the Inner Line was introduced, They could not however entirely prevent such troubles.[61] To stop such troubles the Local Government laid it down that in future all agreements regarding the rubber trade between the traders and the hillmen must be made in the presence of the Deputy Commissioner concerned and that the Inner Line passes would be issued to the traders only when they had entered into agreements and deposited enough security money for prompt payment of any claim that might be proved against them.[62] This arrangement was expected to safeguard the hillmen and thus remove the chance of reprisals such as they had frequently attempted in the past when they had been dissatisfied with their treatment at the hands of the rubber traders.

[59] A. A. R., 1898-99, p. 18.

[60] Gupta says that the Bhutias of Charduar and Kuriapara Duar complained of restrictions imposed under the Inner Line Regulation which prevented the entry of plainsmen into trioal country. The Bhutias could no longer engage porters from the plains to carry their goods from the fairs to the hills. The Regulation was therefore rescinded. Though Gupta refers to Mackenzie, t ⁷ lat er dovs not say anything which supports the above view of Gupta. See S. Gupta. *British Policy on the North-East Frontier of India*, 1826-1886, p. 120. Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 55-56.

[61] For some instances, see A. A. R., 1898-99, p. 17; A. F. P., July 1900, Nos. 40-59.

[62] A. F. P., July 1900, Nos. 4*e*-59.

Besides the above major causes, runaway slaves of the tribesmen, inter-tribal feuds, personal vendetta, jealousies and suspicion also led to troubles on the border. When slaves of the tribesmen escaped to British territory and the government refused to restore them to their masters, this refusal caused irritation among the hillmen, For instance, the government's refusal either to restore to the Abors or compensate them for the fugitive Miris whom the Abors used to consider as their serfs caused Abor raids in the plains, Tribal raids seem to have been sometimes caused by the hillmen's attempt to obtain slaves from the plains.[63] S. Gupta points out that a number of Mishmi raids were caused by plainsmen who often raided tribal country, plundered property, abducted women and kidnapped children and slaves. But his reference to Aitchison does not appear to corroborate his opinion. Aitchison does not speak of Mishmi raids. He mentions some Dafla raids against the Daflas recently settled in the plains, the latter having provoked the raids, But the Daflas recently settled in the plains could hardly be called plainsmen in the proper sense of the term. And the quarrels between them and the hill Daflas were in reality tribal feuds.[64]

The government tried to contain the tribesmen by means of economic and military sanctions. The economic measures consisted of the suspension of the *posa* and blockade of the border-Suspension of the *posa* exercised some sobering effect on the hillmen since the *posa* must have been of consequence in their poor economy. But probably of greater importance in their economy was their access to the trade in the plains. When a blockade was enforced against a tribe it was cut off from that trade. But when these economic measures failed to yield the desired effect, and, particularly, in serious cases of outrage, the government had recourse to the military measure of sending a punitive expedition against an offending tribe. On the north-west frontier also, similar economic and military sanctions were employed to coerce a recalcitrant tribe,[65]

Two questions arise in connection with the punitive expeditions:

[63] I. O. Memo. B. 68; S. Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

[64] Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 116; Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. XII, 1931, p. 99.

[65] Davies, *The Problem of the North-West Frontier*, pp. 24-25; J. W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland*, The Hague, 1963, p. 159.

how far they were necessary and how far their work in the hills was justified. It seems that the expeditions were not always occasioned by punitive purposes. There were people in military circles who sometimes considered an expedition necessary not so much for punishing tribal outrages as for training the officers and men of the army.[66] In the official accounts of the military operations we often find that villages and stocks of food grains of the tribes were destroyed. According to S. Gupta indiscriminate burning of villages and granaries often characterised military expeditions.[67] These accounts would have us believe that such destruction was necessary in order to punish the offenders. Our only source of information about these expeditions in those inaccessible hills is the accounts left by the officers who led them. Since they were the last persons to say anything against their own deeds, it is almost impossible to determine from these accounts how far such destruction was necessary. However, we find in Curzon's minute of 14 May 1900 on the Mishmi Expedition of 1899-1900 an open official admission of wanton destruction by an expedition. He stated that the Bebejiyas, against whom the expedition had been sent, had been wrongly supposed to be "a fierce race of cannibals, a very savage, blood-thirsty and dangerous race", and acting upon this wrong hypothesis, the expedition "unsparingly destroyed and burned" the homes and villages of the Bebejiyas who were "on the whole a well behaved and inoffensive tribe, very desirous of being on friendly terms with us".[68] Though tribal outrages grew fewer over the years, it is doubtful how far this was due to the punitive expeditions alone. Though these expeditions certainly impressed the tribes with the power of the government and the serious consequences of an outrage, the hillmen's memory of the effects of an expedition was remarkably short. It was admitted by the Local Government in 1912 that "The policy hitherto adopted of sending expeditions into the Abor country, inflicting punishment, and withdrawing the force has invariably been misunderstood by the tribes concerned. The temporary occupation has been soon forgotten and fresh trouble has ensued.[69] Suspension of the *posa*

[66] Hamilton to Curzon, No. 39, 15 June 1900: Curzon Papers.

[67] S. Gupta, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

[68] Curzon's minute, 14 May 1900, quoted in Reid, *History*, p. 208.

[69] E. Bengal & Assam to India. Foreign Dept., No. 53C. G., 22 February 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1010/1912.

and blockade of the border were often enough to deal effectively with the tribes. Moreover they were increasingly coming in contact with the plains and realising the economic advantage of a peaceful and uninterrupted contact with the plains. These factors probably did more than the punitive expeditions to reduce the incidence of tribal outrages.

In spite of the application of the economic and military measures, which sharply interfered with tribal life, they did not represent the government's essential policy towards the tribesmen. They were employed when the policy of non-interference failed. The government's desire to leave the hillmen alone was carried so far that in May 1900 restrictions were imposed on official tours beyond "the area of political control throughout the Assam frontier". Under this rule the sanction of the Local Government was made necessary in all cases, and where such tours were likely to involve complications with the tribesmen which might necessitate a punitive expedition. the tour was not to be sanctioned without the prior approval of the Indian Government. The immediate occasion for this rule was a clash between the Nagas and the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills when the latter visited a Naga village far beyond the area of political control in February 1900. The Chief Commissioner consequently instructed the Deputy Commissioner that the latter must not in future go beyond his area of political control withou obtaining previous sanction. This order was not only approved but also extended by the Government of India to the entire Assam frontier.[70] But before long the policy of non-interference came under fire.

Some timber companies in Assam who exploited the *Simul* (*bombax malabaricum*) forests north of the Brahmaputra lodged a complaint with the Local Government against tribal blackmail. They seem to have raised the question in 1902 with Sir Bampfylde Fuller, Chief Commissioner of Assam.[71] They complained that the tribesmen were blackmailing their employees when the latter obtained timber from the *Simul* forests which, though beyond the Inner Line, were within British territory. Though from the

[70] Assam to Dy. Commissioner, Naga Hills, No. 199F or 1338P., 11 April 1900: A. F. P., April 1900, No. 5; India, Foreign Dept., to Assam, No. 1046E.B., 18 May 1900: A. F. P., August 1900, No. 9.

[71] E. Bengal and Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3923-J., 9 September 1907: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1261/1908.

British point of view these forests were within British territory, since the government claimed that its territory extended to the foot of the hills, the tribesmen were reluctant, as we have seen, to accept it. Hence, when the employees of the timber companies entered the forests beyond the Inner Line, the tribesmen frequently exacted from them what the British considered blackmail. Fulier seems to have sympathised with the timber companies. He was prepared to allot a tract of country on the upper waters of the Poba and Lallu for a reserve of *Simul* forests with a grant of Rs. 5000/- per annum towards the scheme, and even to push back the frontier outposts to the foot of the hills as a measure of protection from the tribesmen. But for some unknown reason this scheme does not seem to have materialised. And he advised the timber companies in 1904 to pay the hillmen some royalty on timber. Accordingly they made their own arrangements with the tribesmen.[72].

But the tribal exactions did not stop. Consequently two timber companies—the Sissi Saw Mills and Trading Co. Ltd., and the Meckla Nuddee Saw Mills Co. Ltd.[73]—approached Sir L. Hare, Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam, in November 1906, to redress the situation which affected the timber industry, involving many lakhs of rupees. As a remedy they suggested that the Inner Line should be pushed north to the foot of the hills,[74] The purpose behind this suggestion was to bring more forest lands within the limits of regular administration where the timber companies could operate under full government protection. They may also have expected that the proposed measure would relieve them from the vexation of furnishing all the many details of personal and family history of the camp labourers in order to obtain the Inner Line passes for these employees.

Hare took up the matter earnestly. Lamb seems to suggest that the creation of a new province—Eastern Bengal and Assam—

[72] Assam to Dy. Commissioner , Lakhimpur, No. 646 For.-292P., 23 January 1904: A. F. P., January 1904, No. 7. Memorial to L. Hare from the Sissi Saw Mills & Trading Co. Ltd., and the Meckla Nuddee Saw Mills Co. Ltd., November 1906; E. Bengal and Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3923-J., 9 September 1907: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1261/1908.

[73] Their size, dates of establishment, etc. are unknown.

[74] Memorial to L. Hare from the Sissi Saw Mills & Trading Co. Ltd., and the Meckla Nuddee Saw Mills Co. Ltd., November 1906: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1261/1908.

which was a major administrative change of the time had something to do with the response of Hare.[75] There is however no evidence to substantiate this point. Since tribal exactions beyond the Inner Line were based on the hillmen's claim to the land. Hare suggested some measures to make them realise that the land was government territory.[76] First, all tribal exactions in government territory must be stopped, if necessary, by force. Secondly, a poll-tax or house tax should be levied on the hillmen settled in the plains, presumably in recognition of the land being government territory. Thirdly, a tax should also be imposed on each hill village which cultivated land in the plains at the foot of the hills. Besides these measures for asserting government authority over the land, Hare thought it of equal importance to discontinue the *posa* which had been construe by the tribes as a tribute to their prowess. Instead of a fixed *posa*, it would be better to place an equivalent sum at the disposal of the Assistant Political Officer. He could more profitably use it by giving presents to friendly headmen. The tribesmen would thus understand a payment from the government must not be regarded as anything but an act of grace. Before long he proposed that payments could be made to the hillmen for services rendered by them.[77] Noel Williamson, Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya.[78] had suggested that the best way of controlling the tribes would be to overawe them by establishiug advance posts in the hills.[79] But Hare hesitated to recommend such a course of action until the measures proposed by him had been tried and failed. He considered it sufficient if the Assistant Political Officer, accompanied by a strong escort of 150 military police, visited the principal tribal villages beyond the Outer Line, informed them of the 'orders and intentions' of the government, and warned them that their crops and villages would be destroyed in case of failure to pay the tax. Instead of pushing back the

[75] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 326.

[76] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3912-J., 9 Septembr 1907: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910). 1261/1908.

[77] Draft instructions for the guidance of Williamson. enclosed in E. Bengal and Assam to India. Foreign Dept., No. 4801-J., 31 October 1908: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 2125/1908.

[78] In 1906 Williamson was appointed Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya.

[79] Williamson to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, No. 19G., 4 April 1907: E. B. A. P. P., November 1907, No. 17.

Inner Line, as the saw mills had suggested, Hare wanted to promote free intercourse with the tribesmen by encouraging them to visit Sadiya and settle in British territory and by tours of officers who might deal with them in their villages, Hare's policy, if acted upon, would have had far greater significance than a formal advance of the Inner Line. Had the line been pushed back, it would still have been there as a screen, though perhaps less effectively, between the hills and the plains. But Hare seems to have wanted to cancel the very effect of the screen by promoting greater contact between the hills and the plains which would automatically bring the land up to the foothills under greater government control and also solve the problem of the saw mills, He, in fact, struck at the root of the policy of non-interference which he thoroughly opposed. Apart from its failures, as he pointed out, "the fact that over half a century of proximity to clvilisation has failed in any way to redeem the tribes on our border from their native savagery is in itself a condemnation of the policy of non-interference".

Morley clearly saw that Hare was trying to introduce direct administration in a "scantily veiled form" in the inter-Lines zone. But neither Minto nor Morley would agree to Hare's idea of discarding the policy of non-interference. Both were anxious to avoid serious complications with the tribes which might ensue from too sudden an extension of active control such as was implied in Hares' policy, Morley also opposed the idea of establishing advane posts in the hills which would start a process of annexation in those difficult hills to which there was on knowing where there would be a limit. They held that for the purpose of asserting British sovereignty over the inter-Lines tract, it would be enough for the present to forbid tribal blackmail there and to impose a reasonable poll-tax or house tax on the settlers there. As for the royalty on timber which the saw mills had been paying to the hillmen since Fuller's advice in 1904, Morley suggested the desirability of compensating the tribesmen "for the loss of what they undoubtedly consider a legitimate source of revenue." This could be effected as part of a settlement of the question of the *posa*. He agreed with Minto's recommendation of the Assistant Political Officer's proposed tour of the hill villages beyond the Outer Line provided it could be undertaken without any risk of complications with the tribes. The success of the visit would

largely depend on the spirit in which it was undertaken. A reconsideration of the policy of non-interference would be called for only if the visit failed to produce the desired effect. Only then would the government be in a position of having "either to give no effect to the 'orders and intentions' we have announced, or to commit ourselves to a policy of punitive expeditions till the tribes submit, ending perhaps in occupation." Until then Morley was opposed to any change in the policy, He held, "The policy of non-interference Is . . . essentially sound ; no sufficient reason for modifying it is established by the Local Government, . . . I am altogether unable to admit the plea . . . that the policy of non-interference has failed to a degree that justifies its reversal." Next Morley produced a piece of typical sophistry, "The conditions of a border, when, as in this case, orderly British districts march with impracticable hills inhabited by savage tribes, must necessarily be subject to constant difficulties. But these difficulties may be taken as the measure of the dangers attending a policy of active control.[80] The very difficulties, to remove which Hare had supported an active policy, were now considered by Morley as a justification of the policy of non-interference :

The policy of active control having thus been negatived, it only remained for the Assistant Political Officer to visit the villages of the tribesmen and explain to them the new policy of the government. It was decided that Williamson should tour the inter-Lines area and villages in the immediate vicinity of the Outer Line during the cold weather of 1908-09.[81] The experience and information thus gained would show how far it would be advisable to extend negotiations with the more remote villages beyond the Outer Line in the next cold weather.[82] But before undertaking the proposed tour, Williamson crossed the Outer Line and visited the Abor village of Kebang in February 1909 on the invitation, as he said, of a headman of that village. Since Kebang was quite remote from the Outer Line, about 20 miles up the Dihang, the visit was a clear violation

[80] India, to Secy. of State, No. 112, 11 June 1908; Secy. of State to India No. 104, 4 September 1908: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1261/1908.

[81] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 4801-J., 31 October 1908: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910). 2125/1908.

[82] India to Secy. of State, No. 1932, 26 November 1908: P. S. S. F. Vol 13 (1910) 2164/1908.

of the official decision that he would visit the villages beyond the Outer Line only in the cold weather of 1909-10 and that too only if his proposed tour of 1908-09 pointed to the advisability of such a visit. It is difficult to ascertain why he ignored the official instructions. It seems that he did it because he had no faith in the policy of non-interference, and preferred a policy of active control without delay in the face of, as Lamb suggests, a growing Chinese threat. On his visit to Kebang he found the hillmen generally friendly. They recognised that the country up to the foot of the hills was British territory, and they were likely to welcome a settlement if it brought them some pecuniary benefits. The rigours of this journey to Kebang were probably responsible for William son's subsequent illness and his proposed tour of the inter-Lines zone in 1908-09 had to be postponed. But in view of the warm welcome he had received from the hillmen, it was decided that he should visit some important villages in the open season of 1909-10. Such a visit was essential to effect a complete settlement with the Abors.[83] Though Morley authorized the tour in September 1909, he emphasized, in strict pursuance of the policy of non-interference, that the "object of visit to villages beyond the outer line must be strictly limited to arranging for settlement of difficulties in area between the inner and outer lines.[84]

Thus an active policy advocated at a lower official level was by stages toned down and finally set aside by the higher authorities. Williamson, who was in direct touch with the tribes and, consequently, wiser than anyone in the realities of this frontier, had favoured a forward move into the hills and the establishment of advance posts there. Away from the frontier and with less knowledge of the tribes was the Lieutenant-Governor who supported a departure from the old policy but suggested means which were milder than Williamson had proposed. Further away was the Viceroy who did not even support the idea of breaking with the existing policy for fear of complications with the tribes. But the farthest from the frontier and probably the least knowledgeable man concerning tribal affairs on this frontier was the Secretary of

[83] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3460P., 29 June 1909: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1169/1909.

[84] Morley's tel. to Minto, 1 September 1909: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1169/1909.

State who not only agreed with the Viceroy, but was also the strongest supporter of the old policy. The pressure of local circumstances on the frontier thus failed to bring about any fundamental change in the policy of non-interference. It was finally the Chinese danger which convinced the higher authorities of the serious consequences that might follow if the out-moded policy were continued any longer.

CHAPTER III

FROM NON-INTERFERENCE TO POLITICAL CONTROL (1911-1914)

We have seen how the pressure of local problems on this frontier failed to change the policy of non-interference towards the tribes. Even as late as September 1909 Morley adhered to the old policy. But by then the need for change in view of a probable Chinese danger had already clearly appeared urgent to Charles Beil, Political Officer in Slkkim, who, by virtue of his office, had considerable knowledge of Tibet and of Chinese designs in that country. In July 1909 he cautioned the Indian Government against the Chinese. Though this was about even months before the Chinese occupation of Lhasa, the mounting activities of the Chinese in eastern Tibet must have convinced him that they were next going to turn their attention to the contiguous tribal area nortn of Assam. He advised the Indian Government to take immediate steps to prevent the tribal area from falling into Chinese hands. Since the area was likely to be fertile, it could support large numbers of troops. Chinese occupation of this tract would therefore constitute a threat to Assam. The best course, he thought, would be to turn the area into a buffer zone by concluding treaties with the tribes which would exclude all foreign influence from the area by placing the external relations of the tribes under British control. But before entering into such treaties it would be better to obtain information about the boundary of tribal territory with Tibet, the capacity of the country to support troops, the physical difficulties which the invaders would face there, and whether any tribe recognized the suzerainty of Tibet or China in any way. It would be particularly advisable to clear up the last point since China's claim to suzerainty were often shadowy in the extreme.[1]

Bell's warning went unheeded by a government which had not yet awoken to the implications of Chinese activities in Tibet. When in August 1910 he repeated the warning, Lhasa had already

[1] Bell to India, Foreign Dept., No. 12C., 21 July 1909: Bell Papers.

fallen to the Chinese and the first Chinese probes in the Mishmi country had been reported.[2] This new situation on the frontier demanded a radical change in the tribal policy of the government. There was no knowing that the Chinese would not instigate the tribes to raid the plains and thus create a situation similar to that which had vexed the British for a long time on the north-west frontier. If the frontier were to be protected the old policy could no longer be continued. Bell proposed some administrative changes that followed from his view of the new situation. The Deputy Commissioner of Darrang maintained the relations with the hill tribes living on the border of Darrang. Though the control of relations with the tribesmen on the border of Lakhimpur was a direct responsibility of the Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, he did not work independently. He was subordinate to the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur.[3] Bell considered it undesirable that the neighbouring Deputy Commissioner should exercise any control on the tribal affairs, since they were liable to frequent transfers and were not used to work of this kind. He suggested that the tribes should be grouped into two, each being placed in charge of a Political Officer or an Assistont Political Officer. The chief of these officers, in addition to the work of his own group, should also control the other group, and he should be placed directly under the Foreign Department of the Government of India. But, since at least a part of his work would be concerned with Tibetan or Chinese affairs, Bell considered it preferable to place this part of his work under the Political Officer in Sikkim who was the recognized adviser to the Government of India on Tibetan affairs. As the affairs of this frontier were no longer confined to purely tribal relations but were increasingly assuming international significance, he wanted to free the international part of the frontier problem from any control by the Local Government. Now that China had appeared on the scene, "matters of Imperial policy will constantly have to be considered and these can be settled only by the Government of India, to whom they should be referred . . . with the least possible delay . . . experience has shown in recent years that Local Governments have not the knowledge and the grasp of political conditions requisite for dealing

[2] See pp. 139-40.

[3] Reid, *History*, pp. 181, 269.

with the political problems, that have now arisen in connection with these border tribes".[4] As we shall see later, Bell's suggestion of grouping tho tribes and placing the groups under separate officers materialised before long, though none of the political officers was placed either under the Foreign Department or under the Political Officer in Sikkim.[5]

But before any step was taken in the direction of a new policy towards the tribes, the first basic need was to establish close relations with them. On the entire frontier only the Mishmi country appeared to be in immediate danger at the time. Hence an urgent change in the government's tribal policy in this section of the frontier was at first called for. Any change here could serve as the model for change elsewhere on the frontier. The Local Government pointed out three courses of section which were now open for the Mishmi country. First, the Mishmis might be allowed to enjoy their independence as before. Secondly, they should be taken under British protection. Thirdly, they might be allowed to be absorbed by the Chinese. Though the first course would have been preferred by the government, it was doubtful whether the Chinese wonld leave the Mishmis alone. The third course was apparently unthinkable as it would allow the Chinese to extend their influence to the edge of the plains. In the circumstances, therefore, the second course appeared to be the only prudent line of action, though it would entail the tremendous task of protecting the area by establishing posts in the difficult, inhospitable mountains.[6]

Minto shared the views of the Local Government. Pending the wider question of a buffer for the entire frontier, as Bell had suggested, Minto in a telegram to Morley on 23 October 1910 proposed that it was essential to tell the Mishmis without delay that they were under British protection and that they would get British support in refusing to have any relations with the Chinese. Though the Mishmis were not British subjects, they were certainly under British influence and eonsidered the British as the dominant power on the frontier. The declaration of Tungnu, the Miju chief

[4] Bell to India, Foreign Dept., No. 1201 T. E. C., 20 August 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

[5] See pp. 132-34.

[6] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 231-P., 26 May 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

of Pangum, though without authority, that he was a British subject,[7] was certainly an instance in point. Unless, therefore, they were given a definite British assurance, they might be estranged and be taken over by the Chinese. But "it will be unwise to surrender Mishmis, over whom we have exercised our influence, to China, and . . . with the important station of Dibrugarh and the settled district of Lakhimpur to protect, it is inadvisable to allow a possibly hostile power to thrust themselves in upon us nearer than we can legitimately prevent". While this was the immediate step required in the Mishmi country, Minto accepted the essential proposals of Bell for the formation of a keneral tribal policy on the frontier. The tribal country was to be converted into a buffer and treaties concluded with the tribes with a view to barring their relations with any foreign power other than the British.[8] Obviously this would essentially mean an extension to the other tribes of the protection which Minto was proposing as an immediate measure for the Mishmis.

At the India Office, Sir H. S. Barnes, a member of the India Council, was particularly enthusiastic about bringing the tribes under protection. He observed, "On the Assam border, it seems to me inconceivable that we can allow a border tribe like the Mishmis, with whom we have always had dealings to come under Chinese control, and, if so, the sooner we make our intentions quite clear and unmistakable the better, and the first step is to give to the tribesmen the assurances proposed in Lord Minto's telegram of 23rd October.[9] But Morley, a staunch adherent of the policy of non-interference, refused to assent to Minto's suggestion for a forward move. However, he avoided a final decision by asking for the matter to be postponed until the next Viceroy took over.[10]

In November 1910 Hardinge succeeded Minto and discussed the matter with Hare on the 22nd. The decision which he took amounted virtually to a return to the policy of non-interference which Minto had so recently discarded. He opposed the idea of

[7] See p. 140.

[8] Minto's telegram to Morley, 23 October 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1533/1910.

[9] Barnes' minute, 15 December 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4300/1910.

[10] Morley's tel. to *u*into, 25 October 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1535/1910.

promising any support to the Mishmis or any other tribe against Chinese aggression. The only measures which he was prepared to endorse at the moment were: firstly, the frontier officers should cultivate friendly relations with the tribesmen and punish them for outrages in British territory; secondly, if there was no risk of complications, he would authorise a limited scale of explorations to obtain information about the tribal country.[11]

Perhaps nothing would have been so welcome to Morley as this renewed snpport to the old policy. But times had changed. He had left the India Office in November 1910. Men like Ritchie. Barnes and Hirtzel,[12] who had long handled the affairs of India, were no longer prepared to subscribe to a policy of masterly inactivity in the face of an increasing Chinese danger on the Assam frontier. As we shall see later, in the broader context of a frontier polity vis-a-vis the Chinese. Hirtzel sharply criticised Hardinge's attitude.[13]

But within six months Hardinge seems to have gained a better understanding of the frontier situation. In June 1911 he urged a new tribal policy which, however, was not a complete departure from the old policy. It betrayed that Hardinge was still very cautious in changing the existing policy. He wanted to leave the hillmen "in no manner of doubt as to their being under us. or as to their having to look to us for future reward or punishment according to their conduct", but at the same time he was reluctant to give them any guarantee of protection against the Chinese.[14] The obvious incongruity of this policy, which did not escape the notice of Hirtzel, was the product of Hardinge's extraordinary caution. "It seems questionable", Hirtzel observed, "whether any such distinction can be drawn in practice. If because of good conduct to us a tribe is punished by the Chinese, it is quite certain that we shall have either to protect it or throw the whole policy overboard".[15] But to Barnes, the policy of giving no guarantee

[11] India to Secy. of State. No. 182, 22 December 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

[12] Sir Richmond Ritchie. Under Secretary of State for India. Sir Hugh S. Barnes, Member of the India Council. Sir Frederick A. Hirtzel, Secretary, Political and Secret Department, India Office.

[13] See pp. 150-151.

[14] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 29 June 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911; Hardinge Papers, No. 95, Vol. 1, pt. 2, pp. 168-69.

[15] Hirtzel's minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

of protection appeared to have its own merit. It would keep the government uncommitted so that, as he may well have thought, in case the government were required to adjust the boundary to Chinese claims they could do it without loss of face.[16] Perhaps because of this advantage Crewe approved Hardinge's decision not to give a formal guarantee of protection to the tribesmen. But he could not ignore the validity of Hirtzel's observation. If the new policy were to stand, the government could not but protect the tribesmen from external aggression. This could perhaps be done informally without a formal guarantee. Hence he told Hardinge, "change contemplated in relations with Mishmis will, more especially if boundary is laid down, make it incumbent on us in practice to protect tribesmen within that line from unprovoked aggression by Tibetans or Chinese, in such manner and at such time as we may consider proper. I presume that this point has been considered, and that Your Excellency's Government are prepared to accept responsibility involved."[17] But before long Hardinge discarded his half-hearted approach in favour of an openly forward move. Perhaps the immediate cause of this change was provided by Captain F. M. Bailey of the Political Department, who had just completed a remarkable journey from China to India via Rima and the Mishmi country and had reported that the Chinese in Zayul — a Tibetan province contiguous to the Mishmi country — were trying to negotiate with the Mishmis with a view to annexation.[18]

In Septrmber 1911 Hardinge parted with the policy of non-interference once for all. He admitted the utility of that policy so long as the problems on this frontier had been of a purely local character. But circumstances had radically changed with Chinese intervention. "We consider that our future policy should be one of loose political control, having as its object the minimum of interference compatible with the necessity of protecting the

[16] Barnes' minute, 12 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

[17] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 24 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910). 3908/1911; Hardinge Papers, No. 95. Vol. 1, Pt. 1, pp. 121-122.

[18] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 11 August 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1329/1911.

This telegram quoted Bailey's telegram of 8 August 1911 from Sadiya immediately after his arrival in Assam in which he had mentioned the Chinese attempt at negotiating with the Mishmis with the ultimate purpose of annexation.

tribesmen from unprovoked aggression, the responsibility for which we cannot avoid, and of preventing them from violating either our own or Chinese territory; and, while endesvouring to leave the tribes as much as possible to themselves, to abstain from any line of action, or inaction as the case may be, which may tend to inculcate in their minds any undue sense of independence likely to produce results of the nature obtaining under somewhat analogous conditions on the north-west frontier of India".[19] This was the first time that Hardinge advocated the idea of a "loose political control" of the tribal area, meaning thereby to create a buffer which was to be protected from outside invation but not to be interfered with in its internal affairs — an idea which had been first suggested by Bell and later adopted by Minto. Though Crewe approved the policy,[20] he was shortly to reject, as we shall see later, the actual measures which Hardinge considered necessary to implement the very policy which he had sanctioned. One thing, however, which appears clearly to us is that by September 1911 the official attitude to tribal policy underwent a fundamental change.

But, in the absence of an immediate occasion for it, it would have been difficult for the government to suddenly initiate the new active policy without drawing the unwelcome attention of the Chinese who were taking an interest in the tribal area. A most convenient opportunity was however provided to the government by the murder of Williamson. Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, in March 1911 at the hands of the Abors. It would have been impossible for Hardinge to ignore the murder of a British officer. It was however one thing to avenge that murder, which could have been done by sending a small punitive expedition into the Abor country, and it was quite a different thing to send, as we shall see later, an expedition and two missions which operated widely in 1911-12 in the tribal area. Williamson's murder alone could not justify the scale and cost of these operations. In fact, it provided a convenient opportunity for such operations which were considered necessary to meet the growing Chinese danger.

On 8 March 1911 Williamson left Pasighat for the Abor hills,

[19] India to Secy. of State, No. 105, 21 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

[20] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 8 Nov. 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4536/1911.

accompanied by a small unarmed party which included Dr. Gregorson, a tea-garden doctor of Tinsukia. On 30 March the Abors murdered Gregorson and a few sick porters at Pangi after Williamson had left the place for Komsing. Next morning Williamson and his followers were killed at Komsing. Only a few escaped the disaster.[21]

The news of the murder was followed by speculations about the probable reasons for the incident. In certain quarters it seems to have been suspected that the Chinese had a hand in it. Major-General Bower, who commanded the subsequent expedition against the Abors, rightly dismissed the idea as absurd. "The fact is simply we have to deal with a race of savages who think themselves the finest fighters in the world and the most powerful nation."[22] Bower assumed that the cause of the massacre was Abor arrogance and defiance of British authority. Though there was an element of truth in this, the direct cause of the incident was very different. The Abors' suspicion and fear had been considerably provoked by the boasting of Manpur, a Miri of Williamson's party. He falsely told the Abors of Rotung that Williamson had sent for sepoys and guns to punish them. The Abors were alarmed and decided to massacre the whole party.[23]

Questions were raised both in and outside Parliament as to why Williamson had undertaken the journey and whether he had crossed the Outer Line with the approval of the government.[24] Williamson had probably two objectives. The first was to visit the controversial Brahmaputra falls and solve the mystery once for all.[25] The second was to ascertain, if possible, the extent of Chinese activity in the Abor country, at a time when the Chinese were reportedly infiltrating in the tribal area. Williamson had already obtained such political information in the Mishmi country very recently in 1911 when he had journeyed up the Lohit to

[21] Bentinck, *Report*: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[22] Bower to Sir B. Duff, 1 May 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 866/1911.

[23] Bentinck, *Report*: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[24] Commons Debates, 31 October 1911: P. D. Vol. XXX, Col. 688, 1911; Sir Henry Cotton's letter to the Editor, *The Westminster Gazette*, 18 April 1911: P.S.S.F. Vol. 13 (1910), 866/1911.

[25] Hirtzel's minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 900/1911. For the Brahmaputra falls, see Ch. I.

within forty-two miles of Rima.[26] As regards the crossing of the Outer Line, it was found that he had undertaken the journey into the tribal country without the prior permission of the government.[27] In fact, he had done the same thing on two earlier occasions also: in February 1909 when he had visited the Abor country,[28] and in January-February 1911, when he had travelled up the Lohit to Walong.[29] It is difficult to prove that he did so with the connivance of the higher authorities. Lamb thinks that the Local Government allowed him to tour as a private individual and at his own risk.[30] But this was denied at the India Office.[31] The only thing that hints at official connivance was that Williamson was never officially reprimanded for crossing the Outer Line without sanction. By crossing the Outer Line without authority he clearly violated the rule relating to official tours beyond the area of political control throughout the Assam frontier.[32]

On 29 June 1911 Hardinge asked for Crewe's sanction to an expedition against the Abors and received it in July.[33] The proposed expedition had a number of principal objectives. First, it was to avenge the massacre of Williamson and his party, and to arrest the culprits. Secondly, it was to visit the Abors in their villages and make them clearly understand that, in future, they would be under British control which, for the time being, would be of a loose political nature. Thirdly, it was to compel or persuade any Chinese officials or troops who might be met in the tribal territory to withdraw to the north of the "recognised Tibetan-Chinese limits". Fourthly, the tribal country was to be

[26] Commons Debates, 31 October 1911: P. D. Vol. XXX, Col. 689, 1911. *Operations against Abors*, 1911, Cd. 5961, No. 19, enclosure 1. This will be subsequently referred to as the Abor Blue Book.

[27] Commons Debates, 31 October 1911: P. D. Vol. XXX, Cols. 688-89, 1911.

[28] Commons Debates, 7 November 1911: P. D. Vol. XXX, Cols. 1621-1622, 1911. Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 6 November 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 15 (1910), Pt. 3, 1827/1911. Also see Ch. II.

[29] India to Secy. of State, No. 105,21 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

[30] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 345. This view is very likely based on an article in *India* published on 26 May 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 900/1911.

[31] Unsigned minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 900/1911.

[32] See Ch. II.

[33] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 29 June 1911: P.S.S.F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911; Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 24 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911.

explored and surveyed as much as possible so that on the information thus acquired proposals for the alignment of an Indo-Tibetan boundary line could be based.[34] Clearly the last two objectives had no connection with the murders of Williamson and his party which had been the immediate cause of the Abor expedition. They were the direct consequence of Chinese threat on the frontier which we shall discuss in a subsequent chapter.

The government took advantage of the opportunity to stage two allied operations on the frontier—the Mishmi mission and the Miri mission[35]—with the primary aim, in common with the Abor expedition, of exploring and surveying the tribal country for the purpose of defining an Indo-Tibetan boundary. In case such a boundary had been fixed, no Chinese in future would be allowed to penetrate south of it.[36] It was also expected that the Mishmi mission would check any tendency on the part of the Mishmis to join in with the Abors,[37] and, in common with the Abor expedition, persuade or force any Chinese officers or troops who might be met with south of the limits of Tibet, to withdraw northward. It was also to visit the Mishmis in their villages and make them clearly understand that in future they would be under British control of a loose political nature.[38] The Mishmi and Miri missions were planned to operate in the eastern and western sections respectively of the frontier, while the Abor expedition would cover only the central section.

Major-General H. Bower was vested with both the military command and full political control of the Abor expedition. A.

[34] India, Foreign Dept., to Bower, Commanding the Abor Expeditionary Force, No. 1773E.B., 25 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1691-92/1911.

[35] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 29 June 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911; Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 24 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911; Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 6 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1478/1911; Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 23 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4270/1911.

[36] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 29 June 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911; E. Bengal & Assam to Dundas, Asst. Pol. Officer, Sadiya, No. 488C.G., 5 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1804/1911; E. Bengal & Assam to Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts, No. 490-C.G., 5 October 1911: P. S.S.F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1804/1911.

[37] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 29 June 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

[38] E. Bengal & Assam to Dundas, Asst. Pol. Officer, Sadiya, No. 488 C.G., 5 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1804/1911.

Bentinck was appointed Assistant Political Officer to the expedition to assist Bower in political matters.[39] On 28 October 1911 the expedition advanced from Pasighat. On 19 November the first organised resistance was met with at a stockade in the valley of the Igar (or Egar). It was captured in spite of gallant Abor defence. On 20 November an advance was made towards Rotung. On 9 December Kebang was occupied without opposition.[40] All active Abor opposition ceased within a few days. The military superiority of the government was thus unquestionably established in the eyes of the Abors. The murderers of Williamson and his party were sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.[41] Thus the first objective of the expedition was achieved.

After the successful close of the military operations, the expedition set itself to the fulfilment of the second objective. The hostile Abors were clearly given to understand that in future they would be under British control.[42] The most important of the terms imposed on them was that in future they were to obey all the orders of the government and not to disturb the trade with the plains.[43] With the double purpose of exploring the tribal country and of establishing friendly relations with the different Abor communities, small parties were despatched in different directions under Bentinck, Colonel McIntyre, Captain Molesworth and Captain Dunbar, which visited many Abor villages. These visits to different parts of the Abor country dispelled a long-standing erroneous idea about the Abors. They were discovered, after all, to be not as bad as they had been previously thought to be. "The strong force which accompanied all parties might have produced a more or less reluctant acquiescence, but not the genial welcome, the ready and often generous hospitality" which the British found almost everywhere.[44] Bentinck disagreed with "the parrot-cry of treachery"

[39] India, Foreign Dept., to Bower, No. 1773-E.B., 25 September 1911: P. S. S.F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1691-92/1911.

[40] Bower to Chief of the General Staff, Army Headquarters, Simla, No. 1199-A., 11 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 2345/1912.

[41] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 69-P.T., 7 July 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[42] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 69-P.T., 7 July 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[43] Appendix 'A' to Bentinck's *Report*: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[44] Bentinck, *Report*: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

against the Abors "which has been used to cover every failure, or indiscretion on our part".[45]

W.C.M. Dundas, Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, was vested with full political control of the Mishmi mission. Major Bliss was to assume command of the party in case of military necessity.[46] The mission operated in two columns — the Lohit and the Nizamghat columns. The Lohit column started on its march from Sadiya in November 1911 and reached Menilkrai on 4 January 1912.[47] Though the main body of the column did not proceed beyond the Yepak just north of Menilkrai, survey parties were despatched ahead. Wherever the mission went, even in the Delei and Dou valleys which had never been visited before and in the villages on the left bank of the Lohit the very existence of which was previously unknown, it found the people friendly. They were found to understand that their interests lay in friendship with the government and would have nothing to do with the Chinese.[48] The Nizamghat column left Sadiya in November 1911 and returned there on 20 February 1912. To the right of the Dibang, the column visited the Sisseri valley and went up to Lemmo on the left bank of Shiku river. To the left of the Dibang the column went up to the Ichi river.[49] In the Sisseri valley the people were friendly for the main reason that they had been in regular contact with the plains for a long time and were thus under the shadow of British influence. The people of the Dibang valley were friendly as far as Amili. But beyond that village people were suspicious though not hostile.[50]

G. C. Kerwood, Subdivisional Officer, North Lakhimpur, headed the Miri mission.[51] This mission did not meet with a friendly

[45] Diary of the Asst. Pol. Officer, Abor Expeditionary Force, 20 February 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[46] E. Bengal & Assam to Dundas, No. 488-C.G., 5 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1804/1911.

[47] Major Bliss' "Brief Narrative of the Mishmi Mission", 1911-12: P. S. S. F. Vol 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[48] Dundas' note on the Mishmi mission, 17 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14(1910), 3057/1912.

[49] Capt. Bally's Report on the Nizamghat Column, Mishmi mission, 1911-12: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[50] Dundas' note on the Mishmi mission, 17 June 1912: P.S.S.F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[51] E. Bengal & Assam to Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts, No. 490C.G., 5 October 1911: P.S.S.F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1804/1911.

response from the tribesmen. In November 1911 it set out for the hills. On 27 December a reconnaissance party left Gocham with the object of moving up the Subansiri valley to survey as far as possible. Lack of supplies and the hostile attitude of the tribesmen prevented the party from advancing beyond Mukki on the left bank of the Subansiri. In January 1912 a move up the left bank of the Kamla was made, and Sartam was reached on 30 January. In February active hostility was first met with when an advance was made north-west of Sartam. On 14 February a party of 150 Miris attacked the Tali camp and, the following day, the Sartam post was threatened. In the face of such hostility the force had to retire from the hills under strict official order. The Tali village and Rugi and Mai villages were burnt as a punishment.[52]

The experience gathered from the above operations in the mountains suggested the need of some actual measures in two clearly distinct spheres if the new policy were to be put through effectively. First, it was necessary to take some steps right in the midst of the tribal country which would serve as visible symbols of the government's authority. Secondly, it was essential to introduce some basic change in the framework of frontier administration. We shall first examine how far the government succeeded in the first respect and then discuss the measures relating to the second.[53]

In January 1912 on the basis of his experience of the Abor expedition, Bower proposed for the purpose of exercising political control over the Abors the establishment of three permanent outposts at Rotung, Pasighat and Kobo.[54] The Local Government supported the proposal, since past experience had proved "the impossibility of exercising effective control over them [i.e. the Abors] from a post in the plains". Even when a punitive expedition visited their country, they took little time to forget about the expedition. Hence, so the Assam Government seems to have thought, it was necessary to abandon the old policy of temporary measures and expeditions from the plains and establish permanent

[52] General Staff, India, *Military Report on the Subansiri River Area*, Calcutta, 1921, pp. 1-3.

[53] For the measures relating to the second aspect, see pp. 77-79.

[54] General Officer Commanding, Abor Expeditionary Force, to E. Bengal & Assam, 147A., 16 January 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

posts in the hills among the tribesmen themselves.[55] When Hardinge recommended the suggestion,[56] he was convinced of the indispensability of the outposts for the sort of political control of the tribes which he had already envisaged. The higher authorities in India thus saw the wisdom of a measure more than four years after Williamson had pointed to its necessity.[57]

But in London it met with a mixed reception. Of the three places where outposts had been proposed, Rotung alone was in the Abor hills beyond the Outer Line ; as such, it was beyond the limits of ordinary British jurisdiction. Montagu, Under Secretary of State, firmly opposed an outpost at Rotung, since, he thought, it would violate his parliamentary pledge.[58] When on 28 November 1911 Sir W. Byles[59] had asked in the Commons whether a purpose of the Abor expedition was to extend the existing frontier of India, Montagu had given him "an emphatic assurance without reserve that it is not intended, as a result of the expedition, to increase the area administered by the Government of India".[60] An outpost at Rotung beyond the Outer Line might be construed as a violation of this parliamentary statement. But Montagu failed to see that the proposal was meant not to extend the limits of administration but to control the tribesmen effectively according to the newly accepted tribal policy. Further, he overlooked that it was quite in accord with certain statements contained in the Abor Blue Book which had been laid on the table in Parliament on 16 November 1911. With the purpose of explaining the circumstances leading to the Abor expedition and the two missions and the policy which the government desired to pursue, this Blue Book had quoted some of the important correspondence which had taken place at different official levels immediately following Williamson's murder. One such document showed that according to the Government of India, the future British policy would be to cultivate "friendly relations with the tribesmen". In another document thus quoted, the Secretary of

[55] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 53C.G., 22 February 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1010/1912.

[56] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 7 March 1912: P.S.S.F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

[57] See Ch. II.

[58] Montagu's minute, 9 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

[59] M. P. for Salford, North.

[60] Commons Debates, 28 November 1911: P. D. Vol. XXXII, Col. 184, 1911.

State had stated that the new tribal policy would "involve in practice, in the event of unprovoked aggression on the part of Chinese or Tibetans, our protection of tribesmen dwelling within that line [i.e. the new boundary in contemplation], at such time and in such manner as may appear to us suitable".[61] But no effective protection in these mountains could be possible from the plains. And though the Secretary of State's statement was made in relation to the Mishmis, Sir W.Lee-Warner, Member of the India Council, does not seem to have thought that it could not apply in the Abor country as well. In the context of such statements in the Abor Blue Book, he did not think that an outpost at Rotung with connecting outposts at Kobo and Pasighat could be characterised either as an abandonment of the decision against an advance of the administrative boundary, or as anything but a necessary step for implementing the official policy already adopted.[62] The Political Committee of the India Council also decided by a majority that the establishment of the Rotung post "would not contravene the assurances and answers given by the Under-Secretary of State in the House of Commons . . . ."[63] 'On grounds of general policy,' the Secretary of State was, however, reluctant to approve the plan which, he feared, would arouse strong parliamentary protest.[64] He adhered to his decision even when Hardinge argued that without the proposed posts it would be impossible to pursue the new policy, and that a complete withdrawal from the hills might be construed as a sign of weakness by the hostile hillmen who would thus be encouraged to take speedy vengeance on the friendly ones ; any such trouble would necessitate further operations in the hills.[65] Crewe sanctioned the posts at Kobo and Pasighat but not at Rotung.[66] The Rotung post was negatived because Crewe thought, as did Ritchie, that it would be the first step to an extension of political influence in the tribal country which was not the policy of the

[61] Secy. of State to Viceroy, 24 July 1911; India to Secy. of State, 21 September 1911: Abor Blue Book, Nos. 14, 19.

[62] Lee-Warner's draft report, 13 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

[63] P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

[64] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 14 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912

[65] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 21 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1048/1912; Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 22 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1493/1912.

[66] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 6 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1048/1912.

British Government.[67] He, however, does not seem to have been personally opposed to the eventual transformation of the tribal country into an orderly administered area as a consequence of a chain of posts in the hills ; he had perhaps been influenced by the Foreign Secretary, Grey's insistence, as we shall see in a subsequent chapter, that the tribal area could be properly protected from Chinese intrusion only by bringing it under administration. But Crewe could not support posts in the hills because of Asquith who was afraid of parliamentary criticism of any such post.[68]

This was a somewhat confusing decision betraying a lack of clear understanding at the India Office of the new policy which had already been approved. Was it after all possible to exercise a loose political control of the tribes without its corollary of an extension of political influence in the tribal area? Further, was it possible to exercise that control without posts in the hills? Both were impossible, as Hirtzel seems to have thought. He criticised the decision of Crewe. He would not have done so had the Rotung post been vetoed on its individual demerit. But Crewe had vetoed it 'On grounds of general policy'. This, as Hirtzel saw it, amounted to an abandonment of the policy of loose political control. It meant that the British Government had "both negatived on grounds of general policy the means declared by the Government of India to be necessary for carrying it [i.e. the policy of loose political control] out, and have also decided against the extension of political influence".[69] Montagu tried to put up a defence of sorts in favour of Crewe's decision. He did not consider outposts indispensable for loose political control, since "loose political control implies objection to any sort or kind of interference by foreign powers, and I believe that this could best be achieved as a general rule by patrols or expeditions from a well-maintained base in our own territory, and need not involve posts in tribal territory at all".[70] Montagu forgot that these eastern arms of the Himalayas were so difficult of access that any foreign interference here was not easy to check from the plains.

[67] For the reason for refusing the Rotung post, also see Ch. IV.

[68] Crewe to Hardinge, 3 and 26 April 1912: Hardinge Papers, No. 118, Vol. II, Pt. 1, pp. 30, 34.

[69] Hirtzel's note to Ritchie, 26 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1493/1912.

[70] Montagu's note to Ritchie, 1 May 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1493/1912

Further, if experience was any guide, it had been found impossible to control the tribesmen satisfactorily from the plains.

Though the proposal of a military police post in the tribal country was thus set aside, it was shortly revived in a different form. A trade post in the hills was suggested for two purposes. First, it would facilitate an uninterrupted trade between the hills and the plains. The Abor expedition had broken the power of those villages which had so long denied access to the plains to all the villages lying behind them. It was now expected that by providing these in-lying villages with a free access to trade with the plains, the proposed trade post would greatly improve relations with the tribes. Secondly, it would help the government to maintain a visible presence of British authority among the Abors so that they might not forget their promise, and deal expeditiously with any breach of the orders which the offending tribesmen had promised to obey at the time of the expedition. The post was to be held by a guard of 100 military police for at least several months in the year. As to the site of the post, the Chief Commissioner, Sir Archdale Earle, seems to have preferred Yambung which was about ten miles further into the hills beyond Rotung, at the head of a newly built bridle track, and very near Kebang which had formerly interfered with trade.[71]

Montagu opposed the proposal, since he did not see any distinction, except perhaps of language, between the earlier proposal of a police outpost and the present proposal of a trade post which was to be held by an armed guard. He does not seem to have been far from the truth if we remember that the guard was to be as large as 100 rifles for keeping open the insignificant Abor trade. He seems to have thought that a post in the Abor country was not essential to maintain an uninterrupted flow of trade with the plains, since what the Abors wanted was to trade in government territory "rather than in theirs".[72] But he overlooked the fact that trade in British territory was not possible if the routes in the hills were interfered with. Neither Ritchie nor Crewe would now agree with Montagu. Crewe thought that Montagu's stand was tantamount to the unacceptable demand that the Abor country

[71] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 69-P.T., 7 July 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[72] Montagu's notes to Crewe, 4 and 11 September 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

should remain "for ever inviolable and unvisited even for trading". He would not agree with Montagu that the real motive behind the proposal was "to plant a police post leading to administration under a fictitious name".[73] Ritchie's observation, however, betrays that Montagu was right in his essential objection that the trade post was a guise for a police post. Ritchie told Crewe, "I am disposed to think that if the original proposal for a post at Rotung had been in the *present* form and urged for the reasons now given, they would have been approved".[74] Crewe approved the trade post but subject to some limitations which Montagu had suggested to distinguish it clearly from a police post. These limitations were: firstly, the post was not to be considered in any sense as an administrative or political step ; secondly, the armed guard would be there only so long as the post was open, and that their sole duty would be to keep the road open.[75] Pending the decision on a final site for the post, it was temporarily opened at Rotung.[76]

This trade post was soon found inadequate to keep trade open in the Abor country. When in the open season of 1912-13 Dundas accompanied the Abor Survey Party, as Political Officer, he faced the 'barely veiled hostility' of the tribesmen. The principal cause of the hostility seems to have been the same old jealously guarded monopoly of trade with the plains which was thought to have been removed by the destruction of the power and prestige of Kebang. Dundas found that the fall of Kebang had removed only one trade block but others had been left intact. He thought it necessary to eliminate them. The resulting free trade would, as he seems to have thought, bring the government in close contact with the hillmen — a necessary precondition for any exercise of a loose political control. So he proposed a scheme of road construction in the hills. The most important part of this scheme was to extend the existing bridle track from Yambung northward

[73] Crewe's minute, 8 September 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[74] Ritchie's note to Crewe, 12 September 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3456/1912. Italics mine.

[75] Montagu's note to Crewe, 16 September 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912. Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 3 October 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3800/1912.

[76] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 115-P., 9 January 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 994/1913.

until at least Riga was reached by building one stage every year, and to push the trade post ahead simultaneously with the extension of the track. Until Riga was reached, no semblance of the government's control could be claimed. Dundas believed that such a road through the Abor country would, apart from removing trade barriers, have a great political effect on the hillmen. He even wanted the governmeut to bring the important Padam villages, which had cultivtion in government territory, under direct administration and connect them with the outposts at Pasighat and Nizamghat by a good bridle track.[77] Dundas' suggestion was in line with Bentinck's made in April 1912, that the line of least resistance for exercising political control would be to establish trade posts along with the extension of roads in the tribal country.[78] In addition to Dundas' plan, the Chief Commissioner proposed that the Political Officer must visit a number of the more powerful Abor villages with a strong escort to make them realise the strength of the government "before it can be pretended that any measure of control is being exercised in these hills. . . ."[79] Clearly this was a revival of what Hare had suggested about seven years ago.[80] In fact, measures such as those proposed by Dundas and the Chief Commissioner in the name of trade were at the same time essential for opening the country without which no sort of control could be exercised. To allay the hypersensitivity of the India Office to such suggestions, the Chief Commissioner clearly pointed out that they were not aimed at the permanent occupation of the hills contrary to the Secretary of State's declared policy. They were rather essential for implementing that policy, since only the fringe of the tribal country had been touched at the time and "no sort of influence, much less any kind of loose political control, can be exercised over the tribes to the north unless an advance is made."

It seems that the above measures were not implemented and official efforts on this frontier were relaxed after a brief period of

[77] Dundas' note, 17 February 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914; Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 2076P., 7 May 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914.

[78] Bentinck, *Report*: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[79] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 2076P., 7 May 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914.

[80] See Ch. II.

keen interest. One principal reason for this relaxation was the outbreak of war in Europe. In 1914 the Government of India decided not to allow, until the end of the war, any operation on this frontier which might require military support.[81] Further, the problems of this frontier lost their urgency with the disappearance of Chinese power from Tibet and with the delimitation of the Indo-Tibetan boundary in 1914. Though the boundary was delimited on the map without any demarcation on the ground, it was accepted by Tibet and was certainly better than a total absence of any boundary at all.

Although the actual measures taken in the tribal country fell far short of what was necessary to execute the new policy, some basic change was introduced in the administrative framework. It had been clearly seen that the administration of the frontier had to be clearly separated from that of the contiguous plains. It was advisable, as Bentinck pointed out, to relieve the neighbouring Deputy Commissioner of his responsibility for the frontier matters, since his ordinary district work was heavy and constantly increasing. The system of the Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, working under the Deputy Commissioner at Dibrugarh was unsatisfactory. It was desirable that the Assistant Political Officer should correspond directly with the Local Government. Also the frontier work had become so extensive and important that it required the attention of a whole time officer having the status of a District Officer. But, at the same time, the entire frontier was too large for one officer. It was, therefore, advisable to divide it into smaller sections. Bentinck's suggestion was thus essentially the same as Bell's.[82]

It was however mainly on the basis of Major-General Bower's suggestions that the final administrative changes were shaped. In January 1912 he proposed the division of the frontier into three sections: Eastern, Central and Western. The Eastern section would include all the Mishmis, and should be in the charge of an Assistant Political Officer with headquarters at Sadiya. The Central section would comprise all the Abors and extend westward to the eastern watershed of the Subansiri but exclusive of that watershed. This

[81] India, Foreign Dept., to Assam, No. 1112-E.B., 12 November 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914; Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 7526 P., 14 August 1920: P. S. S. F. Vol. 74 (1914), 7276/1920.

[82] Bentinck, *Report*: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

section would require two political officers, one of whom would supervise all the three sections, and the other, a young officer in training. Rotung should be the headquarters of this section. The eastern watershed of the Subansiri would be included in the Western section which would extend westward to the borders of Bhutan. This section should be under the control of an Assistant Political Officer with headquarters at some convenient centre to be selected later.[83] Later it was decided that both geographically and ethnically the main channel of the Subansiri was a better dividing line between the Central and Western sections than the Subansiri-Siyom divide.[84] But, in spite of this decision, some confusion seems to have remained even afterwards regarding the boundary between the Central and Western sections, since as late as 1921 the Indian General Staff referred to the Subansiri-Siyom divide as the boundary.[85] While supporting the proposals of Bower, the Local Government recommended that the Political Officer on this frontier should work directly under the Chief Commissioner of Assam; it should be inadvisable that they should be controlled either by the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, or by the Commissioner of the Assam Valley Districts.[86]

In July 1912 the Chief Commissioner of Assam proposed that the entire tribal area east of the Subansiri-Siyom divide should be in the charge of Dundas, who should have the status of a Deputy Commissioner and work immediately under the Chief Commissioner. Dundas would require four assistants to begin with: one for the Lohit Valley; the second for the Bebejiya and Chulikatta Mishmis; the third for the Abor hills; and the fourth for assisting the Political Officer at the headquarters in the administration of the plains below the foothills. It was believed that these proposals were within moderate limits and that before long the Political Officer would require further assistance. For the area west of the Subansiri-Siyom divide, the Chief Commis-

[83] G. O. C., Abor Expeditionary Force, to E. Bengal & Assam, No. 147A., 16 January 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

[84] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 5197P., 23 September 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4278/1913.

[85] General Staff, India, *Military Report on the Subansiri River Area*, p. 19.

[86] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 53 C.G., 22 February 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1010/1912.

sioner recommended Captain G. A. Nevill as the Political Officer who would work directly under the Chief Commissioner.[87]

In September 1914 the southern boundaries of the Eastern, Central and Western Sections were notified to separate them clearly from the adjoining plains districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur.[88] In 1919 the Eastern and Central sections were officially renamed as the Sadiya Frontier Tract, and the Western section, as the Balipara Frontier Tract.[89]

As we have seen, the policy of non-interference introduced by the British in the nineteenth century lasted till 1911. But thereafter British tribal policy on this frontier underwent a fundamental change to cope with the Chinese threat from the north. The old policy was replaced by a policy of loose political control, and a very timely opportunity to introduce the new policy was provided by the murder of Williamson.

[87] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 69P.T., 7 July 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[88] India, Foreign Dept., Notification Nos. 977-E.B., and 979-E.B., 25 September 1914: The Gazette of India, Pt. I, July-December 1914.

[89] Reid, *History*,pp. 181, 290.

CHAPTER IV

CHINESE THREAT AND COUNTERMEASURES

WE have already mentioned that it was the Chinese threat, more than any other factor, which was responsible for a forward British policy on the north-east frontier of India. Paradoxically, it was the British policy towards Tibet — especially the Younghusband Mission in 1904 — which was largely responsible for the emergence of a Chinese danger on the border of India. Lamb seems to suggest that there had been a change in China's policy towards Tibet before the Younghusband Mission.[1] But he has not shown that the Chinese had taken any effective steps to restore their position in Tibet before that event.[2] And while his suggestion needs to be substantiated possibly from as yet undisclosed sources, there is on the other hand enough evidence in the materials already available to us to show that the Younghusband Mission was largely responsible for the reassertion of Chinese power in Tibet.

There is evidence to establish that the Chinese had no power in Tibet on the eve of the Mission. When Younghusband was at Gyantse on his way so Lhasa, the Chinese Amban wanted to see him personally but could not do so because the Tibetans refused to provide him with transport.[3] And when the British reached Lhasa they found that the Amban was in an unenviable position. Younghusband wrote, "We found him to be practically a prisoner and almost without enough to eat, as the Tibetans had prevented supplies of money from reaching him, and he had actually to borrow money from us".[4] Such a pitiable position of the Amban is an eloquent proof that the Chinese had done little to improve their position in Tibet prior to 1904. Bell, a leading authority on Tibet, clearly admitted that the Younghusband Mission alarmed the Chinese who, fearing that Tibet might be

[1] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, Chap. VIII.

[2] Rather he recognises elsewhere that the new Chinese policy towards Tibet did not begin before 1904. See Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

[3] P. Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, London, 1961, p. 162; Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: a Political History*, Yale, 1967, p. 213.

[4] Quoted in Fleming, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

altogether lost, decided to restore their position in Tibet. Hence, he argued, the British were in a measure responsible for the subsequent Chinese advance in Tibet.[5] The British policy towards Tibet not only prompted the Chinese to assert their power in Tibet. By breaking the power of the Dalai Lama who was the centre of Tibetan opposition to China, the British also facilitated Chinese success. As Lamb admits, "the most apparent result of the Younghusband Mission, which undermined the authority of the Dalai Lama, was to lay Tibet open to a reassertion of Chinese authority".[6] The Chinese advance in Tibet culminated in the fall of Lhasa in 1910.

The Chinese however would not have succeeded in reviving their power in Tibet, had the British decided to maintain their dominant position there after the withdrawal of the Younghusband Mission. But the purpose of the Mission was to keep Russia — and not China — out of Tibet. Britain favoured a stronger position of China in Tibet as a counterpoise to any Russian interference there. Consequently the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 provided that the preservation of Tibet's integrity should rest with China, and that China, but no other Power, should have the right to concessions in Tibet. The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 precluded both Russia and Britain from seeking concessions in Tibet and stationing representatives at Lhasa, and from entering into negotiations with Tibet except through the intermediary of China. These two conventions not only eliminated the possibility of Russian interference in Tibet; they also tied the hands of Britain in Tibet and left the country entirely at the mercy of China who had already been alerted by the Younghusband Mission.[7] The only reason why Britain entered into such self-denying treaties and allowed China a free hand was that she was afraid of Russia alone and did not consider the weak Manchu empire a probable source of danger. But China seized this opportunity and pushed troops through eastern Tibet. Batang was occupied by the end of 1906. In the next three years Derge, Tra-ya and Chamdo, important

[5] Bell to India, Foreign Dept., 21 February 1921: Bell Papers; C. Bell, *Tibet: Past and Present*, Oxford, 1924, pp. 88, 98.

[6] A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, London, 1960, p. 331.

[7] McMahon's Final Memorandum on the Tibet Conference: I. O. Memo. B206; Bell, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-98.

centres in eastern Tibet, fell to the Chinese.[8] Finally, on 12 February 1910 the Chinese occupied Lhasa.[9] The Dalai Lama fled to Darjeeling in India. The Chinese occupation of Lhasa was followed by serious troubles. As Sir A. H. McMahon, British Plenipotentiary at the Tibet Conference, 1913-14,[10] put it, "Our Treaty of 1904 was ignored, obstructions of every description were placed in the way of our Trade Agents and our frontier trade, and the peace of our North-East Frontier was seriously menaced . . . whilst it became evident that a Chinese Tibet would involve incessant intrigues with the States of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. Through the hostile attitude of the Chinese a situation had arisen indeed which threatened . . . to involve grave political responsibilities and a heavy military expenditure on the North-East Frontier of India".[11] In 1906-07 Britain had obviously underrated the potentialities of China on the chessboard of High Asia. Years later a British diplomat wrote in retrospect: "Our original Tibetan policy, formulated after 1904, was to keep everyone, including ourselves, out of Tibet, with the exception of the Chinese. The events of 1906-10 showed that in doing so we had overlooked the source of all our difficulties in Tibet, namely, the Chinese, and played directly into their hands by our self-denying policy".[12]

Almost immediately after occupying Lhasa, the Chinese began probing into the tribal country north of the Assam plains. In May 1910 Tungnu, the Miju Mishmi chief of the village of Pangum, reported to Williamson that two Tibetans had brought him an order from the Chinese to cut a track from Tibet to Assam, and that he had refused to obey, saying — though without authority — that he was a British subject and, as such, he would take orders only from the Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya.[13] In June 1910 another Miju Mishmi, called Halam, reported to Williamson that recently the Chinese had planted two large flags near

[8] Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

[9] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 194.

[10] This Conference is usually called the Simla Conference, probably because it was opened at Simla, though McMahon referred to it as the Tibet Conference. We shall also mention it by its usual name henceforth.

[11] McMahon's Final Memorandum on the Tibet Conference: I. O. Memo. B 206.

[12] B. Alston to Curzon, Secy. of State for Foreign Affairs, 21 May 1920: F.O. 371, Vol. 5316, F 1641/22/10.

[13] I. O. Memo. B180.

the Yepak river in the Lohit valley.[14] When these reports of Chinese activities in the Mishmi country were combined with a report that the Chinese had sent an official with military escort into the Khamti country in Upper Burma, it appeared that they were probably trying to converge on the Brahmaputra valley from both the north-east and south-east.[15]

In 1911 the Chinese apparently stepped up their activities on the frontier. In March 1911 Williamson reported that the Chinese at Rima were engaged in making a road along the left bank of the Lohit towards Tinai (or Tini), a village opposite Walong, most probably for the convenience of tax collectors.[16] Further reports were brought by Captain F.M. Bailey who had lately travelled through the Mishmi country in July 1911 on his adventurous journey from Batang to Sadiya. On 15 July he met two Mishmi headmen at Tinai who had been summoned under a peremptory Chinese order to proceed to the Chinese headquarters at Chikung. Bailey advised them to consult the Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, before going to Chikung. On 20 July he saw two Tibetans at Minzang. They told him that they had been ordered by the Chinese to bring the Mishmi chiefs before the Chikung official without delay. Though the Tibetans had succeeded in persuading some of the Mishmis to go to Chikung, Bailey believed that the departure of the Chinese troops from Chikung may have prevented their meeting with the Mishmis. The Chinese troops had been called away from Chikung in the middle of July to assist in the campaign against Pome where the Chinese had suffered serious reverses at the hands of the Pobas in June 1911.[17]

[14] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 477P., 4 July 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910. Lamb mentions July instead of June when Halam saw Williamson. See Lamb. *op. cit.*, p. 333. I. O. Memo. B180 also mentions July. But since the letter of E. Bengal & Assam to India of 4 July 1910 is a more immediate source of information than I. O. Memo. B180, we should take June as the correct date.

[15] I. O. Memo. B180.

[16] Williamson to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, No. 663G., 11 March 1911; Williamson's tour diary, 5 February 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

[17] Balley to India, Foreign Dept., No. 3, 8 August 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1468/1911; Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 18 August 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1372/1911; Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

The people of Pome were called the Pobas.

Lamb's remark that Bailey believed the Chinese would not abandon their plan in the Mishmi country is unwarranted by both the sources he refers to.

In October 1911 news was received that the Miju Mishmi village of Pangum had been recently visited by some Tibetans under a Chinese order to summon the Miju chiefs to Rima. The Mijus disobeyed the summons fearing that they might be required in connection with the Pome campaign. The Tibetans were also reported to have stated that the Chinese were preparing to extend their boundary seven days beyond what appeared to be Menilkrai in the Lohit valley where the Chinese had previously put up their flags.[18] During the rainy season, earlier in the year, a Chinese party had also visited the Delei valley in the country of the Taraon Mishmis. Mazanon, the Taraon chief of Chipa, a village in the Delei valley, stated in November 1911 that about seven months ago a Chinese official, called Ta Loh, had come over the Glei Dakhru pass with an escort and halted a week near Chipa. He ordered the Mishmis to clear a path down the Delei perhaps to its junction with the Lohit. The Mishmis told him that it would be easier for him to use the Lohit route. Then he gave the Mishmis a piece of paper with some writing on it which, he said, should be shown to any Chinese or British officials whom they might come across. The Mishmis were also asked to plant a Chinese flag at the confluence of the Delei with the Lohit. But the Mishmis refused to accept both the document and the flag. The Chinese then produced nine loads of salt and told the villagers that "they should eat Chinese salt as well as British". During the Mishmi mission operations in December 1911, Captain Hardcastle gathered a slightly different version of the event from three Tibetans. According to them, the Chinese official told the Taraons that in future they must obey the Chinese. Contrary to Mazanon's statement, the Chinese official persuaded the Mishmis to accept a kind of Chinese passport or warrant of protection, saying that it would be useful to show these documents to any Chinese official they might see whilst trading in Tibet, or to any British official who might enter their country. Hardcastle collected fifteen such documents written in Chinese and Tibetan. The text meant that the recipient having tendered his submission, the warrant of protection was issued to him.[19] This acceptance of the documents does not altogether justify Lamb's inference that the Mishmis did so out of

[18] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 10 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1675/1911; I. O. Memo. B189.

[19] I. O. Memo. B189.

submissiveness;[20] more likely they did it to protect their trade interests in Tibet. Unable to read the documents themselves, the illiterate Mishmis must have believed in the Chinese official's statement that the documents would be useful for showing to any Chinese official while trading in Tibet; and they may well have accepted the warrant under the impression that unless they did so their trade across the Glei Dakhru with the Tibetans of the Rong Thod Chu valley would be closed.[21]

In 1911 the Chinese did not confine their activities to the Mishmi section alone; they also became active in the other sections of the frontier. In July 1911 a report came from Peking indicating that the Chinese had seemingly included the Abor country within the region of Pome and were contemplating, evidently as part of their Pome campaign,[22] the despatch of an expedition down the Dihang from Kongbu, which would possibly forestall any punitive operations which the Government of India might undertake the ensuing autumn to punish the Abors for Williamson's murder. Colonel Willoughby, British Military Attaché in Peking, reported that Kongbu, where some Chinese troops had been concentrated, was not more than 130 miles in a straight line from the Abor village of Komsing, and that Komsing was only four stages from Pasighat at the foot of the hills. Further, he identified Kolang — the objective of the proposed Chinese expedition — with Kerang which was not far from the well-known Abor village of Kebang near the plains of Assam.[23] Kerang was well within the sphere which, the Indian military authorities thought, should be under British influence for the purpose of obtaining a strategically sound frontier.[24]

About the same time information was received from certain elephant catchers of the arrival of four men in a Hazarikhowa Aka village north of Tezpur. They appeared to have been a party of Chinese.[25]

[20] Lamb, *op. cit*, p. 357.

[21] Dundas' note, 17 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[22] See p. 83 above.

[23] Col. Willoughby's report, No. 12/1911 enclosed in Jordan to Grey, No. 299, 22 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4082/1911.

[24] Minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4082/1911.

[25] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 7 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1478/1911; E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 423 C.G., 14 July 1911: P. S. S. F Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

Such a brisk Chinese penetration in the tribal country on the border of Assam caught the British unprepared. The best example of this unwariness was that at the turn of the twentieth century, British knowledge of the area was poor in the extreme. Curzon pointed out in February 1900 that nobody, presumably in the Government of India, knew anything about the extreme north-east frontier of India and that most places were not marked on the map.[26] There was no great change in the situation even ten years later when the Government awoke to the Chinese threat on the frontier. Of the entire tribal country, the Lohit valley alone was quite well-known to the British, mainly due to the Lohit tours of F. J. Needham, the first Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, and his successor, N. Williamson. In the other sections little was known beyond the fringe of the hills bordering the plains. This lack of knowledge of the north-east frontier as late as 1910 contrasted sharply with the relatively detailed knowledge of India's northern and north-western frontiers which the British had come to possess by that time. This contrast appears particularly surprising when we remember that the British had come into contact with the north-east frontier about twenty years before their contact with the northern and north-western frontiers. The annexation of Assam took place in 1826 which brought them into contact with the north-east frontier, while their direct contact with the north-west and an indirect one with the northern frontier through Kashmir were established only after the annexation of the Punjab in 1849. The only explanation of this difference is that the north-east frontier was of little strategic importance as compared with its northern and north-western counterparts. And the importance of a frontier lies in the pressure behind it. While the northern and north-western frontiers faced the menace of Russia striding across Central Asia in the nineteenth century, on the north-east the weak Manchu empire posed no such threat at all.

The British neglected the north-east frontier as long as they did not suspect any danger from the Chinese there. Consequently, when the Chinese suddenly displayed brisk activity on that frontier, the plains of Assam lay dangerously open to a determined thrust from that area. In August 1910 the seriousness of the situation was clearly pointed out by Bell, Political Officer in

[26] Curzon to Hamilton, No. 10, 22 February 1900: Curzon Papers.

Sikkim. "That Assam would ever stand the slightest chance of being invaded by a civilised military Power has never been contemplated, and consequently no strategic plan, no defences, no organisation whatever exists to repel a serious invasion. . . . Even with many months of previous warning, it is idle to imagine that the province could be put into a state of defence, which would even faintly approach the favourable conditions under which the defenders would meet an enemy attacking the North-West Frontier . . . .

"If we wait until the contingency arises to guard against a danger which requires not months but years of previous preparation, in order adequately to meet the requirements of the case, the probability of a complete breakdown, followed by a disaster of unparalleled magnitude, will no longer be a matter of academical speculation, but a portentous fact which will tax the utmost resources of the Empire to cope with."[27]

The government was now forced to devise a dynamic policy to meet the requirements of a live frontier which the old policy of non-interference could no longer satisfy. The new policy had two distinct but inseparable aspects. On the one hand, the tribes were to be properly controlled, while on the other, the frontier was to be protected from any Chinese penetration or invasion. One without the other was impossible. We have already studied the first aspect. We shall now study the second. The earliest indication of a new policy of the Government of India came in September 1910. They thought that "the best means of safeguarding frontier from Chinese aggression, without bringing the existing independent tribal area under administration, which is impracticable, would be to push forward the present outer line so as to obtain a good strategical boundary under our control . . . ."[28] In October 1910 Lord Minto for the first time urged the Secretary of State to sanction the new policy which, in view of the Chinese danger, aimed at converting the tribal country into a buffer

[27] Quoted from *Military Report on Assam* in Bell to India, Foreign Dept., No. 1201 T. E. C., 20 August 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

[28] Tel. from India, Foreign Dept., to E. Bengal & Assam, P., No. S-560, 29 September 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910. The alignment proposed for the new boundary was later repeated in Viceroy's telegram to Secretary of State of 23 October 1910. This alignment will be discussed in the last chapter.

by throwing back the Outer Line and entering into treaties with the tribes of the buffer area.[29]

But this first proposal of the Government of India for a forward policy on the north-east frontier was soon reversed by Hardinge who succeeded Minto in November 1910. In December 1910 Hardinge strongly deprecated any forward move beyond the administrative frontier. "Chinese aggression would, in Lord Hardinge's view, be met, not in the tribal territory bordering Assam, but by attack on the coast of China. He was, therefore, opposed to running risks or spending money on endeavours to create a strategic frontier in advance of the administrative border. . . ." Though he recognised that the Chinese activity might ultimately compel India to fix a boundary line, he saw no necessity at that time to risk a forward move in the difficult tribal country. He was only prepared to encourage cultivating friendly relations with the tribes and explorations on a limited scale for the purpose of obtaining further information about the tribal area.[30] In advocating such a policy, which was essentially the same as the old policy of non-interference, Hardinge overruled the views of Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieutenant-Governor, Eastern Bengal and Assam. Hare held that since the Outer Line had no strategic value at all, if the Chinese gained control down to that line, they could easily attack the plains and defence would be extremely difficult. It was, therefore, essential to press forward beyond the Outer Line, and occupy suitable strategic points of defence in the hills. "It is true in any trial of strength between England and China the contest would not probably be decided on this frontier, but we should be bound to defend our valuable tea gardens, and unless we had suitable positions this would be exceedingly difficult, and we could very easily be greatly harassed. . . ."[31] Hardinge's policy might create a situation similar to that on the north-west frontier if the British abandoned the strategic passes there and allowed Russia to come right down to the edge of the plains. When he talked of an attack on China's coast, he was considering the border problem as only a

[29] Minto's tel. to Morley, 23 October 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1535/1910; Minto Papers, Vol. M1015, No. 357.

[30] India to Secy. of State, No. 182, 22 December 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

[31] Quoted in India to Secy. of State, No. 182, 22 December 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

part of the entire Anglo-Chinese relations. He did not quite see that China's coast could be attacked only in case of a full-scale Anglo-Chinese war, while Chinese infiltration on the frontier was a limited problem which needed some local measures. It was in this failure of Hardinge to appreciate the limited character of the problem that his difference with Hare lay.

At the India Office Hardinge's views were sharply criticised by Hirtzel. He wrote, "The levity with which Hardinge talks about attacking the coast of China amazes me. But quite apart from that, it is a bad matter, for no attempt is made to argue the case or to explain the grounds for their [i.e. Government of India's] conclusions; and though of course the onus probandi lies on the other side [i.e. L. Hare], still the Secretary of State is surely entitled to know why the other side is overruled." Hirtzel took the cue from Hare in clearly emphasising the serious implications of a Chinese threat to British economic interests in Assam. "If anything goes wrong in Assam, there will be very voiceful public opinion against us. There are no European industries along the North-West Frontier, and one fat Hindu bannia more or less doesn't matter — yet ! But in Lakhimpur district there are over 70,000 acres of tea-gardens turning out over 30 million pounds of tea annually, and employing over 200 Europeans and over 100,000 Indians. The European capital sunk in tea must be enormous, and there are other industries as well (e.g., coal, over 1/4 million tons a year). These gardens lie at the foot of the hills inhabited by savages; their defence rests with 1 battalion of native infantry and 1 battalion of military police (850 men). Think of the howl the planters would let out, and the rise in the price of tea! The Government of India, of course, know all this, but in a document of this kind they ought to show that they know it; and if they don't, I think the Secretary of State should call them down from the high atmosphere of 'attacks on the coast of China' to the more prosaic level of border protection and administration."[32] Hirtzel's above observations clearly show that extensive British economic interests in Assam exercised probably a more effective influence in shaping the frontier policy than it did in the evolution of tribal policy. In April 1911 the Local Government again pointed out that if the Chinese occupied the hills, they would be

[32] Hirtzel to Ritchie, 12 January 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

in a position to dominate all the tea-gardens north of the Brahmaputra.[33] Finally, when Hardinge subsequently realised the need of a new policy on the frontier he also pointed out the importance of protecting the border districts of Assam where "large sums of private European capital have been invested and where the European population outnumbers that of almost any other district in India".[34]

Had Hardinge adhered to the policy of non-interference he would have been compelled in the long run to change that policy under the pressure of British economic interests in Assam. But by June 1911 he evidently realized the necessity of measures on the frontier to meet the Chinese threat there. This is obvious from his telegram of 29 June 1911,[35] in which he asked for Crewe's sanction to an expedition against the Abors and a friendly mission to the Mishmis after the murder of Williamson. Besides the request for Crewe's sanction, there was a lot more in this telegram which marked it as the first sign of Hardinge's departure from the out-moded policy which he had staunchly advocated in December 1910 in spite of Hare's protests. In view of Chinese activities on the frontier, Hardinge was now convinced of "the urgent necessity of coming to an understanding with China about our mutual frontier and of keeping her as far as possible removed from our present administered areas and of preventing Chinese intriguing within our limits". Hence Hardinge thought it of prime importance that both the Abor expedition and the Mishmi mission should explore and survey the area and obtain such knowledge of the country as would be necessary for determining "a suitable boundary between India and China in this locality, as to which we are at present in almost absolute ignorance." In September 1911 Hardinge obtained Crewe's sanction to the Miri mission which was to survey and explore the area between Bhutan and the Abor country—which could not be covered by the Abor expedition — and collect information for the ultimate purpose of

[33] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 204-C.G., 25 April 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

[34] India to Secy. of State, No. 105, 21 Septembr 1911: P.S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

[35] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 29 June 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911; Hardinge Papers, No. 95, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, pp. 168-69.

delimiting a boundary line.[36] In addition, the Mishmi mission was to erect cairns and boundary stones on what might be considered a suitable frontier line, as this would greatly improve the bargaining strength of the British in any future negotiations with China about a commonly agreed frontier line. Though Hardinge favoured the establishment of friendly relations with the tribesmen, like Minto he was also opposed to advancing the 'administrative frontier' and bringing the tribal area under regular administration.

Hardinge had now become wiser about the frontier situation and had indeed come down to the 'prosaic level of border protection'. But he was still short of the position which Minto had taken in September-October 1910. Unlike Minto, he did not state an alignment for the new frontier line. The three essential elements of Hardinge's suggestions were: first, survey and exploration to collect information about the country; secondly, the erection of boundary markers, for the time being in the Mishmi country alone; thirdly, no extension of regular administration into the tribal area. While there was agreement on all hands on the first point, the last two were debated at length at the India Office and between the India Office and Foreign Office.

Sir H. S. Barnes supported the procedure suggested by Hardinge, mainly because of the psychological effect which the boundary cairns were expected to exercise on the Chinese. Once they were put up, the Chinese would certainly hesitate to go beyond them. There was, of course, the risk of a serious Chinese challenge to this demarcation. But Barnes was prepared to take the risk, since he believed that the Chinese would not challenge once the border had been demarcated; "it is obvious that the existence of a marked line not only diminishes the risk of surreptitious intrusions but greatly increases our power of bargaining if any dispute should arise. Probably the existence of the cairns will prevent any dispute at all."[37] But the demarcation of a boundary by subordinate officers on the spot without prior consultation with the higher authorities was likely to be a

[36] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 6 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1478/1911; Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 23 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4270/1911.

[37] Barnes' minute, 12 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

risky venture. Hence, Sir Richmond Ritchie opposed the idea that the Mishmi mission should erect boundary cairns. Instead, he thought, it would be better if the mission, like the Abor survey party, only collected information about the country, and the demarcation of the line was postponed until the lie of the boundary had been finally settled by the British Government.[38] The procedure suggested by Ritchie was certainly preferable because of the weight and finality which would attach to a boundary line which had been determined in consultation with the British Governnment. But it had two disadvantages. It would mean delay at a time when quick action was essential, and it would require a second mission into the Mishmi country at a considerable expense to demarcate the line.

Crewe did not agree with Ritchie's view. He thought it was better to proceed as the Government of India had suggested.[39] He decided that the Abor survey party should only collect information about the country and must not take any step to demarcate the boundary without previous reference to him.[40] By thus explicitly prohibiting the demarcation in the Abor country, he implicitly allowed it in the Mishmi country for which Hardinge had asked his permission. Perhaps the only reason why Crewe allowed it in the Mishmi country was that, of all the sections of the tribal area this was the most threatened and here the Chinese had already set up boundary markers.

In spite of this controversy over the demarcation of the frontier line, none at the India Office opposed Hardinge's decision against advancing the limits of administration into the tribal area. But on this particular issue, Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office recorded his absolute opposition. He recognised that it was not "practicable in every case to adhere to the boundaries now administered in view of the necessity of establishing a good defensible frontier offering some prospect of permanency". Hence he did not oppose the idea of laying claim to a new frontier beyond the administrative boundary if that frontier satisfied strategic needs. But he opposed the policy of claiming a new frontier without bringing it under regular administration. "It appears to

[38] Ritchie to Crewe, 4 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

[39] Crewe's note, 7 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

[40] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 24 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911; Hardinge Papers, No. 95, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, pp. 12-22.

Sir E. Grey that a policy of sending expeditions into unadministered territory with a view to claiming a frontier, and of subsequently withdrawing, is open to objection as leading to difficulties similar to those encountered in the case of the recent expedition to the Pienma district,[41] and that it would consequently be preferable, whenever possible, to decide upon a suitable and defensible frontier by local exploration and then not only to lay claim to it but to take steps to administer the country enclosed". Hence, Grey opposed the concurrence of the India Office in the Viceroy's decision against advancing the "administrative frontier".[42] He was afraid of a repetition of the Pienma incidents on the Assam border if the British claimed a new frontier without bringing it under administration. While a British claim to a new frontier would draw the Chinese attention, the absence of administration there would facilitate Chinese occupation of the area. Consequently, the net result would be against British interests. Grey's demand essentially meant that there must not be two lines, the inner one representing the administrative limits and the outer one representing the external boundary. Instead of two lines there should be only one representing both administrative limits and external boundary.

Though Grey was right in the light of British experience in northern Burma, his view looked unrealistic when applied to the tribal area north of Assam. It was such an inaccessible country that it was idle to think of bringing it under regular administration. Hence Crewe, Ritchie, and Hirtzel at the India Office disagreed with Grey. Ritchie rightly pointed out that the Foreign Office did not understand the difference between regular administration and control exercised between administrative limits and

[41] The trouble at Pienma (Hpimaw) had its roots in the annexation of Upper Burma which created a new Sino-British frontier and led to intermittent disputes. Pienma was situated on the western side of the Nmaihka-Salween watershed which the British claimed as the boundary but which the Chinese refused to accept as such. The British in spite of their claim did not bring it under administration. In 1910 there were reports of violation of the watershed from the Chinese side including the occupation of Pienma. In January 1911 W. F. Herz, Deputy Commissioner, Myitkyina, entered Pienma unopposed. But his orders precluded any permanent British occupation of Pienma. Shortly after his visit, the Chinese were reported to have reoccupied Pienma, though this report was later found to be wrong. See Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, pp. 282-288.

[42] F. O. to I. O., 21 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911.

outer frontiers. Since regular administration of the tribal area was not possible, the question was "whether to take the risks involved in an outer frontier or to fall back on frontier up to which we do effectively administer". But, as Hirtzel thought, it would be suicidal to choose the latter alternative in order to fulfil Grey's demand. "What the F.O. are asking for is a practical impossibility unless we are to adhere to the present administrative border, have no 'outer line' at all, and let the Chinese, if they choose, occupy — or at all events control the tribes — right down to the very edge of settled British districts which no natural frontier protects. Such a policy is unthinkable."[43]

It fell to Hirtzel to explain the India Office's views to the Foreign Office. He explained, "Administration . . . means a tour — lasting at the outside 6 months — by a Political Officer every year, and there is nothing to prevent a Chinese Taotai from touring there for the remaining 6 months."[44] It is small wonder that such a definition of frontier administration which would even admit of a Chinese official's tour within British territory failed to convince the Foreign Office. A Chinese official's tour within British boundary was certainly the first thing against which the proposed boundary was being aimed. Hirtzel's idea was just the opposite of the Foreign Office's demand for regular administration of the area. But, since what the Foreign Office essentially wanted was not administration for its own sake but a proper defence of the border against any Chinese intrusion, a *via media* between the two extremes was possible if certain measures could be devised to ensure proper protection of the frontier without at the same time introducing regular administration.

Hence, while concurring in Hardinge's decision against extension of administration into the tribal area, Crewe enquired about the measures which Hardinge would propose for the protection of the frontier from any Chinese intrusion. "Experience has shown that it is worse than useless to send an expedition to lay claim to a frontier and then to withdraw it, and that such a procedure only invites an advance on the part of the Chinese." Crewe asked whether Hardinge thought it necessary to establish

[43] Crewe's note, 24 July 1911; Ritchie to Crewe, 22 July 1911; Hirtzel's minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911.

[44] Hirtzel's minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911.

permanent outposts in the hills as Hare had suggested.[45] This was a particularly important question, since permanent outposts would have meant permanent occupation which had been prohibited in the case of Pienma.

There was another controversial point which emerged from Hardinge's telegram of 29 June to Crewe and which needed clarification before a coherent frontier policy could be devised. The telegram had not clearly stated whether the proposed boundary line would lie beyond the Outer Line or the Outer Line be pushed forward and merged into the boundary line. It seemed as though the Government of India wanted to have a third line beyond the Outer Line. The Foreign Office warned, "It would seem that something in the nature of a triple frontier is contemplated which would surely lead to much confusion. . . ."[46] Hirtzel also questioned the prudence of a third line, which had no parallel on the north-west frontier. "Is the multiplication of lines desirable ? An inner line, and an outer line are intelligible: but what about a 'boundary' beyond them ? Are there more than two lines on the North West Frontier, viz., the administrative frontier and the Durand line ?"[47] Since the Government of India's policy seemed obscure on this point, it was essential to ascertain their intention in this regard. If they intended to have a third line, what was the purpose behind it ? Further, what would be the status of the tribesmen between the Outer Line and the border ? Would they be British subjects, or protected persons, and what degree of responsibility would the Government of India take in case of Chinese raids on them or their raids within the Outer and Inner Lines ?[48] These doubts were, however, set at rest by the Government of India who clearly stated that they had no intention of laying down a third line, but wanted to advance the Outer Line and merge it with the new external boundary.[49]

As we have seen, Hardinge's telegram of 29 June gave rise to

[45] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 24 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911; Hardinge Papers, No. 95. Vol. 1, Pt. 1, pp. 121-22.

[46] F. O. to I. O. 21 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911.

[47] Hirtzel's note, 13 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911.

[48] Hirtzel's minute; Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 24 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911; Hardinge Papers, No. 95, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, pp. 121-22.

[49] India to Secy. of State, No. 105, 21 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

a number of controversies. In view of these controversies, Crewe, in his telegram of 24 July, asked Hardinge to state clearly his entire policy on this frontier.[50] Consequently, on 21 September 1911 Hardinge submitted a full statement of his north-east frontier policy. It was pointed out that the very first objective of his government was to obtain a strategic frontier line "between China cum Tibet and the tribal territory from Bhutan up to and including the Mishmi country, and this should . . . now be the *main object* of our policy . . . . the question of a boundary well defined and at a safer distance from our administrative border has become one of imperative importance and admits of no delay. . . ." To meet the strategic requirements of such a line, Hardinge recommended, subject to such modifications as might be found necessary as a result of the survey and explorations in the cold weather of 1911-12, the alignment which Minto had first defined in 1910.[51]

As regards demarcation of the frontier line, Hardinge did not quite agree with Crewe. Though in his telegram of 29 June Hardinge had asked permission for demarcation in the Mishmi country alone, now he gave the matter the shape of a general policy for the entire frontier, unlike Crewe who had allowed it rather tacitly in the Mishmi section but prohibited it in the Abor section. Hardinge did not think it necessary that the new boundary should be regularly demarcated at the moment. But, he thought, it would be probably necessary during the proposed operations in the hills in the next working season "to erect cairns at suitable points, such as trade routes leading into Tibet, to indicate the limits of our control, and to explain to the tribesmen the object of such marks . . . . and, provided that the sites selected conform approximately to the position of the line defined [i.e., the line defined by Minto and now supported by Hardinge] . . . and correctly represent the limits of locally recognised Tibetan territory, we see no objection to the erection of such marks by officers during the course of their enquiries".[52]

[50] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 24 July 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 3908/1911.

[51] India to Secy. of State, No. 105, 21 Septemder 1911: P. S. S. F.Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911. Italics mine. For the alignment suggested by Minto, see Ch. V.

[52] India to Secy. of State, No. 105, 21 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

Hardinge thus wanted Crewe to sanction demarcation on the entire frontier irrespective of the different sections. It is interesting to note that even before receiving any sanction of the Secretary of State to this general policy of demarcation on the frontier,[53] the Abor expedition and the Miri and Mishmi missions were asked to carry out that policy. The Government of India instructed Bower, Officer Commanding the Abor expedition: "No boundary must, however, be settled on the ground without the orders of Government *except in cases*[54] where the recognised limits of Tibetan-Chinese territory are found to conform approximately to the line indicated above [i.e., the line suggested by Hardinge], and to follow such prominent physical features as are essential for a satisfactory strategic and well-defined boundary line." Along with the above instruction was enclosed a memorandum by the Indian General Staff for the guidance of the ensuing operations in the tribal area. This memorandum clearly stated the need of placing boundary markers in the Lohit, Dihang and Kamla valleys.[55] The Local Government in October repeated the same instruction to Dundas and Kerwood who were respectively in charge of the Mishmi and Miri missions, and drew their attention to the above memorandum.[56] Eventually, however, no boundary marker was set up on the frontier by any of the parties.

As late as 23 September 1911, when he authorised the Miri mission, Crewe was opposed to demarcation anywhere except in the Mishmi country.[57] But now he was willing to support Hardinge's proposal since he did not find any better alternative in the given circumstances. He was aware of the disadvantage

[53] For Crewe's sanction to demarcation in all the sections of the frontier, see p. 100 footnote.

[54] Italics mine.

[55] India, Foreign Dept., to Bower, Commanding the Abor Expeditionary Force, No. 1773 E. B., 25 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1691-92/1911.

[56] E. Bengal & Assam to Dundas, No. 488C.G., 5 October 1911; E. Bengal & Assam to Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts, No. 490 C.G., 5 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1804/1911.

[57] Crewe clearly stated, "as in case of explorations in Abor country, operations (in Miri country) will be confined to collection of information and that no delimitation will be attempted without previous reference to me ...." See Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 23 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4270/1911.

of demarcation by subordinate officers on their own responsibility. The British Government might afterwards find themselves unable to maintain that frontier line against Chinese counter-claims which would mean serious loss of face. Hence, in ordinary circumstances, it would have been a far more preferable course to ask the officers only to collect information about the country, leaving the frontier line to be finally determined by the British Government. "But the practical objections in the present instance to such a course, involving as it necessarily must the despatch of further expeditions hereafter for the purpose of demarcating the frontier laid down by His Majesty's Government, appear to Lord Crewe to be very strong, both on account of the difficulty and expense of sending expeditions into these remote and mountainous regions, and in view of the effect likely to be produced on the ignorant tribesmen by repeated incursions of armed parties into their territory."[58]

Closely linked with demarcation of the boundary was the most important issue which the Foreign Office had so greatly emphasised — protection of the newly claimed frontier. As we have seen, Crewe had specifically asked Hardinge about the measures which the latter proposed to take for this purpose. One great difficulty which faced Hardinge in this respect was the almost total ignorance about the country, since the character of the measures which were to be taken was bound to be shaped to a large extent by the nature of the country. In spite of this handicap, however, Hardinge suggested some measures, local and international. A loose political control of the tribes, which we have discussed in an earlier chapter, was one of the important local measures. Besides, one part of the frontier might require outposts, while in another, agreements and arrangements with the tribes were all that might be necessary. By suggesting the establishment of outposts and agreements with tribes, Hardinge echoed the demand of Hare on the one hand and the suggestion of Bell on the other. In addition to such local measures on the frontier, Hardinge proposed a step at the international level; "it is essential in our opinion that, as soon as the boundary has been roughly decided, a formal intimation should be made to China of the

[58] I. O. to F. O., 19 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

limits of the country under our control."[59] Lamb suggests that Hardinge wanted to use such an intimation to China as a diplomatic shield behind which the British operations in the ensuing working season could take place without any obstruction from the Chinese side.[60] But Lamb seems to have misinterpreted Hardinge's purpose. Hardinge does not seem to have wanted that China should be informed *before* the operations, but only when the boundary had been "roughly decided" i.e. obviously *after* the operations had already finished their task in the hills. Hardinge must have hoped that such an intimation would warn China of British retaliation and would thus refrain her from violating the new boundary. But his optimism seems to have been ill-founded if the experience on the Burma border was any guide in this respect, where the Chinese had already violated the British-claimed boundary. As we have seen, Grey had inferred, from the incidents on the Burma border, that a regular administration alone could prevent Chinese violation of the newly-claimed frontier line.

Naturally, Grey remained unconvinced of the effectiveness of the measures which Hardinge had proposed as an alternative to regular administration, which had been held from Minto's time as physically impossible because of the difficult terrain. Grey was "unable to concur in the proposal to demarcate a new frontier until he is satisfied that the Government of India are prepared to take adequate measures to protect any line which may eventually be selected from all reasonable risk of violation by the Chinese. " . . . the policy of demarcating a frontier by boundary cairns or otherwise and of then retiring, far from obviating the inconvenience and expense of sending further expeditions . . . would more probably necessitate the eventual despatch of an expedition on a far larger scale than any now contemplated, unless His Majesty's Government were prepared to acquiesce in the subsequent occupation by the Chinese of territory which had been publicly declared to be within the British sphere." On the same ground he opposed the idea of informing China of the new boundary unless the British claim to it was supported by "obvious

[59] India to Secy. of State, No. 105, 21 September 1911: P. S. S.F. Vol. 13(1910), 1648/1911.

[60] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 351.

evidence of an intention in case of necessity to protect and control the territory claimed". He was afraid that a formal claim by the British would only increase the risk of greater Chinese activity in the area. Hence he preferred that both the demarcation and intimation to China should wait until the Government of India and the British Government had finally determined the line and decided to maintain it against any counter claims.[61]

Crewe accepted Grey's suggestion that formal intimation to China should be deferred. But in other respects he did not agree with Grey's views. He held that unless time had shown the degree and nature of the danger on the frontier, it was impossible to give any further assurance of border protection than the Government of India had already given. "It is of course obvious that in the event of organised and systematic military aggression by the Chinese upon such a frontier as is proposed, a military expedition on a large scale would probably be necessary to repel it. But this would be equally true of any frontier which His Majesty's Government had once formally delimited and proclaimed. . . ." [62]

Grey finally gave in, recognising that the question was primarily the Indian Government's concern.[63] But Crewe did not ignore the weight of Grey's opinion. He told Hardinge that the cairns should be as few as possible and that explanations to the tribes regarding the line should be as non-committal as possible, "since it will be difficult to withdraw from it without local loss of prestige, and His Majesty's Government cannot finally commit themselves to any line until they have all the facts before them."[64] By these twin measures — a limited number of stones which was designed to limit the scope of any possible conflict with the

[61] F. O. to I. O., 26 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4476/1911.

[62] I. O. to F. O., 31 October 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4476/1911.

[63] F. O. to I. O., 6 November 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4536/1911.

[64] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 8 November 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4536/1911.

Incidentally, this was the first time that Crewe did not ask the Indian Government to confine demarcation in the Mishmi country alone, and thus allowed it in the other sections also. Consequently the attention of Bower, Dundas and Kerwood was drawn to Crewe's message for their guidance. See India, Foreign Dept., to Bower, No. 2180 E.B., 13 November 1911; India, Foreign Dept., to E. Bengal & Assam, No. 2181 E.B., 13 November 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1974/1911.

Chinese, and a non-committal explanation to the tribes — Crewe wanted to keep open the way for a retreat without loss of face if the Chinese seriously challenged the line. It should be noted that this hesitation about the demarcation of the frontier and fear of Chinese challenge were at least partly due to British ignorance of the limits of Tibetan authority in the tribal country. This ignorance was to a large extent removed by extensive survey and exploration on the frontier during the next two years.

While the Government of India, the India Office and the Foreign Office were thus engaged in hammering out a policy to guide the frontier operations, critics in parliament challenged the very legality of these operations. Section 55 of the Government of India Act, 1858, had provided that "Except for preventing or repelling actual Invasion of Her Majesty's Indian Possessions, or under other sudden and urgent Necessity, the revenues of India shall not, without the Consent of both Houses of Parliament, be applicable to defray the Expenses of any Military Operation carried on beyond the external Frontiers of such Possessions by Her Majesty's Forces charged upon such Revenues".[65] William Byles (M. P. for Salford, North) and Swift MacNeill (M. P. for Donegal, South) asked in October-November 1911 whether this Act had not been violated by seeking no prior parliamentary sanction to the operations in the hills beyond the Outer Line.[66] The central argument behind this charge was the Outer Line, beyond which the operations were taking place, represented the external frontier of India. Thus the bone of contention was the status of the Outer Line. It was known that the Inner Line represented the limits of administration, and the Gevernment's political control extended up to the Outer Line. But the position beyond the Outer Line was not quite clear. Though the government had not exercised any control regularly beyond the Outer Line, they had done so occasionally by sending punitive expeditions into the hills. But ordinarily, excepting such occasions, the Outer Line was the limit to government control. Hence it appeared to the parliamentary critics as the external boundary of India. Montagu might have seemed to have skated on thin ice when he told MacNeill that

[65] 21 & 22 Vic., Cap. 106.

[66] Commons Debates, 31 October, 6 November, 16 November 1911: P. D. Vol. XXX, Cols. 689, 1443; Vol. XXXI, Cols. 505-6. 1911.

the Abor country did not lie beyond the external frontier,[67] since it was well-known that the Abor country lay beyond the Outer Line. On 14 November Byles pointed out that the maps in the "Imperial Gazetteer of India" showed both the Abor and Mishmi countries as lying outside the external frontier of India. Montagu replied that those maps did not purport to show with "scientific exactness" the frontier between India and Tibet which had never been demarcated.[68] But neither of these parliamentary answers was convincing because it did not touch the crux of the problem — whether the Outer Line could be considered as the external frontier of India. Montagu's statement that the Abor country did not lie beyond the external frontier of India was based on the assumption that the Outer Line was not the external frontier and, consequently, the hill tribes beyond the line were within Indian territory. This assumption could have been supported by solid arguments which were, unfortunately, never very clearly put forwafd in parliamentary discussions.

As regards the tribes, it is true that the Government of India had never exercised any regular control on them. But they had never considered these tribes as under Tibetan control either.[69] As Hirtzel put it precisely, "The Abors have never been regarded as on the Tibetan side of that frontier: ergo they are on the Indian side."[70] There did not, of course, exist any treaty or formal declaration to this effect, since no occasion for either had ever arisen in the past; Tibet, the only other organised government in touch with the tribal area, took no interest in that area except on its northernmost fringe. Hirtzel's argument was not an empty sophistry. It reflected the prevailing attitude of the Government of India. The Government of India had, in the past, freely sent punitive expeditions into the tribal country without ever thinking that they were encroaching on Tibetan territory. That they did not consider the tribal area as Tibetan

[67] Commons Debates, 6 November 1911: P. D. Vol. XXX, Col. 1443, 1911.

[68] Commons Debates, 14 November 1911: P. D. Vol. XXXI, Cols. 179-80, 1911.

[69] It is interesting to note that these tribes, excepting the Daflas, had accepted the authority of the Ahom rulers of Assam, as it was reported by the Mughal historian, Shihabuddin Talish in the seventeenth century. See J. N. Sarkar, "Assam and the Ahoms in 1660 A.D.", *The Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Vol. I, Bankipore, 1915.

[70] Hirtzel's note to Under-Secretary of State, 10 November 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 15 (1910), Pt. 3, 511/1911.

territory is also confirmed by the yellow wash in which the tribal country was shown in the map of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the 1909 edition of Aitchison's *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*.[71] The same colour in this map was used to show such areas as the Khasi Hills, Manipur and Hill Tripura which were undoubtedly within the frontiers of India. Therefore, the Indian authorities must have considered the tribal country north of Assam, which they showed in yellow wash, as within the sphere of British influence. One might ask what was the attitude of the Tibetan Government towards this area. In 1910 Bell reported that the Tibetan Ministers in Darjeeling, who had escaped from Tibet along with the Dalai Lama, considered that the British had conquered the tribes of this area.[72] Lamb states that the Tibetan Government in exile indicated that they considered they had jurisdiction over some Assam Hiamalayan districts.[73] But his statement is unwarranted by his source of information. To substantiate his point, he refers to a letter of Bell to the Government of India of 5 August 1911 and a letter of the Government of India to Captain Weir of 15 August 1911. But neither confirms Lamb's contention. Bell only stated that the Tibetan Ministers in Darjeeling had written to the Tibetan council in Lhasa to ascertain whether the Abors who had murdered Williamson were under the Tibetan Government. But they did not state, as Lamb indicates, that Tibet had jurisdiction over any part of the tribal area.[74]

As regards the Outer Line, Montagu clearly stated in November 1911 its essential distinction from a frontier: "the Outer Line is an *administrative* device fixed at the discretion of an administrator to limit his responsibilities well within his frontier. A frontier is an *international* device fixed by agreement between two administrative authorities."[75] An international boundary must stand on an international agreement between two governments. But

[71] Vol. II.

[72] Bell to India, Foreign Dept., No. 1201 T. E. C., 20 August 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910.

[73] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 351.

[74] Bell to India, 5 August 1911; India to Captain Weir, 15 August 1911: F. O. 371, Vol. 1065, No. 35166.

[75] Montagu to Crewe, 7 November 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 15 (1910), Pt. 3, 505/1911. Italics mine.

the Outer Line was a unilateral device of the Government of India to avoid complications with the turbulent tribes. The very fact that they despatched punitive expeditions across the Outer Line without ever thinking that they were encroaching on a foreign state's land is in itself an eloquent proof that the Outer Line was never recognised as an international boundary. Lamb overlooks this essential distinction when, like the Chinese Government of late, he identifies the Outer Line with India's international boundary here.[76] It is true, as Lamb says,[77] that in various agreements with the Abors it had been stated that British territory extended to the foot of the hills. But he ignores the fact that these treaties had also provided that any infringement of the provisions by the Abors would nullify the engagements.[78] As we have already seen, the Abors violated the engagements and broke the peace of the frontier. One of the important conditions of all these engagements was that the Abors were to respect British territory extending up to the foot of the hills. But they broke this condition by their demands on the land at the foot of the hills. Therefore it would be untenable to hold that on the basis of Abor agreements the foot of the hills was the final limit of Indian territory. Furthermore, engagements with the tribes, who had no central government, could be hardly considered the proper basis for an international boundary. Lamb is not unaware that these agreements with the tribes cannot be considered as international agreements in the proper sense of the term. In a different context he recognizes this and questions the validity of any attempt to prove on the basis of any sueh agreement that British sovereignty before 1914 extended up to the Himalayan range. Hence it is a case of self-contradiction when he suggests on the strength of the Abor treaties that the Outer Line was India's international boundary before 1914.[79] The Outer

[76] India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question*, New Delhi, 1961, pp. 3-4; Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

[77] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 598.

[78] Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. II, 1909, pp. 247, 251-52.

[79] D. P. Choudhury, "The North-East Frontier of India", *Modern Asian Studies*, Cambridge University Press, London, October 1970; Lamb, *The China-India Border*, pp. 53-4.

Line had no parallel on the north-west frontier where the Durand Line had its basis in an agreement between India and Afghanistan. On the north-east frontier, the counterpart of the Durand Line could only be a boundary based on an agreement between India and Tibet which was not yet in existence. As we shall see in the next chapter, this counterpart was established in 1914 when India and Tibet agreed to a boundary line on this frontier. Hence Montagu was quite justified in telling Byles in November 1911 that "having regard to the fact that no frontier has yet been defined, it is impossible that the expedition [i. e., the Abor expedition] should result in the extension of something which does not exist".[80]

In spite of the fact that parliamentary discussions took place about the frontier operations, there are distinct proofs that the authorities would have been glad if they could maintain secrecy. The best proof of this official attitude lies in the heavy editing of the Government of India's despatch to the Secretary of State of 21 September 1911 for the purpose of its inclusion in the Abor Blue Book under item No. 19.[81] A drastic abbreviation of the original text of this despatch affected mainly those parts which gave an account of Chinese activities on the Burma border as part of their activities on the southern borders of Tibet, the policy which had been proposed by Minto, the initial policy of Hardinge and finally his policy of loose political control. In other words, item 19 of the Abor Blue Book omitted much of the historical background, given in the original despatch, to the policy finally adopted on the frontier. But did not conceal the fact that a boundary line had become a necessity in view of the Chinese danger; this is obvious even from the garbled text as given in the Blue Book. The Government of India also did not allow any press correspondent to accompany the Abor expedition, and thought it undesirable to give publicity to the Mishmi mission.[82] But Captain Poole, the only reporter to accompany the Abor expedition, in spite of being a serving officer in the East Yorkshire Regiment, was not selected by the government. He was

[80] Commons Debates, 28 November 1911: P. D. Vol. XXXII, Col. 184, 1911. Byles had asked "whether it is proposed as a result of the expedition to extend the present frontier of British India?"

[81] Abor Blue Book, No. 19.

[82] Bailey, *No Passport to Tibet*, p. 29 footnote; F. O. 371, Vol. 1066, No. 48949.

selected by the two Agents for the *Pioneer* and for Reuters. Moreover, it should be remembered that the official decision to allow only one correspondent to accompany the expedition was not wholly motivated by the desire to conceal facts about the expedition; it was at least partly due to the decision to keep the number of noncombatants to a minimum.[83] There were, it seems, two main reasons for the official attempt to maintain secrecy. First, the India Office had been aware, even before there were parliamentary criticisms from Byles and MacNeill, of the implications of Section 55 of the Government of India Act, 1858. Since they had not yet decided how best to defend their action, their first attempt was to endeavour to maintain secrecy. It was only later, as we have seen, that Montagu defended the official action by distinguishing the Outer Line from an international frontier. But even before Montagu, this distinction had been pointed out by Ferard, Assistant Secretary to the Political and Secret Department, India Office, in August 1911. He recognised that the Outer Line was not an external frontier "laid down by the Government of India with an organised Power, and the proper external frontier would be the Indo-Chinese Frontier, exactly what we have not got, though we are striving to get it". Secondly, it was felt desirable to avoid drawing public attention to the Chinese threat on the frontier and also probably Chinese attention to the British plan of action to meet that threat.[84]

Lamb is right in indicating this official attempt at maintaining secrecy.[85] But he fails to admit that the presentation of the Abor Blue Book and the parliamentary discussions brought much into the open which the authorities had, at the beginning, been unwilling to disclose. It did not remain secret that, in addition to the Abor expedition which alone had relevance in the context of Williamson's murder, the Miri and Mishmi missions had been despatched, since these missions were repeatedly mentioned in the Abor Blue Book.[86] Nor was it a secret that in view of the

[83] Hardinge's tels. to Crewe, 4 October, 17 October 1911: Hardinge Papers, No. 95, Vol. 1, Pt. 2, pp. 217, 223.

[84] Ferard to Peel, 30 August 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 15 (1910), Pt. 3, 497/1911; Shuckburgh to Max Muller, 4 November 1911: F. O. 371, Vol. 1066, No. 47933; Hirtzel's minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 2457/1912.

[85] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 361.

[86] Abor Blue Book, Nos. 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 26.

Chinese activities on the frontier, one principal aim of the operations was to lay down a boundary line. This was clearly revealed in the Abor Blue Book at several places.[87] Especially the version of the Government of India's despatch to the Secretary of State of 21 September as given in the Blue Book, unequivocally stated, "We recommend that, at the same time, advantage should be taken of the expedition to survey and explore the tribal area, as far as possible, in order to obtain knowledge requisite for the determination of a suitable boundary between India and China in the locality ; and that a friendly mission, under an escort of Military Police, should be sent into the Mishmi country with the object . . . of obtaining information as to the nature and limits of their country.

"We would observe in this connection that the unusual political activity displayed by China in recent years along our border, the claims which she has advanced to suzerainty over Nepal and Bhutan, her effective occupation of Tibet, and the despatch of a force to Rima in the immediate vicinity of the Mishmi country, have introduced a disquieting factor into the case. During the past few months there have been further developments in this policy of expansion which it is impossible to ignore. . . . We see no objection to the erection of cairns and boundary stones on what may be considered a suitable frontier line . . . . in the event of our demarcating our external limit, we should explain that we regard it as the line within which no Chinese officials should come. . . ."[88] In view of such a clear statement in the above despatch in the Blue Book of the aim of laying down a frontier, Montagu was fully justified in referring Byles to it when the latter asked whether one purpose of the Abor expedition was to determine an India-China border. As Byles wanted to clarify the matter further, Montagu said that "one of the objects which it is hoped to achieve by the expedition is the laying down of a frontier".[89] In spite of such open statements in the Blue Book and Montagu's unequivocal reply, Lamb suggests that Byles was given no adequate reply.[90]

The operations in the hills in 1911-12 resulted in the propo-

[87] Abor Blue Book, Nos. 13, 14, 19.
[88] Abor Blue Book, No. 19.
[89] Commons Debates, 28 November 1911: P.D. Vol. XXXII, Col. 184, 1911.
[90] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

sal of a number of measures for the protection of the frontier which fall into two broad categories — the establishment of outposts and the construction of roads. While the Mishmi country — the most threatened section of the frontier — received the greatest attention, there was no such proposal for the Miri section which was not only the least threatened but also the least known of all the parts of the frontier.

In January 1912 Major Bliss suggested three sites for the establishment of outposts in the Lohit valley. The first and most important was the farthest point up the Lohit at the Indo-Tibetan border, which was, for the time being, to be near Menilkrai. The second was the farthest point up the Delei so as to command the path leading into the Mishmi country from Tibet through the Glei Dakhru pass. The third was the Biraphu (or Buruphu) hill near the Delei-Lohit confluence where a post would serve as a supporting post to the two other posts.[91] Menilkrai enjoyed some military advantage which alone was the reason, as Dundas thought, why the Chinese had planted flags there. Had it enjoyed no such advantage they could easily have chosen the Yepak to the north, or the Shet Ti to the south, of Menilkrai, both of which being natural features were far more intelligible than Menilkrai as a boundary. Though Dundas supported the idea of an outpost at Menilkrai, he did not recommend its establishment before the place was connected with the plains by a good bridle path with parmanent bridges over the rivers in the Lohit valley like the Dou and Delei. Without such a path the outpost would be isolated and paralysed by the loss of all communication with Sadiya during the rains when these rivers rose in flood.[92]

Subsequently, on the basis of further investigation by Captains Le Breton and Hardcastle, Dundas suggested for the first time that Walong, lying further north, was strategically a far better site than Menilkrai.[93] The General Staff also held that the Chinese had chosen Menilkrai "with the evident intention of denying to

[91] Major Bliss' report, 12 January 1912: P.S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 909/1912.

[92] Dundas, Pol. Officer, Mishmi mission, to E. Bengal & Assam, No. 7 M.C., 15 January 1912; E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 25 C. G., 9 February 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 909/1912.

[93] Dundas to Assam, No. 15 M. C., 1 May 1912: P.S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

us the only suitable site in the valley for a frontier post — Walong — an ideal site . . . commanding the valley to the north on either bank".[94] Dundas suggested the establishment of three outposts at Walong, Buruphu and the point where a branch road over the Painlon pass into the Bebejiya Mishmi country would take off from the proposed Sadiya-Walong road.[95] Later on, he proposed that two more intermediate posts should be established at Minzang and Theronliang for a smooth working of the long line of communication.[96]

In June 1912 the General Staff proposed that, since the Lohit valley was easily accessible from the Chinese base at Rima, it was of prime importance to construct a road up the Lohit as far as Walong with permanent bridges above flood level over the Tidding, Delei and Dou rivers.[97] Besides the Lohit valley road, the Chief Commissioner recommended the construction of a bridle track up the left bank of the Dibang to the Dri-Dibang confluence, a second track up to the Painlon pass taking off from the Sadiya-Walong road near the Digaru river, and a third track up the Delei to the Glei Dakhru pass. The Dibang track was particularly necessary because the upper reaches of the Dri were as much open to interference from Tibet as the Lohit valley was.[98]

Though the programme was taken in hand in 1912-13, the entire plan had to be revised and emphasis laid on the Lohit valley for its great importance. But work in the Lohit valley was upset by heavy rains, land-slides and floods. No outpost could be established in the Lohit valley and natural disasters caused extensive damage to whatever road construction had been done. Consequent to this disastrous experience, it was decided to undertake a moderate programme during the next working season in 1913-14. It was planned to go no further than Haiuling and to establish

[94] The General Staff's note on the North-East Frontier, 1 June 1912: P.S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[95] Dundas' note, 17 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[96] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 98P., 7 January 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 994/1913.

[97] The General Staff's note on the North-East Frontier, 1 June 1912: P.S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[98] Dundas' note, 17 June 1912; Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 69 P.T., 7 July 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

outposts at Haiuling, Theronliang and Digaru.[99] But this plan, excepting the construction of the Lohit valley road only up to the Tidding, did not receive any sanction from the higher authorities who were now unwilling to finance any expensive programme in the Lohit valley.[100] The chief reason for this reluctance seems to have been the change in the Tibetan situation. Consequent to the revolution in China, Chinese military power in Tibet was annihilated and the north-east frontier of India was thus relieved from the strain to which it had been subjected since 1910. There was no longer any immediate Chinese threat. Further, the British, who were trying to bring China and Tibet to the conference table for the purpose of settling the constant Sino-Tibetan trouble, were contemplating the exclusion of China from parts of Tibet which included Zayul from where the Chinese had operated in the Mishmi country. If the British succeeded at the conference in thus sterilising Zayul by diplomatic means, there would be no need of embarking on any expensive programme in the Lohit valley.[101]

As we have seen in an earlier chapter,[102] there were also proposals for the establishment of outposts in the Abor country. Unlike the Mishmi outposts, the Abor outposts were to serve two purposes — control of the tribesmen and, in common with the Mishmi outposts, protection of the frontier from Chinese intrusion.[103]

Bower proposed Rotung, Pasighat and Kobo as the sites for the outposts.[104] Bower's proposal was considered necessary in view of the presence of an aggressive and intriguing China on the frontier.[105] Lee-Warner thought that the proposal was

[99] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 2958 P., 19 June 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 2787/1913.

[100] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 18 October 1913; Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 11 November 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4314/1913.

[101] An unsigned minute: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 2463/1913.

[102] See Ch. III.

[103] Since the Mishmi mission of 1911-12 found the Mishmis quite friendly, the purpose of outposts in their country seems to have been almost wholly the protection of the frontier.

[104] The G. O. C., Abor Expeditionary Force, to E. Bengal & Assam, No. 147A, 16 January 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

[105] E. Bengal & Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 53C.G., 22 February 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1010/1912.

essential for establishing such political influence in the tribal country as would help the determination of the "distant external frontier." Further, as he believed, it was compatible with the statement in the Abor Blue Book that a small police column should be sent periodically into the tribal country presumably to see that no Chinese official came within the frontier which, as he pointed out, clearly involved visits far beyond Rotung.[106] Since Crewe was reluctant in the matter,[107] Hardinge argued that posts in the Abor country would considerably help the demarcation of the frontier and that they were "quite as necessary as post suggested . . . near Menilkrai where at least immediate boundary appears to be known and respected."[108]

Ritchie was particularly opposed to a post at Rotung which alone, of the three proposed sites, was in the Abor hills beyond the Outer Line. He held that Rotung was so far away from the Indo-Tibetan frontier that a post here would be of no use in either demarcating the frontier line or protecting the frontier, unless the Rotung post was to be the first of a chain of further advanced posts in the hills.[109] But an extension of political influence in the tribal area, which would be the consequence of such a chain of posts, was not, as Ritchie assumed, the policy of the British Government.[110] Therefore, in the absence of further advanced posts, it would be useless to maintain a solitary post at Rotung.[111] Ritchie obviously convinced Crewe who sanctioned the posts at Kobo and Pasighat, but taking the line of Ritchie negatived the Rotung post.[112]

This decision ran right in the face of the sanction which had been accorded to Hardinge's proposed measures for frontier protection. In his despatch of 21 September 1911, Hardinge had

[106] Lee-Warner's draft report, 13 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912; Abor Blue Book, No. 19.

[107] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 14 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 866/1912.

[108] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 21 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1048/1912.

[109] Ritchie to Crewe, 22 March 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1048/1912.

[110] Ritchie to Crewe, 23 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1493/1912.

[111] Ritchie to Crewe, 29 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1493/1912.

[112] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 6 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1048/1912; Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 25 April 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 1493/1912.

clearly stated that outposts might be required in some part of the tribal country as a measure of frontier protection.[113] In Crewe's reply of 8 November 1911, there was nothing to suggest that he had not accepted this proposal.[114] Further, the Rotung post was negatived on the fundamental assumption that extension of political influence in the tribal area was not the policy of the British Government. But, in the absence of a regular administration of the area, which the Foreign Office had so much insisted upon, extension of political influence was perhaps the minimum requirement for the protection of the frontier.

When at length a trade post in the hills was sanctioned by Crewe, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, a chief purpose behind it was to protect the frontier from Chinese attack. Crewe pointed out to Hardinge, "Foreign Office drew attention to necessity of force at post being maintained at sufficient strength to meet contingency of Chinese attack."[115]

In the Abor section the only important road which was completed was the road from Kobo to Pasighat, and thence through the hills, to Yambung.[116]

All the activities on the frontier came to a sudden close with the outbreak of war in Europe. The Government of India decided to postpone further action on the frontier until the end of the war.[117]

Though there was much official vacillation and little achievement in matters of communication and establishment of outposts, commendable efforts were made in surveying and exploring the tribal country. These surveys and explorations led to several suggestions as to the alignment for the new boundary line and the final determination of what is today known as the McMahon

[113] See p. 98.

[114] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 8 November 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 4536/1911.

[115] Crewe's tel. to Hardinge, 3 October 1912: Hardinge Papers, No. 96, Vol. II, Pt. 1, p. 142.

[116] Dundas' note, 8 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

In 1914 Dundas proposed a further scheme of road construction in the Abor country. See Ch. III.

[117] India, Foreign Dept., to Assam, No. 1112 E.B., 12 November 1914: P.S.S.F. Vol. 28 (1913), 4745/1914; Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 7526P., 14 August 1920: P. S. S. F. Vol. 74 (1914), 7276/1920.

Line. In one respect the north-east frontier after the delimitation of the Indo-Tibetan border differed greatly from the north-west frontier after the introduction of the Durand Line. The north-west frontier contained fingers of deep British penetration in the Gomal, Tochi, Kurram, Khyber and up the Malakand into Chitral.[118] But on the north-east frontier, British penetration was little beyond the fringe except in the Lohit valley.

[118] J. W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland*, p. 119.

CHAPTER V

THE BOUNDARY LINE IN THE MAKING

WE have seen how the growing Chinese threat on the border induced a keen awareness in both India and England of the need to devise steps for the protection of this unguarded frontier. Of all the measures contemplated for this purpose, certainly the most important was the definition of an Indo-Tibetan boundary. It was only by laying down such a line that the British could hope to set a legal limit to the southward intrusion of China. It was, however, not an easy task. The boundary was to run through one of the most difficult terrains in the world. Huge mountain masses, eternal snow, dense jungles, deep ravines, roaring rivers and wild tribes — all were there to make the task a truly challenging one.

In view of the Chinese activities, the military authorities in India considered the existing position — with the Outer Line as the limit to British political control — as strategically unsound. The Outer Line did not run along any formidable natural feature. Hence on their advice a rough alignment of a strategic boundary was suggested by Minto to Morley in October 1910. This had been already mentioned about a month before by the Government of India in a telegram to the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam. According to this suggestion the line should run from the east of Tawang, which Minto considered as Tibetan territory, in a north-easterly direction to latitude 29°, longitude 94° ; thence along latitude 29° to longitude 96° ; thence in a south-easterly direction to the Zayul Chu as far east and as near Rima as possible; and then crossing the Zayul valley to the Zayul-Irrawaddy divide and along that divide until it joined the Irrawaddy-Salween divide. It was believed that the tribes within this line were mostly independent and some of them already under British influence.[1] It may also have been assumed that this align-

[1] Tel. from India, Foreign Dept., to E. Bengal & Assam, P., No. S-560, 29 September 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1918/1910; Minto's tel. to Morley, 23 October 1910: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1535/1910 .Minto Papers, Vol. M1015, No. 357.

ment conformed to the Himalayan range. Needless to say, in the absence of details, this was a very vague definition of the boundary. This was due largely to the ignorance about the area at the time. Yet this first attempt at defining the boundary provided the basis for future suggestions. When in September 1911 Hardinge was fully convinced of the urgent need of a strategic boundary to keep China out of the tribal country, he repeated Minto's suggested alignment ; "subject to such modifications as may be found necessary as a result of the explorations which will be made during the ensuing cold weather, we consider that line [i. e., Minto's suggested alignment] should be our approximate objective, up to which the existing Assam 'Outer Line' should be advanced".[2] Without detailed information the barest outline as provided by Minto and repeated by Hardinge could be of little use. Such information could only be obtained by survey and exploration which, as we have seen, were one chief objective of the Abor expedition and the Mishmi and Miri missions.

On the eve of these operations in the hills, thc Indian General Staff believed that a suitable military frontier should follow the principal watersheds and include on the British side the tributaries of the Brahmaputra in Assam.[3] This idea of running the boundary along the watersheds repeatedly appeared in subsequent official thinking ;[4] and, when the boundary line was finally determined during the Simla Conference in 1914, Sir A. H. McMahon, the British Plenipotentiary, referred to this line as following the northern watershed of the Brahmaputra except where it crossed the valleys of the Lohit, Tsangpo (i. e. the Dihang), Subansiri and Nyamjang rivers, and for a short distance near Tsari.[5]

Extensive survey and exploration on this frontier during 1911-13 revealed for first time a relatively comprehensive picture of this border area. There were suggestions at different official levels — individual officers on the frontier, the Local Government

[2] India to Secy. of State, No. 105, 21 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1648/1911.

[3] Memorandum by General Staff enclosed with India, Foreign Dept., to Bower, No. 1773 E. B., 25 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1691-92/1911.

[4] But this emphasis on defining the boundary along natural features has been unnecessarily understated by Lamb.

[5] McMahon's Memorandum, 28 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

and the Government of India — for the best possible boundary alignment. And finally out of this process emerged the Indo-Tibetan boundary which is now known as the McMahon Line. For convenience' sake it would be better to examine the various suggested alignments under the three broad sections of the frontier—Eastern, Central and Western. The most debatable areas were the Lohit valley in the Eastern section, the Tsangpo-Dihang valley in the Central section, and the Subansiri valley and Tawang in the western section.

The first hint of a boundary along natural features in the Eastern section came from the Indian General Staff on the eve of the explorations of 1911-12. They pointed out that a suitable boundary might be found along the snow range which divided the waters of the Rong Thod Chu from those of the Lohit and the Zayul district of Tibet from the Mishmi country. It was assumed that a continuous mountain range ran from the Lohit to the Dihang and as such it could serve as a distinct frontier line. There was, however, no suggestion where precisely the line should cross the Lohit in view of the flags which the Chinese had already planted at Menilkrai.[6]

In January 1912 Dundas proposed for the first time that the boundary line should cross the Lohit beyond Menilkrai. The Chinese had planted flags at Menilkrai purely out of military considerations. It was necessary to deprive them of this strategic position. Hence the Yepak stream should serve as the boundary and Menilkrai, south of the Yepak, would provide a suitable site for an outpost. This was however a tentative suggestion from Dundas who expected to discover further north a better site than Menilkrai.[7] Soon such a place was discovered at Walong north of the Yepak. In May Dundas recommended this site for an outpost and preferred the Thor Chu (also called the Tho Chu or Tor Chu) as the boundary in the Lohit valley.[8]

[6] Memorandum by General Staff enclosed with India, Foreign Dept., to Bower, Commanding the Abor Expeditionary Force, No. 1773 E. B., 25 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1691-92/1911.

[7] Dundas to E. Bengal & Assam, No. 7 M. C., 15 January 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 909/1912. See the map of the Lohit Section.

[8] Dundas to Assam, No. 15 M. C., 1 May 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912. See the map of the Lohit Section.

By June 1912 the results of the survey and explorations in the tribal country during the past season had been compared and systematised. The General Staff suggested on this basis a detailed alignment for the entire boundary, such as had not yet been done in the earlier fragmentary proposals. In the Eastern section they proposed a line further advanced than Dundas had suggested. The Mishmi explorations had disclosed the existence of some important routes on the left and right of the Lohit valley (i. e., the left and right sides of the valley while facing the river downstream). On the left the most important route was from the Lohit valley up the Sal Ti valley. It was an easy route which led through the Taluk La into Khamti Long — the unadministered area north of Burma which the British were thinking of bringing under control. On the right there were two very important routes. One led from the Lohit valley up the Tho Chu over the Dou Dakhru pass, and by the Dou valley down again to the Lohit. The other route went up the Delei valley and, crossing the Glei Dakhru pass, led into the Rong Thod Chu valley. It enjoyed considerable traffic and afforded, next to the Lohit valley, the best access from Tibet into the Mishmi country. By this route the Chinese had entered the Mishmi country in 1911 and issued warrants of protection to the Taraons of the Delei valley. Besides, further west, there was the less used Hadigra pass which also connected the Delei valley with the Rong Thod Chu valley. Since the Chinese could easily interfere with the Lohit valley through these routes, it was imperative to deny them any access to these routes and include them on the British side of the boundary. It was, therefore, essential that the boundary line should cross the Lohit valley at some point north of where the routes up the Sal Ti and the Tho Chu left the Lohit. To be precise, it was to follow the watershed of the Lohit and its tributaries south of lat. 28° 20′ and run north of the Taluk La along the Zayul Chu-Irrawaddy watershed to its junction with the Salween-Irrawaddy watershed on the east. On the west it was required to include the important Glei Dakhru pass. From there further north-west, nothing was yet certain, since the Mishmi explorations had not yet succeeded in clearly establishing the existence of an unbroken mountain range from the Lohit to the Dihang round the headwaters of the Dibang. But the suggested

line was proposed to follow the watershed of the Dibang and its tributaries.[9]

Dundas did not favour the above alignment. It would, as he pointed out in June 1912, run along the crest of a range between the Sap Chu and the Rong Thod Chu in a north-westerly direction to lat. 29°. This alignment would have included Sama, and probably Singu (or Sangu), both of which were long established Tibetan villages. Hence he proposed an alternative line to the south of the one suggested by the General Staff. On the right of the Lohit his suggestion was closely similar to the one which he had made in May. Here, he thought, the best boundary would be along the Tho Chu from its confluence with the Lohit to its source. From there, in accord with the General Staff, he agreed that it should run along the crest of the snow range to include the Glei Dakhru pass. On the left bank of the Lohit, he considered it essential to include the valley of the Sal Ti from where, as the General Staff had clearly indicated, it was easy to reach Khamti Long through the Taluk La. Therefore, the best line, according to him, would be either the Kri Ti stream or a line south of the valley of the Kri Ti.[10] This Tho Chu-Kri Ti line would have included the three Tibetan villages of Walong, Tinai and Dong, while the line suggested by the General Staff would have included Kahao, Sama and, probably, Singu also.

The Local Government on the advice of Dundas supported the Tho Chu-Kri Ti line chiefly because it would include the Sal Ti valley route from the Lohit valley to Khamti Long *via* the Taluk La. Once Khamti Long had been brought under the Burma administration, it was important that this route and the Taluk La — through which Khamti Long was accessible from Tibet — were both in British territory. Keeping to this basic proposal, the Local Government elaborated in September 1913 in some detail their idea of the line here. According to them it would run from the Taluk La along the divide to the source of the Kri Ti; thence down the Kri Ti to its confluence with the Lohit; thence across the Lohit and northwards along it to the confluence of the Tho Chu; thence up the left bank of the Tho Chu to its source;

[9] The General Staff's note on the North-East Frontier, 1 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912.

[10] Dundas' note, 8 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912. See the map of the Lohit Section.

thence in a north-westerly direction along the range to the Glei Dakhru pass, and continuing along the range round the sources of the Dri and Dibang.[11]

But within a month, in October 1913, the Local Government proposed a slightly advanced line on the left bank of the Lohit. This was part of a comprehensive proposal covering the entire frontier which had been prepared in consultation with Dundas and Nevill. This proposal, far more detailed than any earlier one, was in all likelihood intended to equip the Government of India with a satisfactory boundary line for which McMahon could negotiate with the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, Lonchen Shatra, at the Simla Conference which had already been formally opened on 6 October.[12] In the Mishmi country the line was to begin at the Taluk La, run west along the Di Chu to its confluence with the Lohit, thence down the Lohit to the confluence of the Tho Chu, thence up the Tho Chu to its longest source, thence in a north-westerly direction along the range which was the watershed between the Rong Thod Chu on the one hand and the Dou, Delei, Tidding, Ithun, Tangon, Dri and tributaries on the other. It would thus include the Glei Dakhru, Hadigra Dakhru, Kaya and Aguia passes and run up to the peak 19557.[13]

About a month later, the Government of India submitted their view of the alignment for the approval of the Secretary of State before this matter could be finally taken up with Lonchen Shatra. They proposed a more advanced line than the one suggested by the Local Government. It was to descend from the Taluk La along the northern watershed of the Di Chu, cross the Lohit above Kahao, and ascend the northern watershed of the Tho Chu to the main divide.[14] The watersheds of the Di Chu and Tho Chu were most probably included out of strategic necessity. While Sama and Singu were thus excluded, Kahao was brought on the

[11] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 358 C., 17 September 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913. See the map of the Lohit Section and Sheet II of the map of the North-East Frontier of India.

[12] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 477.

[13] Assam to India, No. 394C., 17 October 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913. See the map of the Lohit Section and Sheet II of the map of the North-East Frontier of India.

[14] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 21 November 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), Pt. 3, 4790/1913; Hardinge Papers, No. 97, Vol. III, Pt. 2, pp. 289-91. See the map of the Lohit Section.

British side. Dundas suggested the most southerly boundary in January 1912 while the General Staff suggested the most advanced alignment in June 1912. Though none of the subsequent amendments was as advanced as the line suggested by the General Staff, they nevertheless tended to push the boundary forward in successive stages.

In the Central Section the first specific alignment was proposed by the General Staff in June 1912. Here the Abor surveys had located one of the magnificent Himalayan peaks — the Namcha Barwa. At the eastern base of this peak the Tsangpo was believed to have broken through the Himalayan massif by a deep gorge and entered the tribal country as the Dihang. From available information it was guessed that a continuous mountain range ran east to south-east from this gorge to the Mishmi hills which formed the watershed between the Rong Thod Chu and the Delei. East of the gorge this mountain range was suggested as a suitable boundary line.[15] From the Namcha Barwa a lofty snow range ran unbroken in a south-westerly direction. To the west of that peak, this range seems to have been preferred as the boundary.[16]

In October 1913 the Local Government proposed a less advanced line. From peak 19557 it would follow the south-westerly mountain range round the head of the Andra and its tributaries and past the Yonggyap La and Andra La to peak 13838 at the source of the southern tributary of the Chimdru Chu. From here it would proceed north along the subsidiary range forming the watershed between the Chimdru Chu and the smaller streams draining into the Dihang as far as the confluence of the Chimdru Chu; thence up the Dihang to the confluence of the Nyalam Chu; thence up the Nyalam Chu to its source near the Nam La; thence in a south-westerly direction along the range, which is here the watershed between the Tsangpo and the streams flowing into the Dihang, past the Doshung La, Deyang La, Tamnyen La, Lusha

[15] It is not clearly known why this range was not adopted as the boundary east of the gorge. Had it been accepted the boundary line would have run along the main range in which the highest peaks of the Himalaya east of the gorge were situated. One reason seems to have been, as we shall see later, the government's reluctance to include Pemako on the British side.

[16] The General Staff's note on the North-East Frontier, 1 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912. See the map of the Dihang Section.

La and Lungma La.[17] Since this line might include a number of Menba villages (which were in all likelihood Monpa villages of Pemako, the name Monpa having probably been differently spelt as Menba), an alternative alignment from peak 13838 was suggested, if the Government of India deemed it desirable to exclude those villages. This line would run from peak 13838 in a westerly direction round the sources of the Yangsang Chu and down the spur between Korbo and Mongku to the Dihang; thence up the Dihang to the confluence of the Nugong; thence up the Nugong to the Deyang La; and then past the Damnya La, Lusha La and Lungma La.[18]

In November Hardinge adopted the alternative line with a few alterations which in effect meant an alignment further south than the alternative line suggested by the Local Government. According to him the boundary would leave the range at peak 13838 at the north-west corner of the Dibang basin, follow the watershed between the Yangsang Chu and the Tirkong rivers, cross the Dihang between Korbo and Mongku, and ascend the watershed between the Nugong and Ringong rivers to peak 16834 on the main range.[19]

The Western section of the frontier was far less known to the British than the two other sections. Consequently, the proposed alignments in this section lacked detail at the beginning. A more or less clear idea of the frontier here was available only after Captain Bailey had returned to India in November 1913, having travelled for six months through Tibet.[20]

In June 1912 the General Staff thought that the range which ran south-west from the Namcha Barwa continued west of long. 94°. This range was suggested as the boundary. The inaccuracy and inadequacy of the available information at this time about this section of the frontier are apparent from the

[17] In contemporary records, sometimes confusing spellings have been used for some of these passes. E.g., Tamnyen La seems to have been also called the Tiamnyala, and the Lusha La, the Lushela and Lushila.

[18] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 394C., 17 October 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913. See the map of the Dihang Section.

[19] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 21 November 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), Pt. 3, 4790/1913; Hardinge Papers, No. 97, Vol. III, Pt. 2, pp. 289-91. See the map of the Dihang Section.

[20] See pp. 123-24.

facts that hardly anything more than the existence of this range was known and that it then seemed to be unbroken by the Subansiri, which actually pierced the range here. Near the Tawang tract the choice of an alignment posed a problem. West of long. 93° there appeared to be a knot of high peaks on the same range from which a lofty range ran in a south-westerly direction towards Tawang. This was quite a distinct topographical feature and could have served as the boundary. But this would have had the great disadvantage of leaving the Tawang tract as a wedge of Tibetan territory between India and Bhutan. Strategically therefore such an alignment would have been unsound and as such it did not escape the notice of the Indian General Staff. In June 1912 they clearly suggested the desirability of including Tawang on the British side of the boundary. They pointed out, "a dangerous wedge of territory is thrust in between the Miri country and Bhutan. A comparatively easy and much used trade route traverses this wedge from north to south by which the Chinese would be able to exert influence or pressure on Bhutan, while we have no approach to this salient from a flank, as we have in the case of the Chumbi salient". They thought that therefore an ideal boundary line would be "one from the knot of mountains near long. 93° Lat. 28°20′ to the Bhutan border, north of Chona Dzong [i.e. Tsona Dzong] in a direct east and west line with the northern frontier of Bhutan. There appears to be a convenient watershed for it to follow".[21] This was the first proposal to include Tawang on the British side. Neither Minto nor Hardinge had hitherto made any such suggestions. Even in September 1911 the General Staff had excluded Tawang from the contemplated boundary.[22] Though the General Staff wanted to include Tawang, their proposed line lacked exactitude, since they did not mention the specific features like passes or peaks along which the line was supposed to run.

A more precise alignment was suggested by the Local Government in October 1913. By that time further survey and exploration had brought more information about the Himalayan range here. They proposed that the line should run from the headwaters

[21] The General Staff's note on the North-East Frontier, 1 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14 (1910), 3057/1912. See the map of the Tawang Section.

[22] Memorandum by General Staff enclosed with India, Foreign Dept., to Bower, No. 1773E.B., 25 September 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1691-2/1911.

of the Siyom in the neighbourhood of the Tungu La and follow the mountain range to the Shagam La and peaks 18056, 18813, 17279, 19026, 21276, 22713, 20950, 21488, 20860, and the Se La, and from there along the mountain range to peak 13550 and the Bhutan border.[23] This line did not include Tawang on the British side. When in November Hardinge advocated virtually the same boundary, since this was based on the latest information about the geography of the area,[24] apparently he had not yet decided to include Tawang.

It seems, as Lamb points out,[25] that the idea of fixing the Se La range, south of Tawang, as the boundary persisted even in January 1914. On 22 January 1914 McMahon sent Hirtzel a revised map of Tibet.[26] At this time Bell had just begun his talks with Lonchen Shatra regarding the Indo-Tibetan boundary.[27] But the Tawang area had not yet been discussed. So when McMahon sent the above map to Hirtzel, he was not yet sure whether Tawang would be finally included on the British side. Consequently, the Indo-Tibetan boundary follows an alignment on this map just south of Tawang, possibly indicating a boundary along the Se La range. The reasons why Tawang was subsequently brought on the British side will be discussed later.[28]

In May 1913 Captains Bailey and Morshead left the Dibang valley at the end of the survey and exploration operations there

[23] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 394C., 17 October 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913. See the maps of the Subansiri and Tawang Sections.

[24] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 21 November 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), Pt. 3, 4790/1913, Hardinge Papers, No. 97, Vol. III, Pt. 2, pp. 289-91. See the maps of the Subansiri and Tawang Sections. Though Hardinge is not as precise as the Local Government, yet his suggestion does not seem to differ from the latter's.

[25] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 536.

[26] McMahon to Hirtzel, 22 January 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19 (1913), 461/1914. For the map see India Office Political and Secret Dept. map M25.

[27] See p. 126.

[28] See p. 128. Lamb's idea that the skeleton map of Tibet enclosed with McMahon's memorandum of 28 October 1913 shows the Indian frontier east of Bhutan does not seem to be correct. The shade which has been used to show the tribal area on the north-east frontier and has possibly led him to believe that it indicates the British idea of their frontier here, has also been used to show Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, though neither Bhutan nor Nepal was within British territory. See Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 535-36.

during 1912-13. Their purpose seems to have been threefold : to establish beyond all doubts whether the Tsangpo was the same river as the Dihang which flowed into the plains as the Brahmaputra, to find if any falls existed on the Tsangpo, and to survey in detail the contemplated Indo-Tibetan border. They achieved their objective successfully.[29] Having found that the Tsangpo was the same as the Dihang and that no falls worth the name existed on the river, they travelled through the Tsangpo valley often marching close to the southern borders of Tibet. They returned to Assam *via* Tawang on 14 November 1913 and arrived in Simla by 26 November to report to McMahon.[30] The information brought by them greatly helped a detailed and precise definition of the Indo-Tibetan boundary here.

According to Bailey, the southern frontier of Tibet from peak 16834 (which he numbered as 16581) followed the Himalayan range as far as peak 18056 (which he numbered as 17599) just above the village of Migyitun. From this peak to the Chupung La, some forty miles to the south-west, the boundary did not lend itself to any clear geographical definition, since here the upper waters of the Subansiri had broken through the main range at several places. The first of these streams was the Tsari Chu on which the last Tibetan village was Migyitun. On the next two, there were no permanent Tibetan villages ; but there were rest houses at Mipa and the Tama La in which the Tibetans lived several months in the year to help the pilgrims on the Tsari pilgrimage.[31] On the next stream, the Yume Chu, the lowest permanently occupied Tibetan village was Yume, though to the south there was a rest house at Potrang which was occupied in the summer during the Tsari pilgrimage. On the Char Chu the lowest Tibetan village was Dru. Though further downstream, Raprang was a Tibetan village, it had been deserted by the Tibetans after a fight had broken out between them and the Lopas in 1906. Past this debatable area where the main range had been broken by the upper waters of the Subansiri, the boundary, as Bailey saw it,

[29] G. A. Nevill, Political Officer with the Mishmi Survey Party, to Assam, 18 March 1913; an unsigned minute: P. S. F. Vol. 26, 1971/1913; India to Secy. of State, No. 58, 14 July 1916; an unsigned minute: P. S. F. Vol. 26, 3212/1916. For the background to the problems about the Tsangpo, see Ch. I.

[30] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 26 November 1913: P. S. F. Vol. 26, 4823/1913.

[31] For the Tsari pilgrimage, see pp. 126-27.

followed the range from the Chupung La to Gori Chen. From there the main range appeared to him to have run west through the Tulung La and Mila Katong La (i.e. Menlakathong La).[32] From Gori Chen to the Bhutan border, the boundary of Tibet was a matter of considerable concern since here lay Tawang, to the importance of which the General Staff had drawn attention in June 1912.[33]

When a clear idea of the geography of the area and the limits of Tibet was thus emerging in all the three sections of the frontier, the Government of India took the opportunity of the Simla Conference to settle with the Tibetan Government a commonly agreed Indo-Tibetan boundary.

The Chinese revolution which broke out in 1911 swept away the Manchu dynasty and considerably weakened the hold which the Chinese had been lately so busy in establishing in Tibet. The Tibetans seized the opportunity to roll back the Chinese invasion of Tibet. But the Chinese did not stop trying to reconquer Tibet. Consequently disturbances continued in the eastern marches of Tibet. But a fresh Chinese invasion of Tibet was bound to affect seriously the frontiers of India as had happened after the fall of Lhasa to the Chinese in 1910. Hence the British wanted to settle the disputes between Tibet and China, and bring peace and stability in Tibet. It was with this purpose that the Simla Conference was convened by them which was attended by Lonchen Shatra as the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, and Chen I-fan (or Ivan Chen) as the Chinese Plenipotentiary. The conference was presided over by the British Plenipotentiary, Sir Henry McMahon, who was assisted by Charles Bell as adviser on Tibetan affairs and Archibald Rose of the British Legation in Peking as adviser on Chinese affairs. The conference was held from October 1913 to July 1914. Although the main objective of the conference was to stabilise the Tibetan-Chinese relations and, particularly, to define clearly the boundary between Tibet and China, the Indo-Tibetan boundary on India's north-east frontier was also negotiated. Bell carried out the negotiation in this matter with Lonchen Shatra and the boundary was finally determined on a map of the frontier in two sheets at a scale of eight miles to the inch.

[32] Bailey, *Report on an Exploration on the North-East Frontier*, 1913, Chap. IX.
[33] See p. 122.

On 15 January 1914 the first discussion appears to have taken place between Bell and Lonchen Shatra on the Indo-Tibetan boundary. On a map of the frontier in two sheets, Bell showed the eastern and central sections of the frontier up to peak 16834.[34] Lonchen Shatra remarked that the names on the British side of the proposed boundary line did not appear to be Tibetan. The proposed boundary in these two sections presented no difficulty. The Lonchen accepted it with some reservations. If it transpired subsequently that any estate belonging to individual Tibetans had been included in British territory, the matter would be settled by the Tibetan Government with the Indian Government.[35] But if it were found that there were tribesmen south of the line who were under the direct control of the Tibetan Government, Lhasa would waive claims on them. Bell similarly waived all British claims to the lands of the Lopas who had been left north of the line.[36] Bell's surrender of British claims was relevant in view of the fact that though the non-Tibetan tribesmen were being brought within the British side, many Abor settlements were left in Pemako[37] north of the boundary line.

The western section of the boundary line from peak 16834 could not be easily determined. Two parts of this section presented particular difficulties. The first was where the upper waters of the Subansiri had broken through the Himalayan range and the second was from Gori Chen to Bhutan. On the upper waters of the Subansiri the difficulty was mainly religious. There were three places of pilgrimage in and near the holy district of Tsari — Tsari Sarpa (New Tsari), Tso Karpo (White

[34] The boundary line as shown by Bell in these two sections must have been based on Hardinge's suggestion in November 1913, since the McMahon Line here corresponds to his suggestion.

[35] Later in a note to Lonchen Shatra, McMahon stated that the Tibetan ownership in private estates which might have been left south of the boundary would not be disturbed. See McMahon's note to Lonchen Shatra, 24 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19 (1913). Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

[36] Bell to McMahon, 17 January 1914; Bell to Lonchen Shatra, 6 February 1914: Bell Papers.

[37] Bailey believed that the Tsangpo valley below the gorge was known as Pemako. We shall use the name in this sense though it appears from Bailey's report that according to the Tibetans, who had migrated from eastern Tibet in the early twentieth century by the headwaters of the Dibang, Pemako seems to have been somewhere in the Mishmi country. See Bailey, *Report*, Chap. I; Bailey, *No Passport to Tibet*, pp. 35-36.

Lake), and Tsari Nyingpa (Old Tsari).[38] Their exact locations were not known. Tsari Sarpa was somewhere near the source of the river which fell into the Tsangpo at Lilung. Tso Karpo was somewhere on a high mountain between Tsari Sarpa and Tsari Nyingpa. Tsari Nyingpa was divided into the Kingkor and the Ringkor. The Kingkor was a short pilgrimage. Its route led down the Tsari valley from Chosam, went round the Takpa Shiri mountain, north of what was later to become the Indo-Tibetan boundary line, and then returned to Chosam. This pilgrimage was regularly performed by the Tibetan pilgrims every year. The Ringkor was a long pilgrimage which was performed only once in twelve years. The route of this pilgrimage also started at Chosam, and then down the Tsari Chu to Migyitun, it followed the river downstream into the tribal country to the confluence of the Tsari Chu with the combined waters of the Char Chu and Chayul Chu. Thence it ascended the Char-Chayul as far as their junction with the Yume Chu and followed the latter river up to Yume. From there the route reached Chosam *via* the Rip La (or Rib La).[39] Since the Tibetans attached great importance to their sacred places, Bell decided to leave these places of pilgrimage in Tibetan territory. From the Lonchen's description Tsari Sarpa and Tso Karpo appeared to have been situated on or near the mountain range which had been chosen as the frontier. Hence Bell told the Lonchen that if these sacred places fell within a day's march of the British side of the frontier, they would be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier would be modified accordingly.[40] McMahon repeated this assurance to Lonchen Shatra.[41] Both Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa appear to have been later found as lying on the Tibetan side of the boundary.[42] Bell delimited the boundary near Migyitun by leaving that place as

[38] Bell to McMahon, 30 January 1914: Bell Papers.

[39] Bell to McMahon, 30 January and 3 February 1914: Bell Papers; Bailey, *Report*, Chap. IV; Anonymous, "The Sources of the Subansiri and Siyom", *The Himalayan Journal*, Vol. IX, Oxford, 1937.

[40] Bell to McMahon, 3 February 1914; Bell to Lonchen Shatra, 6 February 1914: Bell Papers.

[41] McMahon to Lonchen Shatra, 24 March 1914: P.S.S.F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

[42] India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question*, 1961, p. 110. It will be subsequently referred to as *Report on the Boundary Question*.

well as the Shagam La and Potrang—places on the Tsari Nyingpa route — well within Tibetan territory. The boundary again joined the range below Potrang.[43] It seems that Bell's decision involved a considerable modification of an earlier decision to run the boundary line along the main range which had curved here north and north-west of the final alignment. Though Tso Karpo, Tsari Sarpa and the Kingkor were thus included on the Tibetan side, part of the Ringkor fell within the British side. This part — roughly from the south of Migyitun down the Tsari Chu to its confluence with the combined waters of the Char and Chayul and then up the Char-Chayul as far as the neighbourhood of their junction with the Yume Chu — lay through the tribal country uninhabited by the Tibetans.

From Gori Chen to Bhutan the main range ran westward, as Bailey found it, through the Tulung La and Mila Katong La (i.e., Menlakathong La). Bell evidently decided to place the frontier on this range, since it would secure a strategic barrier between India and Tibet. This implied the inclusion of the Tawang tract between the main range and the Se La range which had so long been looked upon as Tibetan territory, though the inclusion of that tract and a considerable area north of it had been advocated by the General Staff in June 1912.[44] Apart from strategic reasons, Bell thought it necessary to include Tawang on other grounds as well. He considered it advisable to create in near future a North-Eastern Agency to combine the political work connected with Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and the frontier tribes, and Tawang would be an ideal place where the officer in charge could be stationed. Also, since Tawang was on the shortest route between India and Lhasa[45], from here he wonld be nearer Lhasa than was the Political Officer in Sikkim from Gangtok. Moreover, the climate of Tawang was equally suitable to the Tibetans, Bhutanese, Sikkimese, the frontier tribesmen and the plainsmen. For these considerations Bell thought it better to move the headquarters of the Political Officer in Sikkim, who was the Government of India's adviser on Tibetan affairs,

[43] Bell to McMahon, 3 February 1914: Bell Papers. See the map of the Subansiri Section.

[44] See p. 122.

[45] Capt. W. F. T. O' Connor's note on trade routes between India and Tibet, 13 April 1903: P. S. I. E. Vol. 154, 805/1903.

from Gangtok to Tawang. Thus there were several reasons behind Bell's decision to include Tawang on the British side.[46]

But the Lonchen was unwilling to part with Tawang because of Tibetan interests and possessions there. It seems that the larger part of the subsidy, which the British had been paying annually to the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias, used to be sent through the Tawang monastery to the Drepung monastery, which was one of the three big monasteries of Lhasa.[47] Tsona Dzong — a Tibetan administrative centre lying north of the proposed boundary — had estates in Tawang. Private individuals also derived incomes from Tawang, including the Potala Trungyik-Chenpo who had one large estate which he enjoyed in lieu of salary.[48] The families of She-wo and Sam-drup Po-trang also had their private estates in Tawang. The Loseling College of the Drepung monastery of Lhasa received about Rs. 840 from its agent whom it had the right to appoint for the purpose of managing the land of the Tawang monastery.[49]

In spite of such varied Tibetan interests in Tawang, Lonchen Shatra told Bell of the Tibetan Government's decision to surrender any revenue which they used to receive from lands which were now to be on the British side of the boundary. But at the same time the Tibetan Government requested that the incomes and estates of monasteries and private individuals should not be disturbed.[50] This distinction drawn by Lhasa between the monastic incomes and the incomes of the Tibetan Government is interesting. It shows that even Lhasa recognised a distinction between govern-

[46] Bell to McMahon, 23 January 1914: Bell Papers.

[47] Reid, *History*, pp. 301-302; Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 304.

[48] Bell to McMahon, 3 February 1914: Bell Papers.

Four monks seem to have been known as Trungyik-chenpo who were charged with promulgating and carrying out the Dalai Lama's orders, with the appointment and transfer of monk civil servants, such as the religious counterparts of the civil governors in each district, and with hearing the petitions and appeals of monks and monasteries. See G. Tucci, *Tibet: Land of Snows*, New York, 1967, p. 204. Since Bell used the name in the singular, he seems to have been unaware that it referred to four monks; or he may have actually meant to indicate a particular monk by using the word 'Potala' before the name.

[49] Bell to McMahon, 21 March 1914: Bell Papers.

[50] It should be noted that both the decision and the request of the Tibetan Government were meant for the frontier in general, and not for Tawang alone.

mental and monastic matters in Tibet.[51] It is precisely on the basis of this distinction that the Government of India has of late argued that the collection of religious dues in Tawang cannot be evidence of the territorial authority of the Tibetan Government there.[52] The above distinction drawn by the Tibetans themselves in 1914 invalidates Lamb's suggestion that, since Tibet was a theocracy, the Indian Government was wrong in distinguishing between the ecclesiastical and temporal affairs of Tibet.[53] In accordance with the Tibetan Government's request Bell told the Lonchen that "all proprietary rights (*Dak-top*) of individual Tibetans on the British side of the frontier will be retained by those, who at present enjoy them".[54]

It seems strange that, while agreeing to the Tibetan Government's request, Bell did not refer to the monastic incomes and that the Lonchen also did not point out this omission. Probably, by the proprietary rights of individual Tibetans, both Bell and the Lonchen understood the incomes of the monasteries as well as of the private individuals. This conjecture seems to be confirmed by the language in which McMahon finally consented to the Tibetan request. He wrote to the Lonchen on 24 March 1914, "The Tibetan ownership in private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed".[55] The private estates can possibly be interpreted as all estates which were not owned by the Tibetan Government and, as such, meaning the monastic estates as well as the estates of private individuals. Though this decision was taken primarily in the course of negotiation over the Western section of the frontier, it seems to have been equally applicable to the other sections also, since there is nothing in McMahon's note of 24 March to the Lonchen to suggest that the British consent to the Tibetan request in this respect applied only in the Western section. It is not clear from the Bell Papers whether any decision was

[51] According to Tucci, land ownership in Tibet was of three kinds: state (*shung*), noble (*ger*), and monastic (*chho*). See G. Tucci, *Tibet: Land of Snows*, p. 201. This is further evidence of the distinction recognised in Tibet between the state and monastic affairs; the two were not identical.

[52] India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Report on the Boundary Question*, p. 124.

[53] Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-304.

[54] Bell to McMahon, 21 March 1914: Bell Papers.

[55] McMahon to Lonchen Shatra, 24 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

taken regarding the subsidy annually paid by the British for the Kuriapara Duar, the major portion of which passed on to the Drepung monastery through the Tawang monastery, though it was clearly agreed that a part of the subsidy — Rs. 500 — which was received by the Nyetsang and Labrang should continue to be paid to them.[56] Most probably as monastery income — and not as income of the Lhasa Government — it was left undisturbed and the British continued to pay it in subsequent years.[57] The Tibetan Government wanted to enjoy the right of appointing the head lama of the Tawang monastery. But since such a practice could not be allowed in British territory, it was decided that the Tibetan Government would be consulted before the appointment of a new head lama.[58] The obstacles to drawing the boundary line westward along the main range from Gori Chen through the Menlakathong La to the Bhutan border were thus removed.[59]

From the Bell Papers it appears that the Lonchen at first agreed to the boundary as proposed by Bell. But later at a meeting with Bell on 30th January 1914, he was prompted by his assistant, the Tri-mon-Teji, to raise objections to the inclusion of Tawang in British territory on the ground of Tibetan interests there. Bell overcame this objection rather diplomatically. Bell told the Lonchen that he had already agreed to the boundary, that although he needed Lhasa's approval he had expected no difficulty in coming to a satisfactory settlement, and that McMahon had accordingly been informed who was under the impression that the boundary had been settled and only required the formal confirmation of Lhasa. Obviously this was a subtle, diplomatic pressure exercised by Bell on the Lonchen. And this had the desired effect. On 2nd February the Lonchen sent a Tibetan official, the Nyen-dron Khen-chung, to Lhasa "with full instructions and with a letter urging that, in view of the great help rendered by the British

[56] Bell to McMahon, 21 March 1914: Bell Papers. The Nyestsangs were perhaps members of the Trukdri of Tawang. See Ch. I. It is difficult to identify the Labrang. In Carrasco's account we come across a Labrang which was possibly an important monastery in Amdo. See P. Carrasco, *Land and Polity in Tibet*, Seattle, 1959, p. 156. But it is doubtful if this is the same Labrang sharing the subsidy as mentioned above.

[57] Reid, *History*, pp. 302-303.

[58] Bell to McMahon, 21 March 1914: Bell Papers.

[59] See the map of the Tawang Section.

Government in this China-Tibet Conference for the present and for the future welfare of Tibet, the Tibetan Government should consider this question of the boundary favourably." The Lonchen received Lhasa's approval about a month later.[60]

Lamb states that in Tawang Lonchen Shatra secured the retention of Tibetan tax-collecting rights "disguised under the term 'certain dues now collected by the Tibetan Government . . . from the Monpas and Lopas for articles sold'."[61] Here Lamb is obviously referring to an understanding reached between Bell and Lonchen Shatra,[62] and later repeated by McMahon in his note of 24 March 1914 to the Lonchen : "You wished to know whether certain dues now collected by the Tibetan Government at Tsona Jong and in Kongbu and Kham from the Monpas and Lopas for articles sold may still be collected. Mr. Bell has informed you that such details will be settled in a friendly spirit, when you have furnished him the further information, which you have promised".[63] The Lonchen had to raise this point, since, though the Tibetan Government were surrendering all revenue claims south of the new boundary, there would still be the Monpas and Lopas who would continue to come from the south of the line to Tsona Dzong, Kongbu and Kham, which were all in Tibetan territory north of that line, and sell rice, chillies and other commodities as they had done in the past. Clearly the Tibetan Government wanted to retain their right to levy duty on such merchandise sold north of the boundary, though the Monpas and Lopas were being included on the British side. This was quite understandable and reasonable. But curiously Lamb has distorted it. To substantiate his point that the Lonchen secured the retention of tax-collecting rights in Tawang, Lamb has deliberately omitted the words "at Tsona Jong and in Kongbu and Kham" from the relevant part of McMahon's note to Lonchen Shatra on 24 March 1914 as quoted above. But these words clearly show that the Lonchen wanted to retain the right to levy duties, not in Tawang which was being included on the Indian side, but at

[60] Bell to McMahon, 30 January, 3 February, and 21 March 1914; Lonchen Shatra to Bell, 9 February 1914: Bell Papers.

[61] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, pp. 547-48.

[62] Bell to McMahon, 21 March 1914: Bell Papers.

[63] McMahon to Lonchen Shatra, 24 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

places which were to the north of the new boundary. Further, contrary to Lamb's view that the Lonchen secured the retention of tax-collecting rights, there was, as it clearly appears from McMahon's above note to the Lonchen, only an understanding with the Lonchen that such matters were to be later settled in a friendly spirit when he had furnished the British side with further information on this point. That this was the position is also confirmed by what Bell wrote to McMahon on 21 March 1914: "I said [i.e. to the Lonchen] that all these are matters of detail which can be settled *later on*, on the receipt of the fuller information of revenue and expenditure which the Lonchen has promised to furnish. On receipt of the fuller information, the British Government will consider these matters and will settle them in a friendly spirit."[64] It is not known if any further negotiation took place in this respect after the Simla Conference. But it is quite likely that the Tibetan Government continued to levy the duties as they had done in the past.

The Indo-Tibetan boundary negotiation was finalised by an exchange of notes between McMahon and Lonchen Shatra on 24 and 25 March 1914.[65] McMahon was well aware that the new boundary had been determined on insufficient knowledge of the area. Hence he believed that if further knowledge were acquired in future pointing to the desirability of modifying the boundary anywhere, in view of the co-operative attitude of the Tibetans throughout the negotiation the British should also show a similar attitude in regard to the Tibetan interests "although no obligation to do so has been mentioned in the agreement."[66] This however does not imply that the new boundary was, as Lamb says, experimental or provisional.[67] By and large the boundary had become a settled fact, and it was probably only for minor alterations that McMahon wanted to make room like modification of the boundary in the light of fresh information about the exact location of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa.

[64] Bell to McMahon, 21 March 1914: Bell Papers. My italics.

[65] McMahon to Lonchen Shatra, 24 March 1914; Lonchen Shatra to McMahon, 25 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914. For the text of these notes, see appendix.

[66] McMahon's memorandum, 28 March 1914: P. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

[67] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 548.

It remains for us to see how far the boundary, which was thus determined in 1914, could be justified in the light of the available information about the area. From the east, the first debatable point was the Lohit valley which had been open to intense Chinese activity and where they had planted flags at Menilkrai. Since the Chinese action at Menilkrai had been ex parte in character and, more particularly, as they were no longer in power in Tibet when the Simla Conference opened, no importance could be attached to their flags as marking their boundary at Menilkrai. The only decisive factor in determining the boundary here could be the extent of Tibetan settlement. In other words, the ethnic divide between the Tibetans and the Mishmis could be taken as the basis of the boundary line in the Lohit valley.

On no account did Menilkrai represent the limit of Tibetan settlement. Here there was a huge boulder, more conspicuous and larger than the many others at this place. This boulder had been mentioned by the two French missionaries, M. Krick and M. Bourri, who were murdered in the hills by the Mishmis in 1854,[68] as the boundary between India and Tibet. When the British became aware of the importance of the frontier, there were probably some among the Bitish officers who considered Menilkrai as the boundary. But, as Williamson pointed out, it was the above statement of the French missionaries which was alone responsible for this idea.[69] There was thus no solid basis to it. In fact it was later discovered that there was no Tibetan settlement on the right bank of the Lohit even north of Menilkrai for a long distance except at Walong until Sama was reached.[70]

Sati, south of Menilkrai, was the last Miju Mishmi village on the right bank of the Lohit, and Sama, far north of Menilkrai, was the first old Tibetan village. The entire area of about 40 miles between these two places, with the only exception of Walong, was completely uninhabited. But there were marks of deserted Tibetan villages in this area. The Tibetans had probably been

[68] Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 48-9. Bourri's name has been differently spelt by different authors. Mackenzie gives the above spelling. Bailey spells it as Bourry. See Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam*, p. 8.

[69] Williamson's tour diary, 3 February 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13(1910), 1081/1911.

[70] Williamson to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, No. 663G., 11 March 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13(1910), 1081/1911.

driven north by disease and the frequent attacks of the Mishmis who raided even as far as Rima — the last Tibetan centre of administration — and besieged it in 1860.[71] But that this tract originally belonged to the Mijus and not to the Tibetans and that the Tibetans had actually encroached on this land, is proved by the names of the hills, flats and streams which were all Miju. The Tibetans also used these Miju names, having had none of their own, for example, for the Yepak, Nam Ti, Krao Ti, etc. From the appearance of the land, Dundas had no doubt that years ago the Mijus used to live in the area and carry on their *jhum* cultivation. Most probably the cultivable patches had been progressively denuded of trees by this kind of cultivation which had rendered them useless for further cultivation and human habitation, while the steep hillsides were still covered with thick pine forests when the Mishmi mission visited the country.[72] This fact seems to explain why no Miju was found living in this area at the time of the mission. Walong was the only village in this uninhabited tract. The inhabitants of Walong were Tibetans. But it was discovered that they had been actually settled there by a Miju chief, Dagresson, and his father. These Tibetans of Walong looked after the cattle of the Mijus and also paid some rice and salt to the latter. So Walong was a Tibetan village only by Miju permission and not against the wishes of the Mijus.[73]

Between Walong and the McMahon Line there were three Tibetan villages on the left bank of the Lohit — Tinai (or Tine), Dong and Kahao (or Kahap or Kahan). Of these, Tinai and Dong existed, like Walong, on the sufferance of the Mijus. The Tibe-

[71] Dundas' note, 15 September 1913, quoted in Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 358C., 17 September 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18(1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913; R. W. Godfrey, Political Officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, *Report on the tour up the Lohit Valley to Rima*, 1939-40, p. 8.

[72] Dundas' note, 15 September 1913, quoted in Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 358C., 17 September 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18(1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913.

[73] Diary of Williamson's tour up the Lohit, 1909-10 and Williamson to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, No. 359G, 5-7 March 1910: E. B. A. P. P. No. 7, September 1910; Tour diary of Williamson, 29 January 1911: P. S. S. F. Vol. 13 (1910), 1081/1911; Tour Diary of T. P. M. O'Callaghan, Asst. Political Officer, Walong Promenade Party, 1 February-3 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 1918/1914.

tans of these villages looked after the cattle of the Mijus.[74] But the information about Kahao was not unambiguous. Dundas appears to have considered it as the first old Tibetan village on the left bank of the Lohit.[75] But according to the Indian General Staff, the inhabitants of Kahao, like those of Tinai and Dong, were employed by the Mijus to assist in keeping and pasturing their cattle.[76] The position of Kahao as a Tibetan settlement thus seems to have been in doubt.

When the final alignment of the boundary was proposed by Hardinge along the northern watersheds of the Di Chu and Tho Chu, it was stated that the Tibetan rights in the Lohit valley below Sama were so weak as to be negligible.[77] In fact, as we have seen, no Tibetan rights existed south of Sama except in the doubtful case of Kahao. The absence of Tibetan rights below Sama had been discovered by Williamson as early as 1909-10 but his report seems to have somehow escaped official notice at the time when the alignment of the boundary was being discussed. When he went up the Lohit in the cold weather of 1909-10, it was only at the Tatap Ti that he came on the first signs of Tibetan authority.[78] Clearly thus the Tatap Ti was the limit of Tibet, and, if its identity and location can be established, the justification or otherwise of the boundary line can be examined with reference to this stream. One great difficulty in this respect is that, due to ignorance of the area, contemporary maps frequently show the same physical features under different names. In such cases they can be identified only from their identical positions. The map on which the Indo-Tibetan boundary was drawn does not show any stream under the name Tatap Ti. Hence there can be no direct evidence whether

[74] Dundas, Pol. Officer, Mishmi Mission, to E. Bengal and Assam, No. 7 M.C., 15 January 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14(1910), 909/1912; Dundas to Assam, No. 15 M.C., 1 May 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14(1910), 3057/1912.

[75] Dundas, Pol. Officer, Mishmi Mission, to E. Bengal and Assam, No. 7 M.C., 15 January 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14(1910), 909/1912; Dundas' note, 15 September 1913, quoted in Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 358C., 17 September 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18(1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913.

[76] The General Staff's note on the North-East Frontier, 1 June 1912: P. S. S. F. Vol. 14(1910), 3057/1912.

[77] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 21 November 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 18(1913), Pt. 3, 4790/1913.

[78] Williamson to Dy. Commissioner, Lakhimpur, No. 359G., 5-7 March 1910: E. B. A. P. P., No. 7,September 1910.

the boundary runs south or north of the Tatap Ti. But indirect evidence is not lacking. Williamson prepared a map to illustrate the route from Assam to Szechuan in western China via the Lohit valley. Of all the contemporary maps of the area, this map alone shows the Tatap Ti under this name.[79] This map shows the Kochu flowing north of the Krao Ti, the Tatap Ti flowing north of the Kochu, and Sama lying north of the Tatap Ti. The map of the Mishmi Mission Survey Detachment, 1911-12,[80] shows the Thor Chu flowing north of the Krao Ti. From its relative position to the Krao Ti and from its course as shown in the map, the Thor Chu seems to be the same as the Kochu. Moreover the two names sound closely alike. The Thor Chu appears under the name Tho Chu in the map on which the boundary line was drawn.[81] The Mishmi Mission Survey map further shows the Ta Tu flowing north of the Thor Chu and south of Sama. The Ta Tu is most probably the same as the Tatap Ti, since the position of the Tatap Ti in relation to Sama and the Kochu is almost the same as that of the Ta Tu in relotion to Sama and the Thor Chu. And the Ta Tu is highly likely to be the same as the Ta Chu which, as shown in the map of the Indo-Tibetan boundary, flows north of that line.[82] We can, therefore, reasonably assume that the Tatap Ti flowing north of the Kochu, as shown in Williamson's map, is the same as the Ta Chu flowing north of the Tho Chu as shown in the map of the Indo-Tibetan boundary. Further, the name Tatap Ti seems to be a Miju name while the name Ta Chu was probably a Tibetan name. It was at this stream that Williamson discovered the first signs of any Tibetan authority. Therefore there could hardly be any objection to the boundary line running south of the Ta Chu. Perhaps the boundary would not have been unjustified had it been pushed further north to the Ta Chu.

North-west of the Lohit basin flow the Dri, Andra and Yonggyap — the upper waters of the Dibang. Here the new boundary followed an easily recognisable physical feature — the watershed between the rivers flowing south into Assam and those flowing

[79] See a section of the Route Map from Assam to Ssechuan, Western China. Most probably Williamson prepared this map immediately after his visit to the Lohit valley in 1909-10.

[80] See a section of the Map of the Mishmi Mission Survey Detachment, 1911-12.

[81] See the map of the Lohit Section.

[82] See the map of the Lohit Section.

north into Tibet. But this area presented a small ethnic problem. There were some Tibetans who lived south of the watershed. About the beginning of the twentieth century, some Tibetan families, to escape Chinese oppression in eastern Tibet, entered the upper Dibang valley by the passes at the heads of the Dri, Andra and Yonggyap valleys. Though they settled down on friendly terms with the Mishmis of the area, quarrels broke out between the two communities after some time. Having been harassed by Mishmi hostility and sickness the Tibetans finally withdrew about five years before Bailey's visit to that country in 1913 during the Mishmi explorations. Only a few were left behind who were not strong enough to undertake the arduous journey back to Tibet.[83] But these Tibetans — who were still living there at the time of Bailey's visit — were almost isolated from Tibet and were living in a country dominated by the Mishmis. Therefore, by including this small, isolated Tibetan group on the Indian side, the new boundary does not seem to have violated here the ethnic divide between the Tibetans and Mishmis.

Further west lies the Tsangpo-Dihang basin. Here the General Staff's proposed alignment would have run from the Namcha Barwa on the one hand to the south-west and on the other to the south-east. Had a pronounced physical feature been the only deciding factor, this alignment would have been quite satisfactory, since the boundary would have run along the main Himalayan range which was broken only at the eastern base of the Namcha Barwa by the Tsangpo. But there were other factors as well which were equally to be taken into account before determining the boundary here.

The Tsangpo valley below the gorge — sometimes known as Pemako or Pemakoichen which had no definite borders — had been inhabited by the Abors before a large number of people from eastern Bhutan and Tawang migrated to that place. They probably went there in the early years of the nineteenth century. The descendants of the immigrants were indiscriminately called Monpas or Drukpas, though originally the former name meant the inhabitants of the Tawang tract and the latter meant the Bhutanese. They pushed the earlier inhabitants — the Abors — southward gradually, though many Abor villages remained in the

[83] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. I.

valley and in some cases the Abors lived with the immigrants in the same villages.[84] Because of this fusion there were Abors in Monpa dominated areas and vice versa, and consequently it was difficult to draw a clear ethnic divide in Pemako. When in October 1913 the Local Government suggested, on the advice of Dundas, a boundary from peak 13838 to as far north as the Nam La, it was pointed out that this alignment would include a number of Monpa villages all of which had been established at the expense of the Abors whom the immigrants had been pushing southward. But, in spite of this pressure, Dundas found Abors living as far north as Gemling near the confluence of the Chimdru Chu with the Tsangpo. But in case the Government of India deemed it desirable to exclude the Monpa villages, the Local Government suggested an alternative alignment from peak 13838 which would have gone as far north as the Deyang La.[85] In suggesting this alternative alignment, the Local Government seems to have been told by Dundas, who had personally gone up the Dihang with the Abor survey party in 1912-13, that no Monpas lived south of this line. Therefore the boundary could have run along this alignment without infringing the ethnic principle; the Monpas would not have been included on the British side. But when the boundary was finally decided upon, it ran south of this alternative alignment, making more concession to Lhasa than the ethnic principle would perhaps have demanded here.

The reason why the Indian Government did not want to take over the Monpas of Pemako was that they were considered subjects of Pome, though some of the Abors also, whom the British were taking over, were probably of the same status. It was this authority of Pome which presented a political difficulty, apart from the ethnic one, in determining the boundary here. Before the Monpa immigration, the whole of Pemako belonged to the Abors and was independent of Pome (also called Poyul) — a country north of Pemako. When the Monpas came, they obtained help from the Pobas (i.e. the people of Pome) against the Abors. When the country was settled, both the Monpas and Abors were brought

[84] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. I.

[85] Assam to India, Foreign Dept., No. 394C., 17 October 1913: P. S. S. F.Vol. 18(1913), Pt. 3, 4595/1913.

under the authority of Pome. It is essential to ascertain the southern limit of Poba authority and examine whether the boundary line violated it anywhere. The Pobas claimed that the Dihang valley belonged to them as far down as Shimong. But Bailey dismissed the claim as very unsubstantial[86]. About 1905 serious fighting broke out between the Abors and Pobas. The Pobas, as Bailey's account goes, defeated the Abors and built a fort near Jido in the Dihang valley[87]. Since Jido is to the south of the boudary line, the Poba authority seems to have been violated here. But Bailey's information about the Poba fort at Jido is of doubtful validity. He admitted elsewhere in his report that he did not possess accurate information about the frontier of Pome in the Tsangpo-Dihang valley as he did not travel downstream far enough, and he thought that the Abor Survey Party, who were operating in the hills in that season under Dundas's leadership, should have better information in this respect[88]. It is therefore quite likely that, when Dundas advised the Local Government to propose an alternative alignment from peak 13838 via the Deyang La, he knew that no Poba authority extended south of that line; and, as we have seen, the boundary runs south of that alternative alignment.

Bailey's account also provides us with some evidence, although indirect, of the limit of Poba authority in the Dihang valley. Bailey stated that the following passes led over the Himalayan range from Kongbo into the Tsangpo-Dihang valley : the Nam La, Doshong La, Betasupu La, Deyang La, Tamnyen La, Lusha La, Lamdo or Paka La, Shoka La, Nayu La and Yusum La.[89] An idea of the people who used these passes throws light on the extent of Poba authority if we assume that these passes were normally used by those who lived near them. Bailey learnt that the first three passes were used only by the Monpas and civilised Abors of Pemako. The people in upper Pemako were "more advanced in civilization" and the Abors there had probably been

[86] Bailey, *Report*, Chaps. I and IX.

[87] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. I; Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 321.

Lamb wrongly states that the Monpas built the fort at Jido. The Monpas, according to Bailey, were subjects of the Pobas and it was the Pobas who built the fort probably to check Abor attacks in the future.

[88] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. IX.

[89] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XI.

longer under the domination of Pome, while lower down the people were more allied to the Abors and less civilised.[90] Since the people of upper Pemako used the Nam La, Doshong La and Betasupu La, they seem to have lived near these passes, and since they seem, from Bailey's account, to have been under Poba authority, it is likely that Poba authority extended as far down as the Betasupu La. South of this pass, however, Poba authority does not seem to have been unambiguous, since Bailey learnt that the next three passes were used by Abors who were partly subjects of Pome and partly independent.[91] The Pobas thus seem to have exercised some short of limited authority in the neighbourhood of these passes — the Deyang La, Tamnyen La and Lusha La, while their full-fledged, undisputed authority probably ended somewhere north of the Deyang La. The remaining passes were used by the Abors who were absolutely independent. If, therefore, the boundary line had gone as far north as the Deyang La, it would not have militated against any undisputed Poba authority. And this line, as we have seen, would also have been in accord with the ethnic divide here between the descendants of the immigrants and the original inhabitants — the Abors.

But both the difficulties — ethnic and political — could with some justice be ignored in determining the boundary and the whole of Pemako up to the Namcha Barwa be included on the Indian side. First, the ethnic difficulty had been created by the immigration of people from eastern Bhutan and Tawang who were not Tibetans strictly speaking though they had probably close affinities with the Tibetans. Even in 1913 the descendants of the Bhutanese immigrants considered themselves subjects of the Tongsa Penlop of Bhutan and spoke of him with great awe.[92]

Secondly, the political difficulty arose from the Poba authority in Pemako. But this was not the authority of the Lhasa Government with whom the British wanted to settle a commonly agreed boundary, since the Pobas claimed to be independent of Lhasa.[93] Though the Tsela Dzongpon (the Tibetan official of Tsela Dzong in Kongbo) collected a tax of about 5000 lbs. of butter annually

[90] Bailey, *Report*, Chaps. I and XI.
[91] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XI.
[92] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. I.
[93] Bailey, *Report*, Chaps. I and XIII.

from the Pobas for the use of the monasteries at Lhasa[94], this was no absolute proof of Lhasa's territorial authority over Pome, since the Pobas also used to collect a sulphur tax from the people of lower Kongbo[95], which was under Lhasa administration. The sulphur tax was originally levied by the Abors when they were the masters of Pemako. But later the right to this tax along with the mastery of Pemako passed into the hands of the Pobas. The Depa of Gyala, one of the subordinates of the Tsela Dzongpon, used to pay 14 bags of sulphur annually to the Pobas.[96] Collection of a tax in this part of the world did not therefore necessarily mean territorial authority,[97] and there was no reason to believe that Pome was not independent of Lhasa because the Pobas paid a tax in butter to Lhasa. Whatever may have been Lhasa's attitude towards Pome, the fact remains that the Pobas claimed themselves to be independent of Lhasa. Since Pemako was under the authority of Pome, the British could annex the whole of Pemako up to the Namcha Barwa without infringing any territorial rights possessed by Lhasa, though it would have violated the Poba rights.

The boundary line west of the Tsangpo-Dihang basin runs south-west from peak 16834 along the main Himalayan range which is admirable as an easily recognisable physical feature. Besides, this range was generally speaking an ethnic divide between the Tibetans to the north and the tribesmen to the south. But, in spite of these advantages, this range was not continuous and unbroken, and south of it there seem to have been pockets of Tibetan authority. South-west of peak 16834 there were the Lamdo La, Shoka La and Nayu La. The Lopas who crossed these passes were, as Bailey said, independent. But the Lo La was used by the people of Pachakshiri who paid taxes to the Lhalu family of Lhasa.[98] But they did not pay any tax to the Lhasa Government.[99] The Pachakshiri people lived south of the main range at the headwaters of the Siyom. When the people of eastern Bhutan and Tawang migrated to Pemako, some of them colonised the

[94] Bailey, *Report*, Chaps. I and X.
[95] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. I.
[96] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. X.
[97] See pp. 148-49 below.
[98] Bailey, *Report*, Chaps. IX and XI.
[99] Bailey, *No Passport to Tibet*, p. 162.

upper valley of the Siyom and came to be known as the Pachakshiribas (i.e. the people of Pachakshiri).[100] Though the Pachakshiri country lay south of the boundary, the mere payment of taxes was no positive evidence of the territorial authority of the recipient of the taxes, as we shall see later;[101] particularly in this case the taxes were paid to a Tibetan family and not to the Lhasa Government.

Further west we come to the upper waters of the Subansiri which have broken the main range at several places. Here, as we have seen, the boundary left the main range near Migyitun and joined it again below Potrang. Bell decided on such an alignment only to leave Tibetan places of pilgrimage within Tibetan territory. Only a part of the long pilgrimage (the Ringkor) route was included in British territory. Lamb charges that this had the effect of deliberately ignoring the fact that the entire region through which the route of the pilgrimage lay was considered sacred by the Tibetans.[102] Perhaps he wants to imply that since the region was sacred to the Tibetans, it was therefore Tibetan territory. But both the charge and the implication are baseless. Migyitun, which was left just north of the boundary, was itself considered as outside the sacred area.[103] The tract through which the pilgrimage route passed was a low lying country where no Tibetan lived. Also the Lonchen did not claim this tract as Tibetan territory,[104] and he admitted that the pilgrimage route below Migyitun passed through tribal country.[105] Once in every twelve years, the Tibetans used to assemble at Migyitun and heavily bribe the Lopas with *tsampa*, swords, salt, etc., before the commencement of the Ringkor pilgrimage. The purpose was to induce the tribesmen to allow the Ringkor pilgrims a safe passage on the road.[106] There is no reason why the Tibetans should have bribed the Lopas if the

[100] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XI.

[101] See pp. 148-49 below.

[102] Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-23.

[103] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. IV.

[104] Bell to McMahon, 23 January 1914: Bell Papers; McMahon's memorandum, 28 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

[105] Bell to McMahon, 30 January 1914: Bell Papers.

[106] Bailey, *Report*, Chaps. IV and XI; Bell to McMahon, 30 January 1914: Bell Papers; Anonymous, "The Sources of the Subansiri and Siyom". *The Himalayan Journal*, Vol. IX, 1937.

route of the pilgrimage lay through Tibetan territory. These considerations invalidate Lamb's argument. Moreover, if this tract were to be considered Tibetan only because of its sanctity to the Tibetans, the claim would be far less tenable than an Indian claim to the Mount Kailas and Mansarowar region of western Tibet which has been sacred to countless Hindu pilgrims from time immemorial and has been, at least, much better known than the Ringkor pilgrimage.

Had the religious factor not arisen, the boundary on the upper waters of the Subansiri would have swung north on both the grounds of corresponding to the main range and to the last limits of permanent Tibetan settlement. From the east, the first of the upper waters of the Subansiri was the Tsari Chu. Migyitun was the last Tibetan village on the Tsari Chu north of the boundary line. But the people of that village did not appear to be true Tibetans. They seemed to have Lopa blood in them and many of them looked like true Lopas. Further, the inhabitants paid taxes not only to the Tibetans at Sanga Choling, Kyimdong Dzong and Guru Namgye Dzong but also to the Lopas.[107] But in spite of this ethnic affinity with the Lopas and payment of taxes to them, Migyitun was considered politically within Tibet, perhaps because the Tibetans considered it as their frontier village meant to keep the Lopas out of Tibet.[108] But apart from Migyitun there were other places which were left within Tibetan territory though there were no permanent Tibetan settlements at these places. On the two tributaries of the Tsari Chu there were no permanent Tibetan villages, though there were rest houses at Mipa and the Tama La where the Tibetans lived several months every year to help the pilgrims. Similarly further west on the Yume Chu, the lowest permanently occupied village was Yume though below it there was a rest house at Potrang. The temporary occupation of these rest houses was no reason why they should have been included in Tibet. The Lopas used to come up and hunt game as far as the

[107] F. Ludlow, "The Sources of the Subansiri and Siyom", *The Himalayan Journal*, Vol. X, Oxford, 1938.

[108] Bell to McMahon, 30 January 1914: Bell Papers; Bailey, *No Passport to Tibet*, p. 200.

This is another evidence that the collection of tax was in itself no decisive proof of territorial authority on this frontier. See pp. 148-49 below.

Tibetan rest houses after the return of the pilgrims.[109] This appears to indicate that the area was held alternately by the Tibetans and the Lopas at two different times of the year, and the one's claim to the tract may have been as good as that of the other. Next to the Yume Chu were the Char Chu and Chayul Chu. On the Char the lowest Tibetan village was Dru. Raprang village below Dru had been deserted by the Tibetans after their war with the Lopas in 1906.[110] On the Chayul the lowest Tibetan habitation was the temple of Karu Tra where a single monk lived throughout the year.[111]

In the light of these facts the boundary line could have run along the main range without infringing any real Tibetan rights, if it excluded Migyitun on the Tsari Chu, Yume on the Yume Chu, Dru on the Char Chu and Karu Tra on the Chayul Chu — these having been the last Tibetan settlements on these streams. In that event the line would have deviated north from the present boundary and included the Droma La, the peak 18813 and the tract of land south of Yume, and then turned south including Potrang and the Char valley below Dru. This alignment would also have been in keeping with the Lopa rights. Until 1906 they had claimed the whole of Tsari except the actual valley of the Tsari Chu, and had received from the Tibetans taxes in *tsampa*, swords, spears and salt at Yume. War broke out in 1906 between the Tibetans and Lopas on account of some trade dispute in which the Lopas were worsted.[112] The Lopa claim to Tsari was thus a matter of the very recent past.

Further south-west the boundary included the Tawang tract on the Indian side. Tibetan influence here was far more obvious than anywhere else south of the boundary. And the most visible symbol of that influence was the Tawang monastery, an offshoot of the Drepung monastery of Lhasa. The Tawang monastery had been founded in the seventeenth century by a close friend of the

[109] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. IX.

[110] When Ludlow visited the place years later, he found Raprang a Lopa village. See F. Ludlow, "The Sources of the Subansiri and Siyom", *The Himalayan Journal*, Vol. X, 1938. Perhaps the Lopas occupied Raprang after the Tibetans had deserted it in 1906.

[111] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. IX.

[112] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XI.

fifth Dalai Lama.[113] This monstery was the centre of extensive Tibetan influence in the life of the people of Tawang, and probably because of this influence the Government of India did not for a long time contemplate the inclusion of Tawang in India. This does not mean that the Indian authorities considered the whole tract as entirely outside the sphere of British influence. In the 1909 edition of Aitchison's *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*,[114] the map of Eastern Bengal and Assam shows Dirang Dzong — an administrative centre under Tawang — and a considerable area to the north and west of it in a light yellow wash. Probably the Indian authorities wanted to indicate that Dirang Dzong and the surrounding area — which were in the Tawang tract — were within the British sphere of influence, since the same wash is applied in this map to such places as the Khasi Hills, Manipur and Hill Tipperah which were all in British territory.

Though Tibetan influence in the Tawang tract was obvious, no minute study has been carried out into its extent and character. In our present context the facts which need particular attention area : how far south did people of strictly Tibetan origin live in this area and what were the character and extent of Tibetan administration here. Any such study must take into account the Se La range, since conditions varied north and south of it.

We have seen that the Monpas — the inhabitants of Tawang — were in all probability non-Tibetans in origin though deeply influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. At the time of the Simla Conference both Bell and McMahon seam to have been made aware by Bailey of these facts at least to some extent. Bell wrote to McMahon, "The inhabitants between the Menlakathong and the Se La ranges are more akin to the Bhutanese and to the inhabitants south of the Tse La — Se La line than they are to the inhabitants north of the Menlakathong La. . . . All the indications go to show that north of this range [i.e. the range crossed by the Menlakathong La] the inhabitants are typical Tibetans. . . ."[115] McMahon held a similar view. He wrote, "To the north of it [i.e., the new boundary along the range crossed by the Menlakathong La] are people of Tibetan descent ; to the south the inhabitants

[113] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 294 footnote.

[114] Vol. II.

[115] Bell to McMahon, 23 January 1914: Bell Papers.

are of Bhutanese and Aka extraction. It is unquestionably the correct boundary".[116]

As for the extent of Tibetan administration in Tawang, we shall first examine the area south of the Se La range. Here we come across three groups of people — the Charduar Bhutias, the Thebengia Bhutias and the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias.[117]

Lamb suggests that the Sherdukpens who, as we have seen, were probably the same as Charduar Bhutias, were indirectly under Tibetan political control "exerted through . . . rather remote channels".[118] But he does not substantiate his contention. So far as they were themselves concerned, they actually claimed to be independent of Tawang — the centre of Tibetan control in this area — and in 1844 they acknowledged themselves as under British protection.[119] The Thebengias were also independent of any Tibetan control through Tawang, as we gather it from Aitchison.[120]

The Kuriapara Duar Bhutias were, however, believed to have been subordinate to Tawang.[121] Here we shall give one instance which seems to substantiate this belief. In 1852 one of the *Sath Rajas*[122] of the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias, called the Gelling (or Gelong), tried to assert independence and appropriate the annual subsidy paid by the British, the larger part of which, as we have seen, was passed on to the Drepung monastery through Tawang.[123] Troops were sent from Tawang against him and he fled to the British territory. The Tibetans demanded his surrender which was declined by the British. It was finally agreed that he should live in British territory, under British protection. In 1861 he returned to the hills but was again forced to seek refuge in British territory.

[116] McMahon's memorandum, 28 March 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

[117] See Ch. I.

[118] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

[119] Capt. Gordon to Major Jenkins, 13 February 1844: I. P. F. P. Vol. 51, No. 131, 20 April 1844. Mackenzie, *History*, p. 18. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties. Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. XI, 1931, p. 100.

[120] Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. XII, 1931, p. 101.

[121] Mackenzie, *History*, p. 16; Aitchison, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, Calcutta, 1929, p. 81.

[122] The chiefs of the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias were known to the British under this name. The chiefs of the Charduar Bhutias also seem to have been known by the same name. See Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 16, 18.

[123] See p. 129 above.

In 1864 he was murdered by the Bhutias probably under the instigation of the Tawang authorities.[124] Such an instance of Tawang intervening in the affairs of the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias suggests that they were subject to Tawang.

We may therefore conclude that, of the three groups of Bhutias living south of the Se La who were known to the British during the period under study, only the Kuriapara Duar Bhutias were known to have been under Tibetan control from Tawang. None has, however, examined the real character of this control.

Of the control of Tawang south of the Se La, nothing more is known to us than that the monastery, through its agents at Dirang Dzong and Taklung Dzong or Talung Dzong, used to collect taxes from the people of the area. Ordinarily, the collection of taxes is in itself a sufficient proof of the territorial claim of the tax-collecting power. But on a close examination this simple standard fails to apply on this frontier. The collection of tax by one party did not prevent another from doing likewise, and consequently the same village was often a victim of double taxation. One such instance, mentioned by Bailey, was Namshu, a Monpa village. This village paid taxes not only to Tawang but also to the Akas who were in no way subject to Tawang. But this village, which was subject to double taxation by Tawang and the Akas, seems to have been itself receiving a tax in yaks from Mago[125] though Mago, a district south of the Tulung La,[126] was the private property of Samdru Potrang, one of the big families of Lhasa,[127] just as the Pachakshiri country was considered as the private estate of the Lhalu family of Lhasa. Mago paid taxes not only to the Samdru Potrang family and to the village of Namshu, but also a tax in salt and cheese to the Akas through the Monpas of Namshu.[128] Such a confusing pattern of tax collection is clear evidence that on this frontier taxation in itself could not be considered a conclusive proof of territorial authority on the part of the power who collected the tax. This applies not only

[124] Gordon to Jenkins, 13 February 1844: I. P. F. P. 20 April 1844, No. 131; Mackenzie, *History*, pp. 16-18; B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Darrang*, pp. 54-55.

[125] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XI.

[126] Bailey, *No Passport to Tibet*, pp. 227-28.

[127] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. VI.

[128] Bailey, *Report*, Chaps. VI and XI.

in the Tawang tract but also elsewhere. We have seen that the Pobas used to collect a tax in sulphur from the people of lower Kongbo though it was under Lhasa administration. Also, Migyitun, a village on the Tsari Chu, was considered as within Tibet, though its inhabitants paid taxes not only to the Tibetans but to the Lopas as well.

In fact, south of the Se La, Tawang's authority was effectively challenged by the tribesmen. They claimed the whole of Dirang Chu valley right up to the Se La and levied taxes on all the villages. When Bailey visited Tawang in 1913, he was asked by the Akas at Namshu village near Dirang Dzong to pay a tax on the ground that he had entered their country.[129] In 1914 Captain Nevill also learnt that the Monpa villages up to the Se La were blackmailed by the Mijis. The Monpas of Rahung complained that though they paid taxes to the Dirang Dzongpon, he did nothing to protect them from the tribesmen. The Dirang Dzongpon was, in his turn, helpless since he did not get any help from Tawang.[130] This failure of Tawang shows that Lamb's assumption, that the Dirang Dzong and Taklung Dzong officials were responsible for defence of the area south of the Se La from the wild tribesmen,[131] has no basis in the actual situation at that time. Obviously there was hardly any Tibetan administration worth the name south of that pass.

North of the Se La, the position seems to have been different. Here the tribesmen did not come up to exact dues, nor did they claim the country as their own. But there was probably some distinction between Tibetan administration at Tawang and as it prevailed north of Tawang. Bell wrote, "All the indications go to show that north of this range [the range followed by the boundary line and crossed by the Menlakathong La] . . . the administration is controlled by Lhasa".[132] This was a distinction which the Tibetans had themselves drawn between Tawang and Tibet proper. A few miles north of the Menlakathong La, there was a

[129] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XI.

[130] Diary of visit to Tawang by Capt. G. A. Nevill, Political Officer, Western Section, North-East Frontier, March-April 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 28 (1913), 3461/1914.

[131] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 303.

[132] Bell to McMahon, 23 January 1914: Bell Papers.

Tsukang (or Chukhang) i.e., a customs house. Agents of Tsona Dzong were stationed there. They levied a duty of 10% on all articles brought from Tawang to Tsona. But no such duty was levied on the merchandise which went south from Tsona to Tawang.[133] The location of the customs house just north of the range suggests that the Tibetans did not consider Tawang as part of Tibet proper. This idea is rather confirmed by the discrimination made between the merchandise going to the south and that coming from the south of the range. Had it been just an internal toll house, no such discrimination would have occurred. Thus, though the Tawang tract north of the Se La seems to have been under a greater degree of Tibetan control than the country south of the Se La, yet the Tibetans themselves do not seem to have considered this northern part as within Tibet proper.

Our above examination of the boundary shows that several factors seem to have been taken into account before determining its alignment. Had the physical factor alone to be considered, the task would have been far easier, since in this terrain the high Himalayan range provided an unmistakable natural feature which, at the same time, would have admirably met the strategic need that lay behind delimiting this boundary. But in the event, apart from the physical, there were also other factors which needed consideration, namely ethnic, political and religious. Though it was mainly the geographical and ethnic factors which determined the alignment, yet at places they gave way to some of the other factors. None of these considerations thus applied consistently throughout the whole frontier. One cannot agree with Lamb that the boundary was essentially an ethnic one.[134] He ignores the fact that the ethnic and geographical divides have happily coincided in most parts of the frontier. He is also far from the truth in saying that only in Tawang and on the Lohit was the boundary based on geographical features out of strategic considerations in disregard of the ethnic principle.[135] First, his statement clearly suggests that people of Tibetan origin living in these two sections were included on the Indian side. But such an assumption is hardly tenable. We have seen that the people of Tawang were non-Tibetans in

[133] Bailey, *Report*, Chap. XV; Bell to McMahon, 23 January 1914: Bell Papers.
[134] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 563.
[135] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 563.

origin. On the Lohit there were of course three or four Tibetan villages south of the new boundary. But the Tibetans of these villages had been settled by the Mishmis and they could not have lived there against the wishes of the Mishmis. If there was any significant disregard of the ethnic principle in determining this boundary, it occurred in Pemako which was left north of the line because it was mostly inhabited by the Monpas who were under Poba authority. But, as we have seen, the Monpas were not Tibetans in origin. Had the ethnic principle been violated nowhere except in Tawang and on the Lohit, as Lamb suggests, the whole of Pemako should have been included on the Indian side, since the people here like the other tribes of this frontier, who were included in Indian territory, were non-Tibetans. Secondly, Lamb overlooks the very obvious fact that for over seven hundred miles this boundary mostly followed the main Himalayan range with only two notable exceptions. On the upper waters of the Subansiri, it deviated from that range for religious reasons. In Pemako it did not run up to the Namcha Barwa — the highest peak of the eastern Himalaya — mainly for political considerations. East of the Namcha Barwa, the boundary would have followed the main range along the highest peaks, had the General Staff's proposal of June 1912 been accepted. But instead it followed a southern range which, however, is the watershed here between the streams flowing into Tibet and the streams draining into the Dibang and Lohit. This watershed continues unbroken until it reaches the Lohit valley. Thirdly, as W. F. van Eekelen has recently pointed out, the geographical consideration must have been given as much weight as the ethnic consideration, as it appears from McMahon's own description. Moreover, McMahon was himself a great believer in natural features like watersheds as frontiers.[136] The British Government was also convinced that both factors had been given equal importance; "the line chosen follows the main geographical features approximating to the traditional border between Thibet and the semi-independent tribes under the control of the Government of India, and that as far as possible it divides exactly the territory occupied by people of Tibetan origin from that inhabited by the Miris, Abors, Daphlas, and the other

[136] W.F. van Eekelen, "Simla Convention and McMahon Line", *Royal Central Asian Journal*, Vol. LIV, London, June 1967.

tribes within the British sphere of influence".[137] Of late there has been much controversy about the geographical character of the boundary. Lamb has questioned the validity of the claim that the boundary is a watershed line. His view is acceptable only if one assumes that the watershed on this 700-mile long frontier must be without a break. As a matter of fact this long watershed is broken only at four points. And though, as Lamb points out, the watershed principle was not mentioned in the notes of 24-25 March 1914 exchanged between the British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries, the idea of a watershed alignment for the boundary appeared right from the beginning when the British recognised the need of settling a boundary here and kept appearing repeatedly in subsequent official thinking. And when the boundary was finally determined, McMahon referred to it as following the northern watershed of the Brahmaputra except where it crossed the valleys of the Lohit, Tsangpo, Subansiri, and Nyamjang. It would thus be a mistake to deny that the watershed principle was an important factor in determining the alignment of the boundary.[138]

Recently the Chinese Government has questioncd the validity of the Indo-Tibetan boundary on the ground that it was never discussed at the Simla Conference, and that it was determined by the British and Tibetan plenipotentiaries "behind the back of the representative of the Chinese Central Government. . . ."[139] The basic Chinese assumption is that Lonchen Shatra did not have the authority to negotiate the boundary without Chinese approval. This means that the Lonchen was not an equal of Ivan Chen at the Conference. This misconception is based on a deliberate Chinese attempt to project Tibet's present status fifty years back when she was not a region of China. And when the Lonchen joined the Simla Conference, he did so as an equal of both the British and Chinese representatives. By agreeing to his plenipotentiary powers and to discuss with him the boundary between Tibet and China, the Chinese automatically recognised Tibet as virtually an independent state and its plenipotentiary as an equal

[137] Grey to Buchanan, 4 May 1914: F. O. 371, Vol. 1929, No. 18917.

[138] D. P. Choudhury, "The North-East Frontier of India," *Modern Asian Studies*, London, October 1970; Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 533-4, 563-5.

[139] The Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India, 8 September 1959: *Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China, September-November* 1959.

of the Chinese representative. This fact cannot be altered by the present occupation of Tibet by China. The validity of the boudary line therefore does not depend on whether or not did Ivan Chen participate in the negotiation on this boundary.

It is however true that the Chinese representative was not a party to the Indo-Tibetan boundary negotiations and the resulting agreement. But why did not the Chinese protest at that time against the Indo-Tibetan boundary which had been negotiated without their participation? They of course repudiated the Simla Convention which had been initialled by Chen together with the Tibetan and British representatives on 27 April 1914.[140] But the cause of this rather unusual step of a government disavowing an agreement initialled by its plenipotentiary was that the Chinese would not accept the Tibet-China boundary as had been decided at the Conference.[141] The Chinese did not protest against the Indo-Tibetan boundary. Why did they not do so? The Chinese say that they did not know anything about the Indo-Tibetan boundary which had not been discussed with their representative.[142] Nobody has yet examined in detail this too familiar Chinese plea of ignorance which does not stand the test of a close scrutiny of the maps of the Simla Conference.

On 30 October 1913 Ivan Chen stated the Chinese version of the Sino-Tibetan boundary.[143] This Chinese-claimed line as drawn by Chen himself on a map of Tibet,[144] was clearly violated by the Indo-Tibetan boundary as later drawn by McMahon on two important maps presented before the Conference. The first of these maps was tabled at the Conference on 17 February 1914 when McMahon proposed a division of Tibet into Inner and Outer zones as a solution of the Tibet-China problem.[145] The second

[140] Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 505.

[141] They wanted the Salween to be the boundary between Tibet and China. See Chinese Minister to Grey, 6 April 1914: F. O. 535, Vol. 17, No. 70; Hardinge's letter to Crewe, 7 April 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1373/1914; Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 502, 516-17, 523.

[142] Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry Note to the Indian Embassy in China, 26 December 1959: *Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China, November* 1959-*March* 1960.

[143] F. O. 371, Vol. 1613, No. 52398.

[144] See the map of a Section of South-Eastern Tibet.

[145] For the proceedings of this meeting, see F. O. 371, Vol. 1929, No. 10695; P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4,893/1914. For the map see the map of a Section of South-Eastern Tibet.

map was initialled by Chen when, on 27 April 1914, he initialled the tripartite Convention between Britain, China and Tibet.[146] On both these maps, the Indo-Tibetan boundary, part of the red line which McMahon had drawn to show the boundary of entire Tibet, was clearly at variance with the Chinese claim in this area. Moreover, even between these two maps there were remarkable variations regarding the Indo-Tibetan boundary. Why did not Chen protest against the alignment of this boundary which clearly betrayed variations from one to the other map and was also contrary to the Chines claim? Why did he initial the Convention map without seeking any clarification from McMahon regarding Tibet's boundary here?

Lamb suggests a number of explanations. First, since the Indo-Tibetan boundary had been decided without Chinese participation, McMahon tried indirectly to obtain Chinese approval of this boundary "by the judicious use of a little extra red ink in prolonging the frontier of greater Tibet" and thus including the Indo-Tibetan boundary on the Convention map.[147] Chinese acceptance of this frontier of greater Tibet, as shown by the red line, would have automatically meant, as Lamb suggests, Chinese approval of the Indo-Tibetan boundary also. And Chen was so ignorant of maps that he failed to detect "McMahon's sleight of hand".[148] Secondly, Chen must have realised that his actions would be repudiated by his own government; so it did not really matter what he initialled.[149] Thirdly, Chen had been subjected to such an "intense moral pressure" [150] by the British side that, even if he had discovered McMahon's trick, he was "too intimidated by the overpowering British delegation to protest",[151] or most probably under that pressure he did not give much thought to "the little appendix to the red line marking the Tibetan border on the Convention map which has since become famous as the

[146] For the proceedings of this meeting of the Conference, see P. S. S. F. Vol. 20 (1913), Pt. 5, 1913/1914. For the map see the map of a Section of South-Eastern Tibet. The Indo-Tibetan boundary as shown on this map represents the alignment which was fixed by the Tibetan and British representatives in March 1914.

[147] Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 530-31.

[148] Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 549-50.

[149] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

[150] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

[151] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

McMahon Line".[152] These explanations, which Lamb has so ingeniously put forward, are however hardly tenable. It would be native to think that a veteran diplomat like Chen, of whom McMahon said, "Monsieur Ivan Chen has the advantage of long diplomatic training. . . .",[153] failed to notice the changes in the alignment of the Indo-Tibetan boundary on two different maps of the Conference and the conflict of this alignment in each case with the Chinese claim which he had stated on 30 October 1913. Particularly, the conflict between the Chinese claim and the Indo-Tibetan boundary is so obvious that even a layman — not to speak of a seasoned diplomat — could not have failed to detect it. Therefore, Lamb's first explanation — that Chen was unaware of the Indo-Tibetan boundary — does not carry conviction. The second explanation is even less tenable. It would indeed be an extraordinarily strange plenipotentiary to have initialled an agreement after a long and arduous negotiation of six months over a most vexed issue only in the hope that his government would disavow his action! Had he really realised his government's attitude, Chen could have as well abstained from initialling, since the Chinese Government's repudiation was surely far less creditable to his diplomatic career than abstention would have been. The third explanation is based on the primary assumption that Chen had been subjected to great pressure before he initialled the convention. This is, however, a personal belief of Lamb — exactly in line with an unfounded Chinese complaint at that time — which is therefore outside the purview of any matter-of-fact historical analysis. But suffice it to say that Chen himself made no such complaint and Grey told the Chinese Minister in London that the charge was entirely baseless.[154] Moreover, if Chen had been under any kind of pressure from the British side, why did he volunteer to obtain the assent of the Chinese Government long after they had repudiated the convention?[155] Had he realised beforehand,

[152] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

[153] McMahon's memorandum on Tibet Conference, 6 October-20 November 1913: P. S. S. F. Vol. 20(1913), Pt. 5, 3160/1914.

[154] Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 29 April 1914: F. O. 371, Vol. 1929, No. 18986; Grey's tel. to Jordan, 1 May 1914, and Foreign Office Note to the Chinese Minister, 1 May 1914: F. O. 371, Vol. 1929, No. 19289.

[155] Chen wanted to plead with the Chinese Government for the last time on the ground that the Convention would best serve Chinese interests. He confidentially told McMahon that even if he was not allowed to sign on 3 July 1914

as Lamb suggests, that his government would not accept the Convention, there was no reason on his part for trying to persuade his government in this matter, once the expected had happened.

The real explanation of Chinese silence over the Indo-Tibetan boundary lay in their indifference to the tribal country north of Assam after their expulsion from Tibet. It is true that their original claim as stated by Chen on 30 October 1913 had included a part of the tribal country within the boundary of China.[156] But it would be a mistake to take this original Chinese claim too seriously. This was actually an exaggerated claim put forward as a bargaining counter to the equally exaggerated claim of the Tibetans,[157] which Lonchen Shatra had laid before the Conference on 13 October 1913.[158] Even the Chinese themselves could hardly have expected that the Tibetans would concede their fantastic demands. And when their claims became more realistic, they ceased to claim part of the tribal area along with the contiguous Tibetan territory. They demanded the Salween as the boundary between Tibet and China.[159] Since the Salween was far away from the Indo-Tibetan frontier, the Chinese must have consequently lost their interest in the tribal country, on this frontier. So it did not really matter to them where the Indo-Tibetan boundary actually ran here. There was no practical reason for Chen to protest against the alignment of this boundary, which he could not have failed to notice, once the Chinese had withdrawn their claim from the Tibetan areas adjacent to this frontier. Even when the Chinese put forward their proposals, after they had repudiated the Con-

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yet the attitude of Peking might change for the better subsequently. Thus far from being under any pressure, Chen was rather willing to sign the Convention because he believed it would be conducive to the interests of China. See Hardinge's tel. to Crewe, 2 July 1914: F. O. 371, Vol. 1931, No. 30064.

[156] Lamb says that the Chinese line, which Chen drew at "various times" during the Conference, always started below Walong and ran west and northwest to meet the Dihang. See Lamb, *The McMahon Line*, p. 551. But the three maps which are enclosed in the papers to which Lamb refers, do not show the Chinese line drawn at *various times*; they only show the line which Chen drew to illustrate the Chinese claim of 30 October 1913.

[157] Regarding the Chinese claim, Hirtzel minuted on 1 November 1913, "The Chinese counter-proposals are, very naturally, as exorbitant as were the Tibetan proposals." See P. S. S. F. Vol. 18 (1913), 4473/1913.

[158] F. O. 371, Vol. 1613, No. 50097.

[159] Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 498-500, 502.

vention initialled by Chen on 27 April 1914, they did not claim any part of the tribal country. On 13 June 1914 the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs handed to Sir J. Jordan, British Minister in Peking, a memorandum and a map stating the Chinese-claimed line between Inner Tibet, where China would be free in both civil and military affairs, and the autonomous Outer Tibet.[160] Since Inner Tibet had been originally intended by McMahon to be virtually a part of China,[161] the boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet represented the real Tibet-China boundary. This boundary, as shown in brown line on the accompanying map, lay far away from the north-east frontier of India. One should not however think that the Chinese became indifferent to this frontier only when they withdrew their boundary to the Salween. Even before they decided to recognise the Salween as the boundary[162] there is evidence to believe that they had not attached any serious importance to their claim in the tribal country between India and Tibet. Immediately after McMahon had tabled before the Conference on 17 February 1914 his proposal to partition Tibet, Chen sent a secret cable on 19 February 1914 to the Wai-chiao-pu, the Chinese Foreign Office,[163] at a time when the Chinese had not yet decided about the Salween boundary. In this telegram, intercepted by the British, Chen described the boundaries of both Inner and Outer Tibet as proposed by McMahon. But his description stopped at the Tila La, though McMahon, to show the boundary of entire Tibet, had continued the line further beyond south and south-west of the Tila La; and it was south and south-west of the Tila La that the greater part of the line showed the Indo-Tibetan boundary. Chen's silence on this section of the boundary of Tibet as proposed by McMahon clearly shows what little importance the Chinese attached to their claim on the Indo-Tibetan frontier. Consequently, it is not surprising that they did

[160] Jordan to Grey, No. 235, 16 June 1914: P. S. S. F. Vol. 20(1913), Pt. 5, 2653/1914. For the map see the map of a Section of South-Eastern Tibet.

[161] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

[162] In early March 1914 they seem to have decided about the Salween-based boundary. See Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 498. Evidently this decision was taken only after the Chinese Government had been informed by Chen that McMahon had proposed on 17 February 1914 the partition of Tibet into Inner and Outer zones and the Yangtse-Mekong divide as the boundary between the two zones. See Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 494-95.

[163] F. O. 371, Vol. 1929, No. 11928.

not protest against the Indo-Tibetan boundary. The cause of their silence was neither any pressure exerted on Chen nor his unawareness of the shaping of an Indo-Tibetan boundary, as Lamb would like us to believe, but the small importance which they attached to the tribal country.

Although the Simla Conference directly concerned Tibet, China and Britain only, the British considered it necessary under the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 to inform Russia of the results of the Conference.[164] Accordingly, the Indo-Tibetan boundary agreement was also to be communicated to the Russian Government. Lamb says that Buchanan, the British Ambassador to Russia, was authorised to show Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, only the notes exchanged between Lonchen Shatra and McMahon regarding the Indo-Tibetan boundary, but not the maps attached to these notes.[165] But Lamb's statement is not compatible with the evidence.

Having received the news of the initialling of the Convention on 27 April 1914, B. Alston at the Foreign Office suggested that the Convention and maps, "and the Indo-Tibet Boundary Agreement *with its maps* should at once be transmitted to Sir G. Buchanan with instructions to communicate them to the Russian Government as the result of the negotiations".[166] A few days later, on 4 May Grey authorised Buchanan to communicate to Sazonov "a copy of the enclosed draft convention, together with its accompaying maps, and also copies of the Trade Regulations and of an Indo-Thibet Boundary Agreement which have been separately negotiated and initialled by the British and Thibetan plenipotentiaries." The language of this authorization may at first lead one to think that Buchanan was not asked to show the map of the Indo-Tibetan boundary. But exactly here, in a footnote, a list is given of the papers which Buchanan was being asked to communicate to Sazonov. This list, which Lamb ignores, contains the following :

> "1. Tripartite Agreement; 2. Indo-Tibetan Boundary Agreement; 3. Trade Regulations; maps accompanying 1 and 2."

[164] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 507.

[165] Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 509.

[166] Minute by B. Alston, 29 April 1914: F. O. 371, Vol. 1929, No. 891. My italics.

Obviously Grey authorised Buchanan to communicate *inter alia* also the map of the Indo-Tibetan boundary to Sazonov. Grey did not anticipate "that the Russian Government will raise any objection with respect to the Indo-Thibet boundary", since he did not think that this boundary was one of those results of the Simla Conference which affected the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. This having been his view of the possible Russian reaction, there was no reason why he should have tried to withhold the map from the Russian Government. But if the Russians raised any objection, he thought it would be enough to tell them that the definition of the boundary of the frontier had become possible only in consequence of the recent surveys undertaken in the tribal country.[167] There is thus nothing in the Foreign Office records to suggest that an attempt was made to keep the map of the Indo-Tibetan boundary from the Russians. But had any such attempt been made at all, it would not have finally succeeded. Both the notes which had been exchanged between McMahon and Lonchen Shatra referred to the map of the newly agreed boundary, and McMahon's note made it clear that the map was in two sheets — unlike the Convention map of Tibet which Chen initialled together with McMahon and Lonchen Shatra. Since it was not the notes of McMahon and Lonchen Shatra, but the map in two sheets which gave a clear idea of the boundary, it would have been impossible to satisfy the Russians by showing them the notes only without the map to which these notes clearly refer. It would also have been impossible to dupe the Russians by showing them the Indo-Tibetan bonndary on the Convention map of Tibet, since that map was in one sheet while the map of the Indo-Tibetan boundary was in two sheets as clearly mentioned in McMahon's note of 24 March 1914 to Lonchen Shatra.

On 8 May 1914 Buchanan gave Neratof, the Russian Assistant Foreign Minister,[168] a note containing a statement of the British case in connection with the Simla negotiations.[169] He also gave

[167] Grey to Buchanan, 4 May 1914: F. O. 371, Vol. 1929, No. 18917; F.O. 535, Vol. 17, No. 112.

[168] Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, was away from the capital at the time.

[169] F. O. 371, Vol. 1930, No. 22092; F. O. 535, Vol. 17, No. 125.

Neratof the maps which showed the Indo-Tibetan and Tibeto-Chinese boundaries.[170]

In view of Grey's belief that Russia would not object to the Indo-Tibetan boundary, his instructions to Buchanan, and Buchanan's description of his interview with Neratof, it would be a mistake to think that the Russians did not see the map of the Indo-Tibetan boundary. As anticipated by Grey, the Russians did not raise any objection to this boundary. In fact it is doubtful whether they were really very interested in this boundary running through a wild terrain, almost unknown to the outside world; they did not raise any question about the inclusion of Tibetan estates on the British side of the boundary, to which there is an unmistakable reference in McMahon's note of 24 March.

Thus the Indo-Tibetan boundary, which was first adumbrated by Minto in 1910 took final shape in 1914. Although the main purpose of the British was to obtain a strategic boundary, the alignment of the boundary was based on other factors as well, namely, geographical, political, ethnic and religious. None of them was totally ignored. The boundary was negotiated without the participation of the Chinese representative to the Simla Conference. But it would be wrong to say that the Chinese were ignorant of it. And contemporary records suggest that the Russians also were duly informed of it by the British. One great defect of this boundary, as it appears today, was that it was not demarcated on the ground though in 1914 the British did not consider demarcation a pressing need for the protection of the frontier.

[170] Buchanan to Grey, 9 May 1914: F. O. 371, Vol. 1930, No. 22092, F. O. 535, Vol. 17, No. 125.

CONCLUSION

AFTER the annexation of Assam the British faced the problem of dealing with the hostile tribesmen of the frontier. Their raids were a serious menace to peace in the plains and no government could afford to ignore this problem. But it was a local problem; it did not involve any international complication. The Government of India did not face any foreign power across the frontier. Consequently, the measures which they adopted to deal with this problem were strictly limited in objective. And though the economic interest of European timber companies exerted some pressure at the beginning of the twentieth century, it did not succeed in bringing about any significant change in the government's policy. Since there was no pressure of a foreign power here, the government's measures were not intended to establish British administration in the area and thus fill what may be called in modern terminology the power vacuum which existed here at the time. This local character of the frontier problem continued till the end of the nineteenth century. And the basic policy of the government underlying the measures taken at different times was one of non-interference. They wanted to leave the hillmen alone if the latter did not disturb the peace in the plains.

The first important step which the British took to stop tribal hostility was to enter into agreements with the hillmen under which the latter received subsidies from the government on condition that they behaved themselves. The government however realised that mere subsidies were not enough to keep the hillmen under control. Military preparedness was considered essential. Armed reprisals were usually inflicted in serious cases. More often the government tried to subdue a tribe by means of economic blockades and discontinuance of subsidies. These measures could not however satisfactorily solve the problem.

Unable to fully check tribal hostility, the government decided — especially in view of the increasing rubber trade in the 1870s — to strictly control the contacts between the hillmen and the people of the plains. Hence the Inner Line was laid down on the northern border of Darrang and Lakhimpur. Though the immediate objective of this measure was to prevent troubles arising

between the tribesmen and unscrupulous rubber speculators, yet its general effect was to reduce the contacts between the hills and the plains.

The policy of non-interference was first seriously challenged at the beginning of the twentieth century by some British firms interested in the Assam timber trade. It was on their petition that Hare, Lieutenant-Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, took up the question with the Government of India in 1907. He advocated a more or less forward policy instead of the old policy which had failed to give adequate protection to the plains. But neither the Government of India nor the Secretary of State was prepared to listen to him. The old policy may well have continued in spite of the Local Government's protests had not a sudden change taken place in Tibet about this time.

Almost immediately following the withdrawal of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa, the Chinese made vigorous efforts to revive their influence and power in Tibet. They pushed their army into eastern Tibet and finally captured Lhasa in 1910. Before long they started probing into the tribal area north of Assam. This was a wholly new situation. It was no longer the unorganised hill tribes whom the government faced. More than eighty years after the annexation of Assam the British for the first time faced the pressure of a foreign state on this frontier. If they still pursued the old policy of non-interference, there was nothing to stop the Chinese from occupying the tribal country and coming down to the very edge of the plains. There were considerable British economic interests in Assam and there were men in both India and England who were aware of this fact. A Chinese thrust towards the plains of Assam was bound to spell disaster to these interests.

The Government of India could not ignore this danger. The little known frontier was now in danger of becoming an international problem. Had there been no Chinese pressure, this frontier may well have remained an almost unknown wild tract between India and Tibet causing the government only a limited concern about the tribes. But now under a changed situation the policy of non-interference, which had been devised to meet the local problem of tribal hostility, was abandoned and a forward policy was adopted. The new policy was defined as a policy of loose political control. Its purpose was to leave the tribesmen

free in their internal affairs but at the same time to leave it in no doubt that they were under British control. In other words, the tribal country was not brought under direct administration but no intrusion from the north into the tribal country was to be tolerated henceforth. Practical difficulty was one of the reasons why the government did not try to bring the area under direct administration, which would have unmistakably proved that it was Indian territory. The government had to take into account their past experience of the warlike tribes who had certainly the capacity to give infinite trouble in their inaccessible mountains if administrators directly interfered with their way of life. Thus the British frontier policy here vis-a-vis a foreign power was closely influenced by the local problem of this frontier. A study of the tribal problem is consequently essential for an understanding of the frontier policy of the British in the face of the Chinese threat. This close link is too often ignored in the current interest in the history of this frontier. The best way to demonstrate to the Chinese that this area belonged to the British without actually bringing it under direct administration was to define its northern boundary. This was done in 1914 during the Simla Conference on the basis of surveys made in the preceding years. Had the strategic viability of the boundary been the only consideration, the delimitation of the boundary would have been a comparatively simple job, since the main Himalayan range was not only a recognizable geographical feature but also was ideal for strategic reasons. In the event however ethnic, political and religious factors were taken into account to determine the southern limits of Tibet.

Looking fifty years back and in the light of the present India-China border conflicts, we realize that the British failed to neatly accomplish an important task. The delimitation of the boundary on the map was only a half-finished job. The whole process was not completed by demarcation on the ground. One reason for this failure was that by 1914 the Tibetans had pushed out the Chinese invaders. The north-east frontier of India was consequently free from all Chinese pressure. And Tibet being friendly towards the British, there was no likelihood of a Tibetan threat on this frontier. Secondly, demarcation on the ground would have been an extremely difficult task in this high Himalayan terrain. As McMahon later said in an address to the Royal Society of Arts in November 1935, "For great lengths of it lofty mountain ranges and water-

sheds buried in eternal snow facilitated verbal definition and rendered demarcation on the ground . . . either impossible or superfluous".[1] This indeed was true as the Prime Minister of India recently pointed out, "The boundary in this area passes over a terrain, the height of which varies from 14,000 to 20,000 feet above sea-level".[2] Yet whether the terrain is difficult or not an undemarcated boundary is potentially dangerous. McMahon was aware of this fact. He said in the above address, with reference to undemarcated international boundaries, "Treaties, conventions, or arbitral awards have in those cases stopped short at mere delimitation. . . . This may have appeared good enough at the time, but seemingly unimportant sections of a boundary have a way of becoming, from strategic, economic or political reasons, of vital importance at some later date, and many a war has been the result of this consequent misunderstanding." He further said, "Delimitation can, it is true, be expressed in such clear and exact terms of geographical and topographical definition as to preclude the need of actual demarcation, but this seldom has been the case. The lessons of history teach us the grave potential dangers of an ill-defined and undemarcated frontier".[3] Unfortunately McMahon's caution was not exercised regarding India's north-east frontier and consequently the lesson of history has been repeated on this frontier in 1962 when India and China clashed.

The Chinese now claim this area as part of Chinese territory. In any realistic analysis of the Chinese claim one must bear in mind that this claim as a *Chinese* claim has no historical validity, since the Chinese were never physically present on this frontier, except that in 1910-11 they probed this area on a few occasions. But since Tibet is today considered a part of China — though this idea is historically controversial — the Chinese position on the north-east frontier deserves attention in the present study.

The two most important charges which the Chinese have brought against the Indian view of the McMahon Line as the

[1] Col. Sir A.H. McMahon, "International Boundaries", *Journal of the Royal, Society of Arts*, Vol. LXXXIV, London, 1936.

[2] The Prime Minister of India to the Prime Minister of China, 16 November 1959: *Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China, November* 1959-*March* 1960.

[3] McMahon,"International Boundaries", *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts.*

international boundary on this frontier are : that the boundary is invalid since the Anglo-Tibetan negotiation in this respect was conducted without the knowledge of the Chinese representative at the Simla Conference, and that the boundary was not shown even on the Survey of India's maps for a long time after 1914.[4]

We have discussed the first charge in the last chapter. As regards the second, Sir Olaf Caroe, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 1939-45, has clearly explained the failure of the British in India to bring the maps up to date. He argues that the outbreak of war in Europe just after the Simla Conference and the departure of McMahon himself to Egypt in 1914 were largely responsible for this failure to amend the maps. But even when British maps did not show the area as directly within British administration, it was never considered a part of Tibet. This apparent anomaly between the maps and the official view that the tribes were under British control seems to have arisen from the absence of any pressure on this frontier. With China ousted from Tibet and the friendly Tibetans to the north, the British had no anxiety about the frontier. "The fact is that it is only recently that the Western notion of fixed boundaries up to which an organized state administers on either side has begun to correspond with realities in Asia."[5]

Two conclusions may be suggested by the history of India's north-east frontier. First, it would be a prudent step to demarcate this frontier on the ground as far as the terrain allows at the earliest possible opportunity. Secondly, as long as Tibet remains under Chinese occupation, frontier tension on the high Himalaya will continue. Therefore India will have to be ever vigilant on her Himalayan frontier. Even if one visualizes a Tibet free from Chinese occupation in future, yet the Chinese will leave behind a Tibet quite different from what she was before the Chinese invasion in 1950. Therefore, India cannot possibly ever afford to

[4] The Prime Minister of China to the Prime Minister of India, 8 September 1959: *Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China, September-November* 1959. Note given by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China to the Embassy of India in China, 26 December 1959: *Notes, Memoranda and Letters exchanged between the Governments of India and China, November* 1959-*March* 1960.

[5] Sir O. Caroe, "The Georgraphy and Ethnics of India's Northern Frontiers", *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 126, London, 1960.

relax her vigilance in the Himalaya. Of course one can reasonably assume that an independent Tibet would be a better neighbour than a Tibet under Chinese occupation. India's vigilance on her north-east frontier must not only be purely military in character. She must also bring the tribal people increasingly within the fold of Indian society and economy. To make them feel an integral part of India would be one of the strongest guarantees against any infiltration from the north. They were more or less neglected by the British. But India today can ignore them only to her own detriment.

APPENDIX

Exchange of notes between the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries[1]

To

Lonchen Shatra,

Tibetan Plenipotentiary.

In February last you accepted the India-Tibet frontier from the Isu Razi Pass to the Bhutan frontier, as given in the map (two sheets), of which two copies are herewith attached, subject to the confirmation of your Government and the following conditlons:

(a) The Tibetan ownership in private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed.

(b) If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a day's march of the British side of the frontier, they will be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly.

I understand that your Government have now agreed to this frontier subject to the above two conditions. I shall be glad to learn definitely from you that this is the case.

You wished to know whether certain dues now collected by the Tibetan Government at Tsona Jong and in Kongbu and Kham from the Monpas and Lopas for articles sold may still be collected. Mr. Bell has informed you that such details will be settled in a friendly spirit, when you have furnished him the further information, which you have promised.

The final settlement of this India-Tibet frontier will help to prevent causes of future dispute and thus cannot fail to be of great advantage to both Governments.

Delhi
24 March, 1914

A. H. McMahon
British Plenipotentiary

[1] P. S. S. F. Vol. 19(1913), Pt. 4, 1517/1914.

TRANSLATION

To
Sir Henry McMahon,
British Plenipotentiary to the China-Tibet Conference.

As it was feared that there might be friction in future unless the boundary between India and Tibet is clearly defined, I submitted the map, which you sent to me in February last, to the Tibetan Government at Lhasa for orders. I have now received orders from Lhasa, and I accordingly agree to the boundary as marked in red in the two copies of the maps signed by you, subject to the conditions mentioned in your letter, dated the 24th March, sent to me through Mr. Bell. I have signed and sealed the two copies of the maps. I have kept one copy here and return herewith the other.

Sent on the 29th day of the 1st Month of the Wood-Tiger year (25th March 1914) by Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary.

(Seal of Lonchen Shatra)

ABBREVIATIONS

C. I. P. D.	Collections to India Political Despatches.
P. D. I.	Political Despatches to India.
P. S. F.	Political and Secret Files.
P. S. H. C.	Political and Secret Home Correspondence.
P. S. L. E.	Political and Secret Letters and Enclosures from India.
P. S. S. F.	Political and Secret Subject Files.
I. O. Memo.	India Office Political and Secret Memorandum.
I. P. F. P.	India Political and Foreign Proceedings.
I. F. P., Pol.	India Foreign Proceedings, Political.
I. F. P., Rev.	India Foreign Proceedings, Revenue.
P. P. C.	Proceedings of the President in Council, India, Foreign Department.
A. F. P.	Assam Foreign Proceedings.
E. B. A. P. P.	Eastern Bengal and Assam Political Proceedings.
A. A. R.	Assam Administration Report.
E. B. A. A. R.	Eastern Bengal and Assam Administration Report.
P. D.	The Parliamentary Debates (Official Report), House of Commons, Fifth Series.
I. O.	India Office.
F. O.	Foreign Office.

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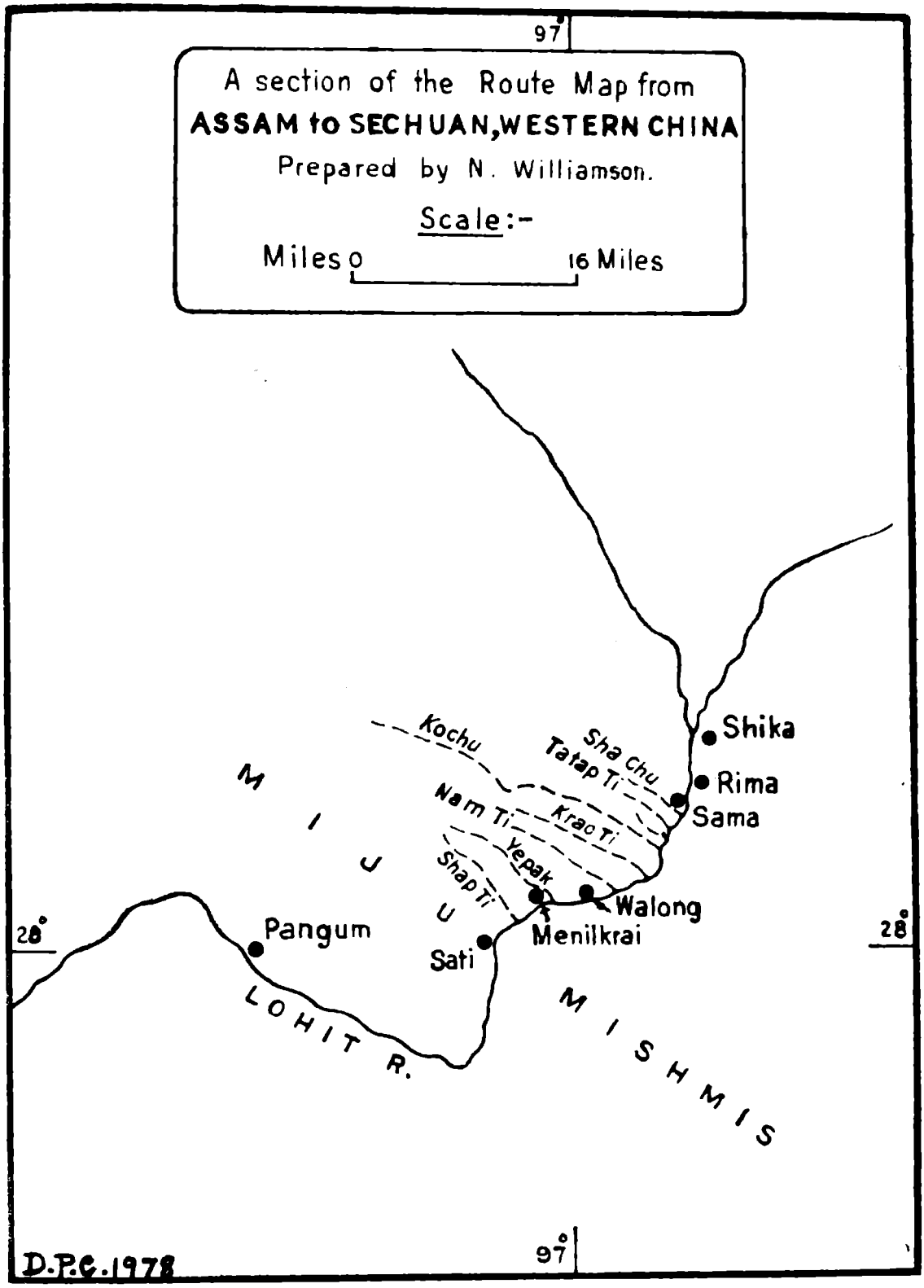
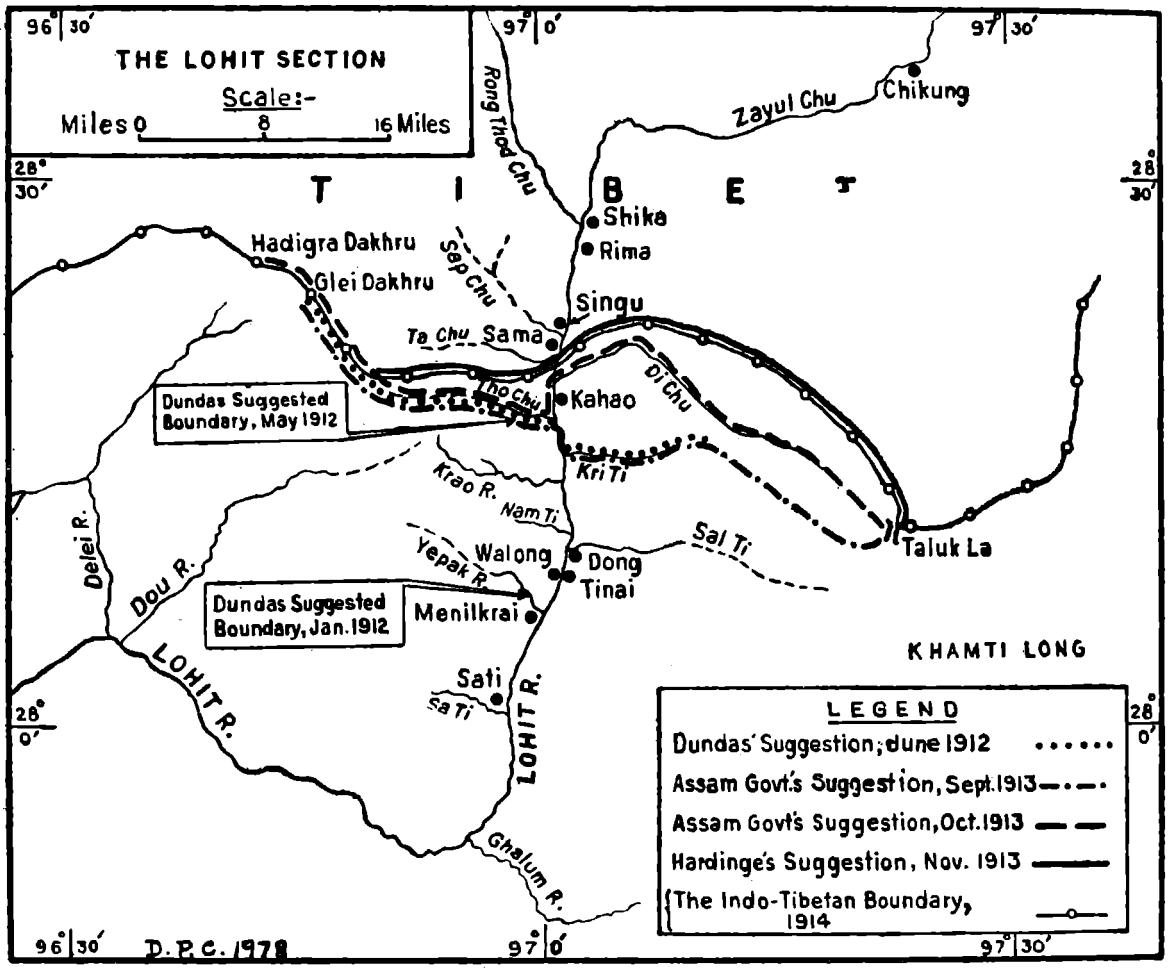
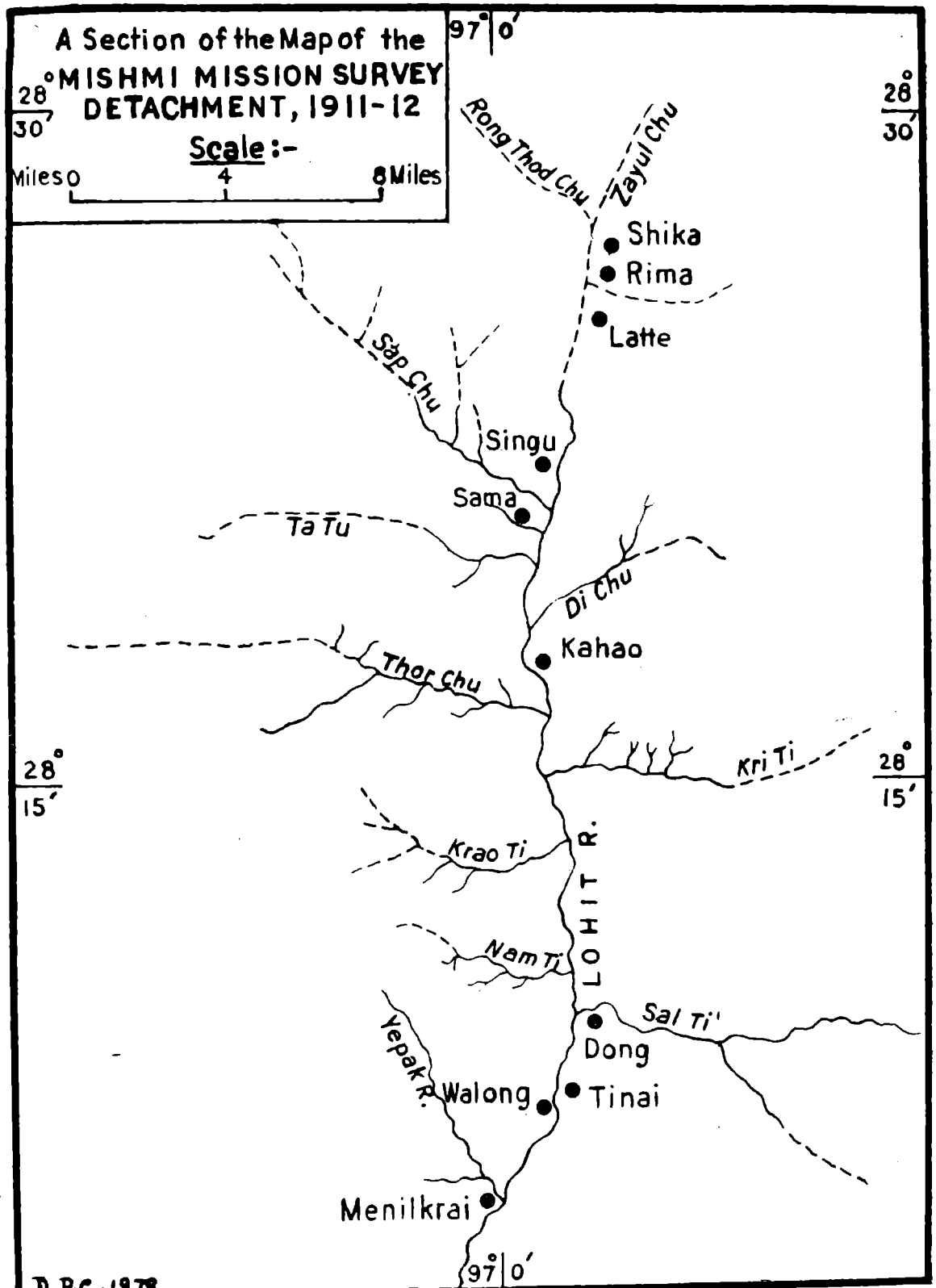
ERRATA

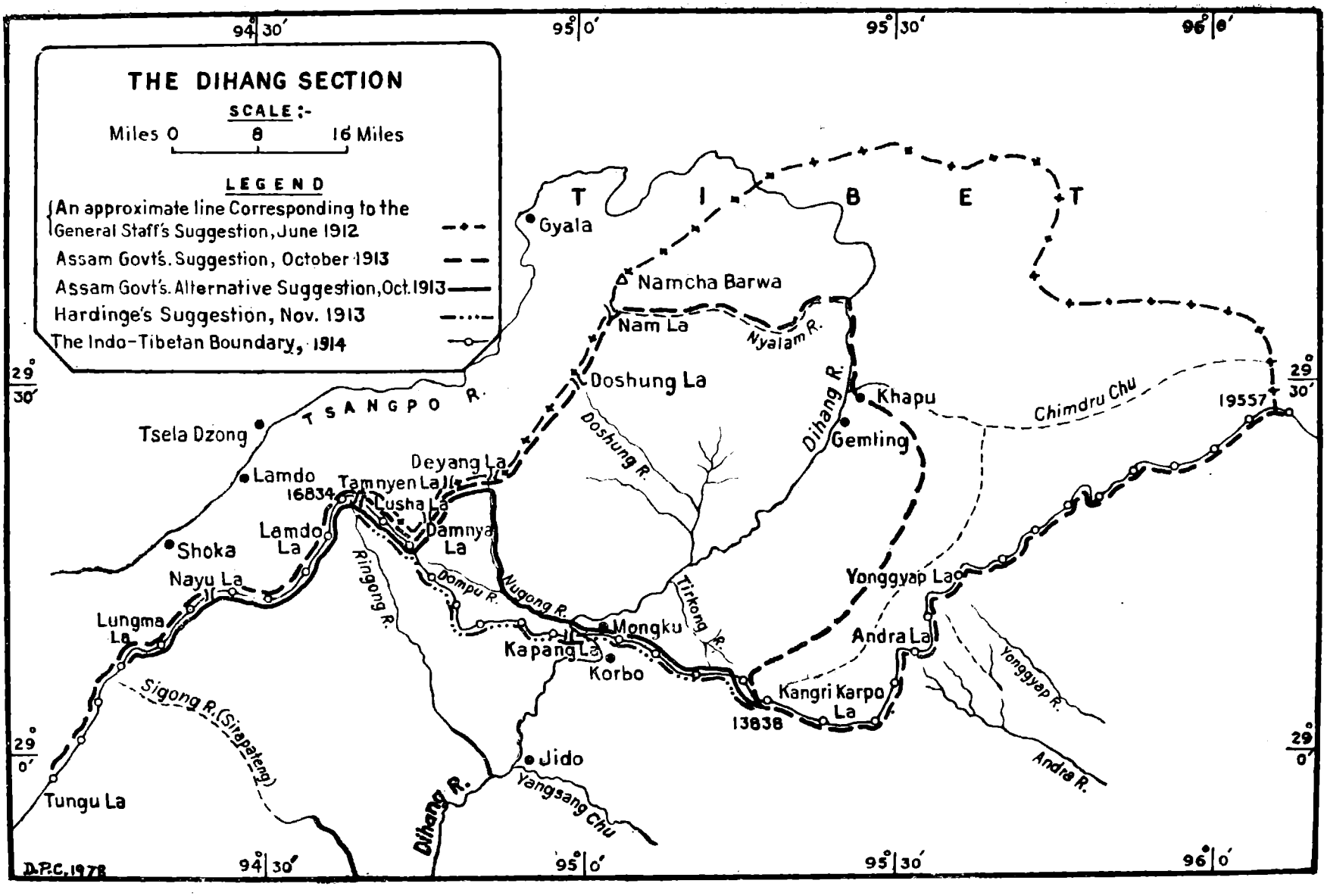
P. 33, line 5 from bottom: for 'Gcvernment' read 'Government', and for 'idca' read 'idea'.
P. 34, line 1: for 'aliowance' read 'allowance'.
P. 42, line 10 from bottom: for 'for. I' read 'for, I'.
P. 48, f.n. 60, line 3: for 'trioal' read 'tribal'.
P. 48, f.n. 60, lines 5-6: for 't ⁷ lat er dovs' read 'the latter does'.
P. 49, line 9: for 'plains, Tribal' read 'plains. Tribal'.
P. 51, line 24: for 'withou' read 'without'.
P. 52, line 6: for 'Fulier' read 'Fuller'.
P. 53, line 14: for 'construe' read 'construed'.
P. 56, line 12: for 'William' read 'William-'.
P. 58, line 5: for 'Beil' read 'Bell'.
P. 58, line 12: for 'nortn' read 'north'.
P. 61, line 12: for 'keneral' read 'general'.
P. 61, f.n. 7: for '140' read '82 below'.
P. 61, f.n. 10, line 1: for '*u*into' read 'Minto'.
P. 62, line 9: for 'snpport' read 'support'.
P. 62, line 15: for 'polity' read 'policy', and for 'Chinese Hirtzel' read 'Chinese, Hirtzel'.
P. 62, f.n. 13: for 'pp. 150-151' read 'p. 89 below'.
P. 64, line 12 from bottom: for 'Williamson. Assistant' read 'Williamson, Assistant'.
P. 96, f.n. 51, line 1: for 'Septemder' read 'September'.
P. 105, line 9 from bottom: for 'But did' read 'But it did'.
P. 134, line 21: for 'Bitish' read 'British'.
P. 137, line 18: for 'relotion' read 'relation'.
P. 146, line 20: for 'area' read 'are'.
P. 148, line 5: for 'thereforc' read 'therefore'.
P. 154, line 10: for 'Chines' read 'Chinese'.
P. 155, line 3: for 'native' read 'naive'.

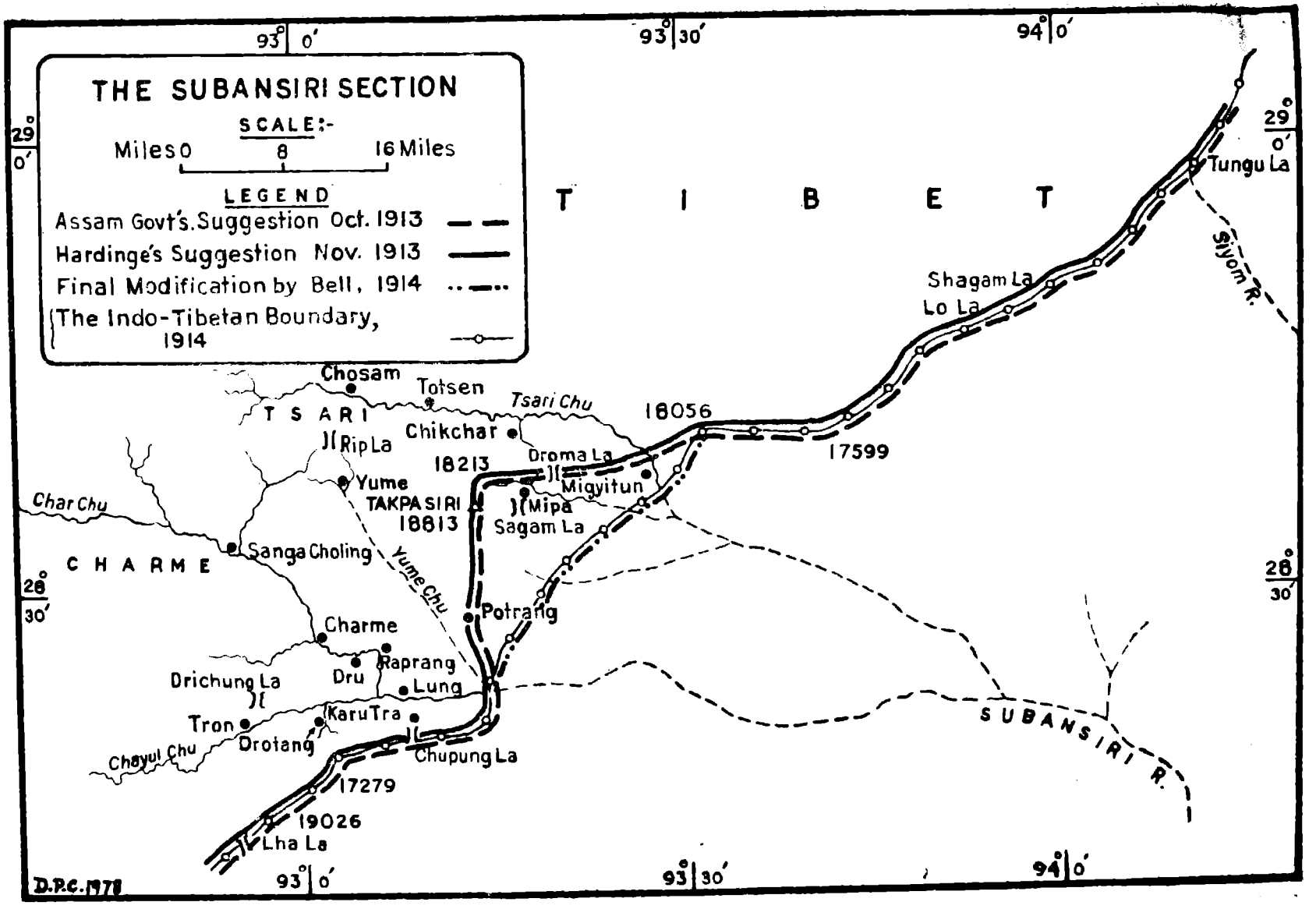
INDEX

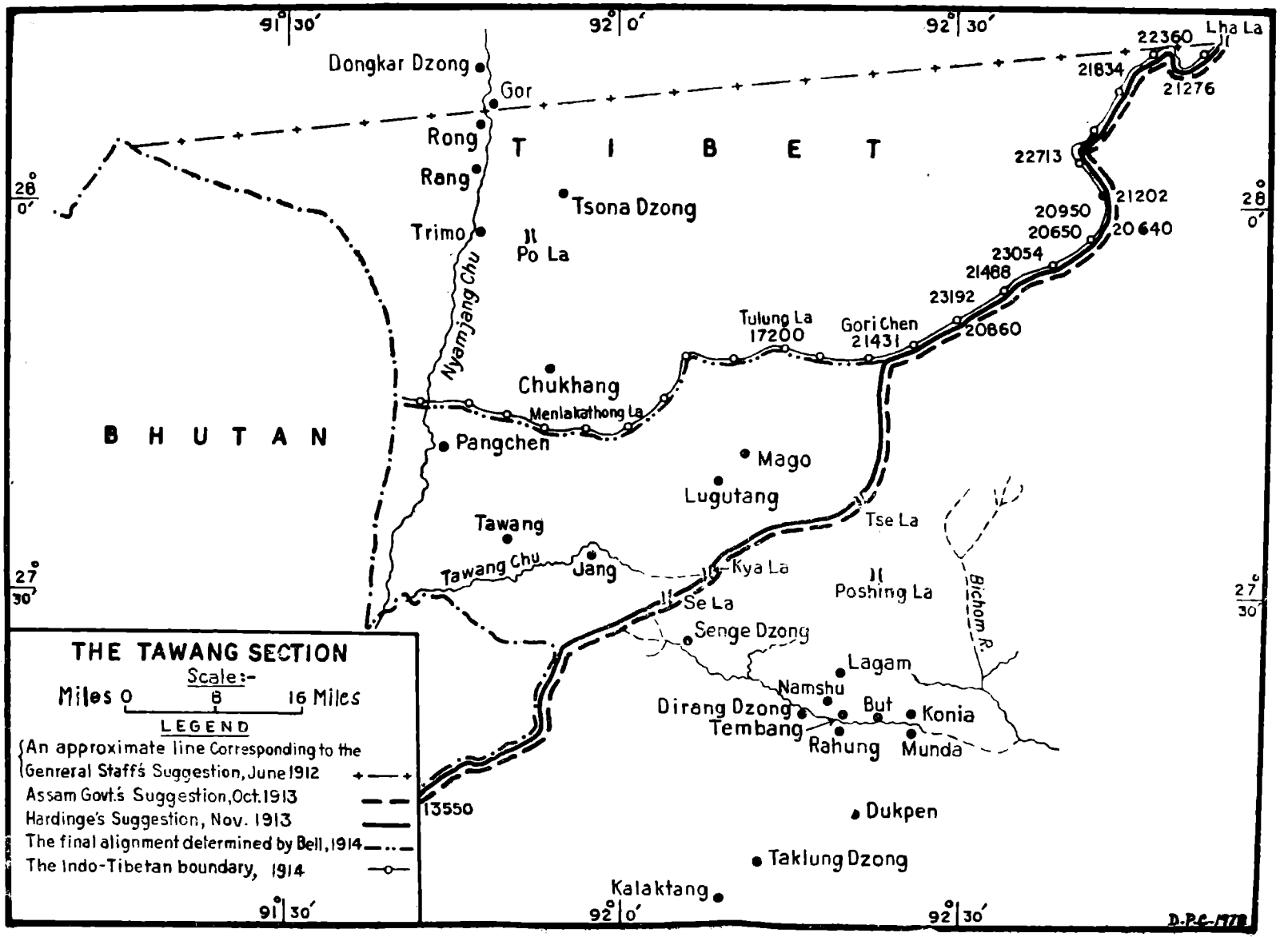

97°
A section of the Route Map from
ASSAM to SECHUAN, WESTERN CHINA
Prepared by N. Williamson.
Scale:-
Miles 0 16 Miles
Kochu
Sha chu
Tatap Ti
Nam Ti
Krac Ti
Yepak
Shap Ti
Shika
Rima
Sama
Walong
Menilkrai
Pangum
Sati
MIJU
LOHIT R.
MISHMIS
28°
28°
97°
D.P.C. 1978

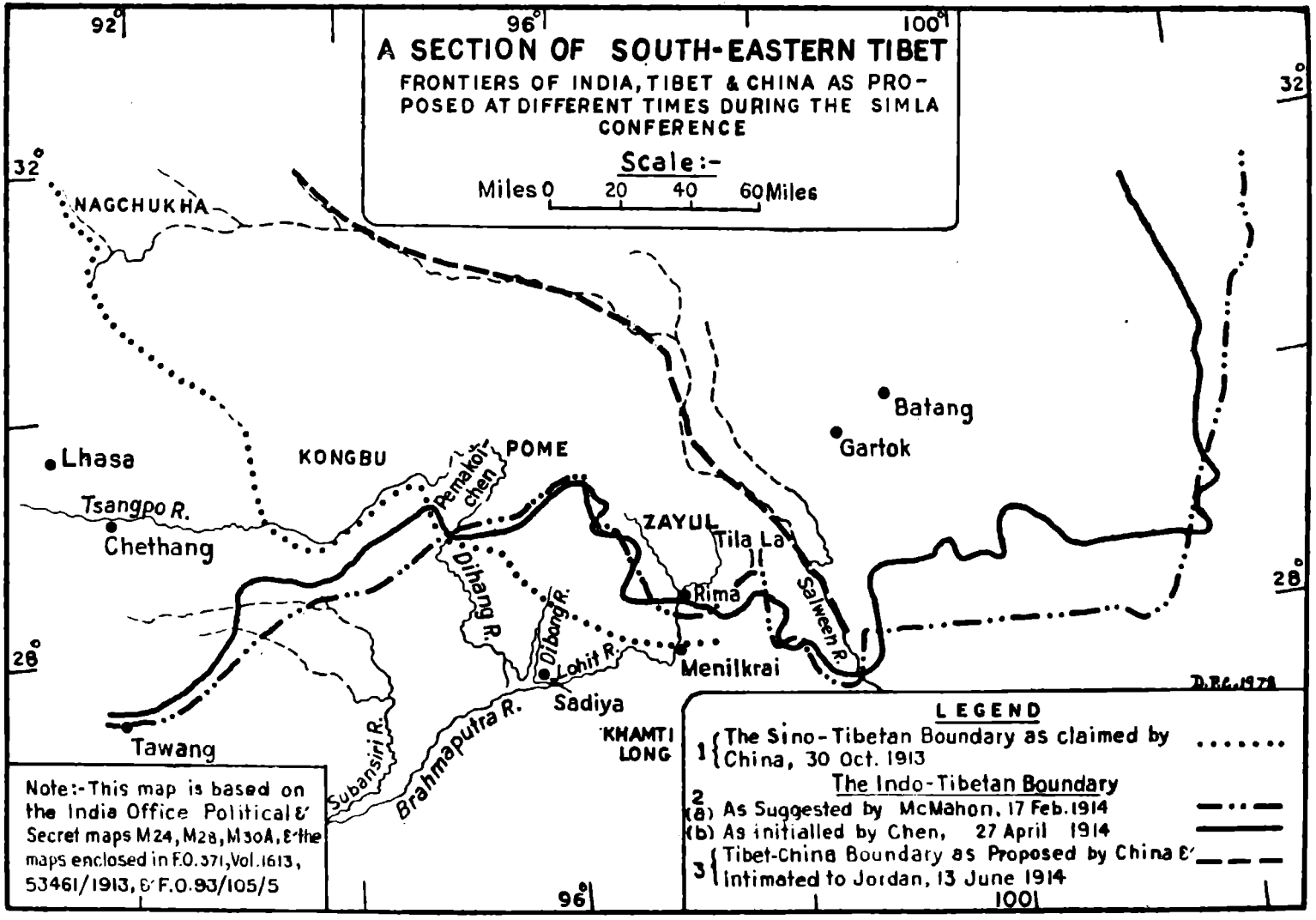

THE LOHIT SECTION
Scale:-
Miles 0 8 16 Miles
96° 30'
97° 0'
97° 30'
28° 30'
28° 0'
T I B E T
Rong Thod Chu
Zayul Chu
Chikung
Shika
Rima
Hadigra Dakhru
Glei Dakhru
Sep Chu
Singu
Ta Chu
Sama
Tho Chu
Kahao
Di Chu
Dundas Suggested Boundary, May 1912
Kri Ti
Krao R.
Nam Ti
Sal Ti
Taluk La
Delei R.
Dou R.
Yepak R.
Walong
Dong
Tinai
Dundas Suggested Boundary, Jan. 1912
Menilkrai
KHAMTI LONG
Sati
Ca Ti
LOHIT R.
LOHIT R.
Ghalum R.
LEGEND
Dundas' Suggestion; June 1912
Assam Govt's Suggestion, Sept. 1913
Assam Govt's Suggestion, Oct. 1913
Hardinge's Suggestion, Nov. 1913
The Indo-Tibetan Boundary, 1914
D.P.C. 1978


A Section of the Map of the
MISHMI MISSION SURVEY
DETACHMENT, 1911-12
Scale:-
Miles 0 4 8 Miles
97° 0'
28° 30'
Rong Thod Chu
Zayul Chu
Shika
Rima
Latte
Sap Chu
Singu
Sama
Ta Tu
Di Chu
Kahao
Thor Chu
Kri Ti
28° 15'
Krao Ti
LOHIT R.
Nam Ti
Sal Ti
Dong
Yepak R.
Walong
Tinai
Menilkrai
D.P.C. 1978


THE DIHANG SECTION
SCALE :-
Miles 0 8 16 Miles
LEGEND
An approximate line Corresponding to the General Staff's Suggestion, June 1912
Assam Govt's. Suggestion, October 1913
Assam Govt's. Alternative Suggestion, Oct. 1913
Hardinge's Suggestion, Nov. 1913
The Indo-Tibetan Boundary, 1914
94° 30'
95° 0'
95° 30'
96° 0'
29° 30'
29° 0'
T I B E T
Gyala
Namcha Barwa
Nam La
Nyalam R.
Doshung La
Doshung R.
Dihang R.
Khapu
Gemling
Chimdru Chu
19557
TSANGPO R.
Tsela Dzong
Lamdo
Deyang La
Tamnyen La
16834
Tusha La
Damnya La
Lamdo La
Shoka
Nayu La
Ringong R.
Dompu R.
Nugong R.
Tirkong R.
Yonggyap La
Lungma La
Mongku
Kapang La
Korbo
Andra La
Yonggyap R.
Sigong R. (Siapateng)
Kangri Karpo La
13838
Tungu La
Jido
Yangsang Chu
Andra R.
Dihang R.
D.P.C. 1978


THE SUBANSIRI SECTION
SCALE:-
Miles 0 8 16 Miles
LEGEND
Assam Govt's. Suggestion Oct. 1913
Hardinge's Suggestion Nov. 1913
Final Modification by Bell, 1914
The Indo-Tibetan Boundary, 1914
93° 0′
93° 30′
94° 0′
29° 0′
28° 30′
T I B E T
Tungu La
Siyom R.
Shagam La
Lo La
Chosam
Totsen
Tsari Chu
T S A R I
Rip La
Chikchar
18056
17599
18213
Droma La
Migyitun
Yume
TAKPA SIRI
18813
Mipa
Sagam La
Char Chu
Sanga Choling
Yume Chu
C H A R M E
Potrang
Charme
Raprang
Dru
Lung
Drichung La
Tron
Karu Tra
Drotang
Chayul Chu
Chupung La
17279
19026
Lha La
SUBANSIRI R.
D.P.C. 1978


91° 30′
92° 0′
92° 30′
28° 0′
27° 30′
Dongkar Dzong
Gor
Rong
Rang
Trimo
Po La
Tsona Dzong
T I B E T
Lha La
22360
21834
21276
22713
21202
20950
20650
20640
23054
21488
23192
20860
Tulung La
17200
Gori Chen
21431
Nyamjang Chu
Chukhang
Menlakathong La
B H U T A N
Pangchen
Mago
Lugutang
Tawang
Tse La
Tawang Chu
Jang
Kya La
Se La
Poshing La
Bichom R.
Senge Dzong
Lagam
Namshu
Dirang Dzong
But
Konia
Tembang
Rahung
Munda
13550
Dukpen
Taklung Dzong
Kalaktang
THE TAWANG SECTION
Scale:-
Miles 0 8 16 Miles
LEGEND
An approximate line Corresponding to the Genreral Staff's Suggestion, June 1912
Assam Govt.'s Suggestion, Oct. 1913
Hardinge's Suggestion, Nov. 1913
The final alignment determined by Bell, 1914
The Indo-Tibetan boundary, 1914
D.P.C.-177


A SECTION OF SOUTH-EASTERN TIBET
FRONTIERS OF INDIA, TIBET & CHINA AS PROPOSED AT DIFFERENT TIMES DURING THE SIMLA CONFERENCE
Scale:-
Miles 0 20 40 60 Miles
92°
96°
100°
32°
28°
NAGCHUKHA
Lhasa
KONGBU
POME
Pemakotchen
Tsangpo R.
Chethang
ZAYUL
Tila La
Rima
Batang
Gartok
Dihang R.
Dibang R.
Lohit R.
Menilkrai
Sadiya
Salween R.
Brahmaputra R.
Subansiri R.
KHAMTI LONG
Tawang
D.R.C. 1978
LEGEND
1 The Sino-Tibetan Boundary as claimed by China, 30 Oct. 1913
The Indo-Tibetan Boundary
2 (a) As Suggested by McMahon, 17 Feb. 1914
(b) As initialled by Chen, 27 April 1914
3 Tibet-China Boundary as Proposed by China & Intimated to Jordan, 13 June 1914
Note:-This map is based on the India Office Political & Secret maps M24, M28, M30A, & the maps enclosed in F.O.371, Vol.1613, 53461/1913, & F.O.93/105/5