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## The Crown Colony Plan for the Hills of North East India: Concept to Collapse 1941-1946

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That a volume is being organised to discuss the process of integration of States with the Indian Union assumes significance in those states having come under an 'Indian' administration for fifty years. The half century of this experience gives sufficient time to look back and re-examine, if not to reinterpret the momentous developments that came shortly before, with and after India's Independence. The seminar also assumes significance because this will be the first attempt to bring together persons of varied academic and other interests with the simple purpose to recall the process by which eastern and north eastern India came to be. I believe that an important stimulant which has made this discussion possible are the questions on the integration process that are being raised by individuals, groups of persons with a variety of political affiliation, which no doubt will be discussed in detail.

The purpose of making this presentation is to situate the hill areas of north India shortly before the transfer of power in 1947 and the process of integrating the hills into the Union. In doing so it will partly answer why the integration of some of the hill districts into Assam and India was not as smooth as might have been wished. Further it suggests that the neglect to consider British opinions on the future of the hill areas in an independent India has been the Assam problem in its relations with the hill people. The paper makes no attempt to support or espouse the Crown Colony/Protectorate, only that it had in it a feeble and ill timed bid to do something for the political future of the hill people.

### II

What motivated Sir Robert Reid, Governor of Assam to write the Confidential *A Note on the Future of the Present Excluded, Partially Excluded and Tribal Areas of Assam*,<sup>1</sup> is not

