# DAVID SCOTT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

1802-1831

A STUDY IN BRITISH PATERNALISM

*by*

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*'Its interesting situation between Hindoostan and China, two names with which the civilized world has been long familiar, whilst itself remains nearly unknown, is a striking fact and leaves nothing to be wished, but the means and opportunity for exploring it.'*

Surveyor-General Blacker to
Lord Amherst about Assam,
22 April, 1824.

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TO THE MEMORY OF

DR. LALIT KUMAR BAROOAH

# PREFACE

In the long roll of the East India Company's Bengal civil servants, placed in the North-East Frontier region, the name of David Scott stands out, undoubtably, as one of the most fascinating. He served the Company in the various capacities on the northern and eastern frontiers of the Bengal Presidency from 1804 to 1831. First coming into prominence by his handling of relations with Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet during the Nepal war of 1814, Scott was successively concerned with the Garo hills, the Khasi and Jaintia hills and the Brahmaputra valley (along with its eastern frontier) as Agent to the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier of Bengal and as Commissioner of Assam. His career in India, where he also died in harness in 1831, at the early age of forty-five, is the subject of this study. The dominant feature in his ideas of administration was Paternalism and hence the sub-title—the justification of which is fully given in the first chapter of the book (along with the importance and need of such a study). The last chapter, while making some concluding remarks on Scott's philosophy of government, tries to describe what type of Paternalism it was. The chapters in between deal with some of the important subjects that the British Paternalists in India were most concerned with in the early nineteenth century.

This study, being a first attempt at giving as far as possible, a full account of Scott's administrative career and his early background, much fresh material and the hitherto-unknown details on many known facts are incorporated here. I have, however, drawn much from many outstanding authorities in my understanding of the dominant ideas of administration prevalent in India of David Scott's time and also of the region where Scott served and died. I am particularly indebted to the works of Dr. Eric Stokes, Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and Dr. A. Lamb, cited in the pages of my book.

The book includes a few maps and appendices. The maps of the north-east parts of Rangpur and of the Assam valley are adapted from those in M. Martin's *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of the Eastern India,* vol. III, first published from London in 1838. The one showing Scott's route from Sylhet to Nowgong and then to Gauhati in 1824 across the Jaintia hills was found amongst Scott's official despatches of the time. I have made no orthographical change in these maps. For obvious reasons I have, however, modernised, in my text, the spelling of the names of many Khasi and Garo villages found in the despatches. Some extracts from the unpublished report of Scott on the Garos, dated 20 August, 1816 are given in the Appendix D. In many parts the language of this report is far from being smooth and crisp unlike his many other admirable reports on different subjects. But it has its own importance. Besides describing critically the then-existing Garo-*zamindar* relationship, it gives us in the early nineteenth century background, the physical feature of the land of the Garos; the principal tribes and clans among them; their laws of succession; their democratic mindedness; their government; their manufacture; and the practice of head-haunting among them. Appendix E which is an agreement taken in the post-rebellion period from a semi-independent Khasi chief, gives a fair idea of the planned penetration of the British into the Khasi and Jaintia hills.

The research for this work was undertaken in England during 1961-64 and today, at the time of its publication, I gratefully remember the help and guidance that I received from Mr. J. B. Harrison, Reader in Indian History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. For constant sympathetic encouragement and many other kindnesses I am grateful also to Professor A. L. Basham. I have been further benefited by the comments and suggestions received from Dr. Percival Spear and Dr. I. Cumpston. Mr. M. D. K. Turner of Southlands, Camberley, Surrey; Mr. H. K. Sircar, Assistant Librarian, Carey Library, Serampore; Mr. J. A. Chalmers, M.D., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., Worcester; Mr. T. Henderson, M.A., F.E.I.S., Headmaster, Musselburg

Grammar School, Musselburg, Scotland,—all helped me in my search for information connected with Scott's early life and his missionary zeal.

In the libraries where I worked in England, I always found the greatest courtesy and helpfulness, particularly in the India Office Library, the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies and the library of the University of Nottingham.

I owe a debt of thanks to several of my friends and colleagues for their criticism, help and encouragement. Dr. Imtiaz Hussain made some incisive comments after going through an earlier version of this work which helped me at the time of revision; Mr. Surojit Bannerjee, Mr. N. Hassan, Miss S. Pahwa and Dr. A. J. Cordingly ungrudgingly helped me in many other ways while I was arranging the manuscript for the press; Mr. Devendra Jain, besides agreeing to publish the book in reasonable time, showed many courtesies. The book would not have, however, seen the light of the day without the sustained interest taken in it by my very dear friend J.L-F.

The book is dedicated to a renowned socio-medical worker of modern Assam who, although not alive today, is the chief source of my inspiration.

Kirorimal College,
Delhi.
9 November, 1969.

N. K. B.

# CONTENTS

MAPS

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|---|---|
| *App.* | Appendix. |
| *B.C.* | Board's Collections. |
| *B.C.J.C.* | Bengal Criminal and Judicial Consultations. |
| *B.P.C.* | Bengal Political Consultations. |
| *B.S.P.C.* | Bengal Secret and Political Consultations. |
| *C.C.O.* | Calcutta Christian Observer. |
| *Home Misc.* | Home Miscellaneous Series. |
| *J.A.S.B.* | Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal. |
| *J.L.B.* | Judicial Letters from Bengal. |
| *M.C.L.R.M.* | Monthly Circular Letters Regarding Missionary in India. |
| *P.A.S.M.* | Periodical Account of the Serampore Mission. |
| *P.L.B.* | Political Letters from Bengal. |
| *P.P.* | Parliamentary Papers. |
| *R.I.L.C.* | Report from the Indian Law Commissioners relating to Slavery in the East Indies. |

# I

## THE MAN: HIS LIFE, DEATH AND ATTITUDES

THE OBJECT of this book is to study the ideas and policies of one of the most distinguished local administrators of British India. This was David Scott, who served in north-east India from 1804 to 1831. The importance of his career lies in the fact that from his first appointment at Gorakhpur[1] the nature of his duties and his zeal for geographical and ethnological survey combined to make him an increasingly trusted expert in the affairs of the independent or semi-independent states of the north and north-east frontier. After the first Nepal war (1814-1816) he became the chief channel of British contact with Bhutan, Sikkim, Tibet, Cooch Behar, the Garo hills and Assam. The conquest and annexation of Assam, which he had advocated, subsequently made him the chief administrator of that state. From 1814, when he first held charge of the Bengal district of Rangpur, until his death in 1831 at Cherrapunji, the destiny of the Assamese people was in great measure influenced by the opinions and decisions of David Scott. His ideas and actions, often unhesitatingly accepted by higher authority gradually transformed the non-Indian character[2] of the

[1] *Personal Records,* Vol. XIX, pp. 27-61, a sketch of Scott's career prepared in March 1831 by Thomas Fisher; H. T. Prinsep, *Register of the Hon'ble East India Company's Bengal Civil Servants,* 1790-1842, p. 332.

[2] 'Assam in the medieval period had, as a result of its conquest by the Ahom kings from the Shan area, become non-Indian in its culture. Its early affiliation with India in the time of Kumara Bhaskara had been practically forgotten.' See K. M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History,* p. 148.

On the economic and sociological planes also the peculiarities of the medieval Assam can be detected. See, A Guha, 'Land rights and social classes in medieval Assam,' *The Indian Economic and Social History*

Ahom administration. He also subdued and settled the hitherto uncompromisingly independent tribes of the Garo and the Khasi hills and the Singphos of the present North-Eastern Frontier. Many of his measures were novel; but, being considered particularly appropriate to this newly conquered region, they secured both acceptance and considerable influence.

Yet few of the ideas and measures David Scott propounded and carried out in this transitional period of Assam's history have been studied in any detail by modern writers. About those of his earlier career, prior to his work in Assam, virtually nothing has been written. This is surprising since Scott's importance was early recognised. More than eighty years ago Alexander Mackenzie, when writing his *History of the relations of the Government with the hill tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal,*[3] declared "the most interesting and personally instructive part of my task in preparing the present volume has been the perusal of Scott's admirable reports and letters," and he regretted that he lacked the time to prepare a volume of official selections from Scott's writings. He wrote: "The name and fame of David Scott are still green on the North-East Frontier. He was one of those remarkable men who have from time to time been the ornament of our Indian services. Had the scene of his life's labours been in North-West or Central India, where the great problem of Empire was then being worked out, instead of amid the obscure jungles of Assam, he would occupy a place in history by the side of Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe."[4] Unfortunately these lines have remained merely a 'quotable quote' and nothing more than that. Forty four years later lament was still heard that "an authoritative biography of this great administrator has yet remained

*Review,* III, No. 3, Sept. 1966. See also by the same author 'Ahom Migration : its Impact on Rice Economy of Medieval Assam,' *Artha Vijnana,* Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1967.

[3] Published in 1884.

[4] A. Mackenzie, *op. cit.,* P. 5 n.

a desideratum, nor has any attempt been made to justify the tribute paid to his genius and attainments in the inscription on his tomb at Cherrapoonji."[5]

Why then such neglect? Several reasons suggest themselves. Until recently to the general historian of India Assam has seemed a backwater, and India's north-east frontier one lacking in strategic importance. Those who have written on Assamese history have often been concerned with a longer period and wider issues than those of David Scott's career, whose formative stages were in any case passed outside Assam. Finally, David Scott may have deterred would-be biographers by failing to leave behind such private and family papers as would give colour, detail and an insight into the formation of his philosophy.

None of these reasons today seems sufficient bar to a study of David Scott. International events have given Assam an unlooked-for topicality and importance. There is a new or renewed interest in the ideas of the British officials at work in India, as witness works such as Eric Stokes' *English Utilitarians and India.* And if personal papers are lacking, official documents are many, and they describe in great detail many of Scott's more important ideas and measures. Scott had so much to say that was important and interesting, and so many controversial issues of the time were dealt with by him that the attempt must be made to depict his career from official documents and other contemporary publications and journals.

Curiously enough the main handicap in studying Scott's life and career has proved to be not the absence of private papers but the absence of public controversy. By the time he was appointed to the chief office in Assam he had acquired so great a reputation and so much won the confidence

[5] S. K. Bhuyan, 'Stray notes on David Scott,' *Assam Review,* May 1928.

[6] Indeed, such was the extent of the discretion granted that in 1834, three years after Scott's death, the Court of Directors reproved the Calcutta Council for "placing unlimited confidence in Mr. Scott's power of management and in allowing him to govern the country in his

of government that many of his early administrative measures —especially revenue and judicial—were accepted almost without discussion by the government at Calcutta. Enormous faith and trust were put in Scott's experience and local knowledge and he was given discretionary powers on many occasions.[6] This, we are afraid, has made the study of that part of his life mainly narrative. But the growth and development of Scott's measures, especially in Assam, a distant territory with an administrative system so very unlike that of the rest of India, are themselves perhaps sufficient, when considered in detail, to reveal the working of Scott's mind and his contribution to the non-regulation type of government.

David Scott was born on the 14th of May 1786 in the much respected Scott family of Usan and Dunninald in the north-east of Scotland, the second son of Archibald Scott.[7] His grandfather Robert Scott, born in 1705, was an advocate in Dunninald, a Member of Parliament for the County of Angus in 1732-1734, and was created a freeholder of Forfarshire in 1743.[8] Robert not only played an active part in public affairs, but also, as Laird of Dunninald, took very good care of his patrimony.[9] David's father, Archibald Scott, married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Renny of Usan, by whom he had two daughters. The Rennys of Usan were very wealthy people and Elizabeth as the eldest lawful daughter of Robert Renny of Ulysseshaven had a charter under the great seal (given on 12 Feb., 1751) of the lands

own way without satisfying yourself with respect to the mode in which he governed." Letter from Court, no. 14, 1834, quoted in R. M. Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam,* p. 235.

[7] Writers Petitions, Vol. 17, no. 32, enclosures attached to Scott's petition to become a writer in the Bengal Establishment.

[8] A. Jervise, *Epitaphs and Inscriptions from Burial Grounds and Old Buildings in the North East of Scotland,* Vol. II, pp. 393-95; C. H. Philips, *The Correspondence of David Scott Director and Chairman of the East India Company relating to Indian Affairs* 1787-1805, p. XI and n.

[9] C. H. Philips, *op. cit.,* pp. X-XI and XI n.

and barony of Ulysseshaven with the village, tower, fortalice and the fishery town of the same. Archibald thus in right of his wife Elizabeth—who died in December 1761—became the heir of Usan.[10]

Archibald's second wife Margaret Chalmers was the daughter of Principal Chalmers of King's College, Aberdeen. By her Archibald had two sons Robert and David, and two daughters—Isabella and Anne.[11] Robert, as a nominee of Henry Dundas, went out to India in 1795 as a writer on the Bengal Establishment and remained well acquainted with all the influential people in the East India affairs through his uncle David Scott (1746-1805), whose daughter he married at a later date.[12]

David Scott thus came from a family of considerable local standing, wealth and importance. He attended a good school, Musselburg Academy now Musselburg Grammar School[13] where he studied Latin, French, drawing and geography besides writing, arithmetic and book-keeping. The Rector of the Academy, John Taylor certified him to be meritorious and his 'genius' and improvement' to be 'very marked at all our public exhibitions'.[14] But in his career David Scott probably found his family's standing and his own education of much less importance than the position and influence of his uncle. This uncle, Archibald's younger brother, was also named David Scott. After acquiring a fortune and an exceptional knowledge of Eastern trade he had returned to a distinguished public career in Britain in 1786.[15] His native place experienced the full benefit of his

[10] A Jervise, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 394.

[12] C. H. Philips, *op. cit.*, Letter no. 26, David Scott to William Farlie, London, 30 March, 1795, p. 30. See also pp. 53, 134, 159, 160, 161, 177, 284, 303, 304, 315, 357, 390, 400, 416 for Robert's relationship with D. Scott (Sr.).

[13] This information has been gratefully received from Mr. T. Henderson, the Headmaster of the School.

[14] Writers' Petitions, Vol. 17, enclosures to petition no. 32.

[15] C. H. Philips, *The East Indian Company* 1784-1834, p. 72; See also C. H. Philips, *Correspondence of David Scott*, p. X-XXII.

unwearied services as one of her representatives in successive parliaments for the County of Angus and for the district of Burghs. The records of the East India Company amply attest the zeal and talent with which for many years he helped as a Director and Chairman, to control the affairs of that commercial body.[16] It was through his uncle's recommendation while Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Company, that the younger David also got a job of a writer on the Bengal Establishment in August 1801.[17]

David Scott was appointed a writer in August 1801 and on 27 January, 1802 he was selected for the service in India. He sailed that same year landing in India on 15 October, 1802.[18]

On arrival he joined Fort William College. In the fourth examination held at the College in January 1804 Scott attained a second class both in Hindustani and Persian.[19] During his Fort William days Scott also developed a close friendship with two persons who in later years, being in the most influential positions, probably had more effect upon Scott's career than any knowledge of Persian and Hindustani. One of these was a fellow student George Swinton, who rose to the position of the Chief Secretary to the Government of India. Swinton was an extremely brilliant student who attained the highest distinction in the College examinations which he took, along with David Scott, in 1804.[20] Their friendship was an abiding one, and Swinton was of the greatest use in sponsoring Scott's plans and policies and in furthering his career. The other person was

[16] *Ibid.*, and A. Jervise, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

[17] Writers' Petitions, Vol. 17, enclosures to the petition no. 32, David Scott's (Senior) recommendation of his nephew.

[18] H. T. Prinsep, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

[19] C. Buchanan, *The College of Fort William in Bengal*, pp. 194-97.

[20] Swinton got a degree of Honour in Persian, a degree of honour in Hindustani, stood fifth in Arabic, took part in the public disputation in Persian, secured the second prize for Persian composition and also received an honorary reward in classics. C. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-214.

William Carey who was Scott's teacher in the College.[21] Scott was a devout Christian[22] and Carey's missionary zeal drew the young man to him. When Scott was appointed to Cooch Behar and later took charge of the Garo hills, he used his influence to open up the hill country to missionary activity.[23] His correspondence with Carey at the Serampore mission headquarters became regular and their common aim brought them into a still closer relationship of mutual support and help. To the work of the Serampore College Scott contributed by sending three Garos, who, together with a Punjabi, a Maratha, two Khasis, two Arakanese and several Bengalis helped to give that institution its all-India scope.[24]

Throughout his career Scott was kept busy in the north-eastern region of India—his headquarters shifting constantly eastwards with the development of new spheres of influence of the Company on that frontier. In August, 1804, when he quitted Fort William College he was appointed assistant to the collector of Gorakhpur. In September, 1807, he was appointed registrar of the zilla court of Gorakhpur and assistant to the magistrate, and then officiating magistrate. In March, 1812, he was made acting judge and magistrate of Purnea. In December he was sent to Rangpur as the judge and magistrate of that district. In September, 1816, he was made the commissioner in Cooch Behar and joint magistrate at Rangpur.[25] While in this post Scott became deeply involved in the affairs of the Garo hill tribes. His suggestions for promoting the general civilization of these tribes led the Government of India to create a new post for the execution of these plans, for which of course they found no other person better qualified than Scott himself. Hence in 1822 Scott was made the civil commissioner of the North-East parts of Rangpur with a salary of Rs. 40,000 per annum including

[21] S. P. Carey, *William Carey*, p. 353.

[22] See Chapter VI, 179-180.

[23] S. P. Carey, *op. cit.*, pp. 353, 361, 401, 432-3.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 353.

[25] H. T. Prinsep, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

all travelling and other personal charges. In addition to this laborious duty he was to continue to hold the office of the commissioner of Cooch Behar. To these joint posts was added on 15 November, 1823, the office of Agent to the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier of Bengal, with an additional allowance of 1,000 rupees per month. The latter appointment was occasioned by the unsatisfactory state of the relation between the British government and the Burmese. On 3 December, 1828, after the occupation of Assam, Scott was selected by the Bengal government for appointment as Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit of Assam with special powers under Regulation I of the year 1829.[26] He still retained his office as the governor general's Agent on the North-East Frontier. This multiple situation he held till his death in August, 1831. As agent to the governor-general on the North-East Frontier of Bengal and civil commissioner at Rangpur he drew 12,000 rupees as salary and as commissioner of revenue and circuit of Assam, North-East Rangpur, Sherpur and Sylhet from March, 1829, he drew Rs. 40,000—a total salary of 52,000 rupees per annum.[27]

Just after Scott's death a Colonel Watson,[28] who calls Scott his 'cousin and friend' collected 'a variety of interesting notices' about Scott's public and private life. Some of

[26] In several documents the Commissioner of Assam was addressed as 'Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit, 17th Division, Assam.' According to Regulation I of 1829 the 17th Commissioner's Division comprised Sherpore and Sylhet and it was placed for a time under the Commissioner of Assam and North-East Rangpur. See K. N. Dutt, *A Handbook to the Old Records of the Assam Secretariat,* p. 47.

[27] Personal Records, Vol. XIX, pp. 27-61.

[28] Archibald Watson (1779-1855) was the eldest son of James Watson and his wife Anne, the sixth daughter of Robert Scott of Dunninald and Usan. Archibald Watson married his cousin Anne, daughter of Archibald Scott (David Scott's father) of Usan. His career was distinguished, for going out as a cadet in 1794, he became a Major-General in 1838 and Lieutenant General in 1851. He died at Abbethune on 22 August 1855. See Major V. C. P. Hodson, *List of Officers of the Bengal Army,* 1758-1834, pp. 401-402.

this information was incorporated in Adam White's *Memoir of the late David Scott, Esq.* which he edited; but the rest of the material has since been mislaid or lost.[29] It is particularly unfortunate that the information which Col. Waston collected about Scott's early life and education—prior to his embarkation for India and for the period subsequent to his arrival in India in the year 1802 up to the first Burmese war—should have been among the missing material. The reason Watson gives for not incorporating this portion in *Memoir* is described by him thus: "on considering that after all there could be little or nothing new to Mr. Scott's friends and connections in anything I had written; or to speak more candidly, a distrust of my own ability to do justice to the life and character of my departed friend, finally induced me to withhold this part of the intended publication."[30] However, from the little notes which he has incorporated here and there in White's *Memoir* and from Scott's own letters—public and private—and also from the writings of his subordinates, much can be discerned of Scott's personality. White describes him as a stout man, weighing 13 or 15 stone always with a smile on the lips and a sparkle in his small, but lively eyes. He speaks of Scott, in his private life, as "the most unassuming of human beings, and his manners of the most simple and unpretending."[31] He was rather tall, inclined to corpulency and of commanding appearance; fond of discussion and was an excellent conversationalist. In discussion his weapon never carried any offensive wound nor was he disposed to suppress any one with the superiority of his intellect.[32]

[29] Watson said that he transmitted to England most of his collection which he had received from different quarters 'not then entertaining the most distant idea of the present undertaking' (the publishing of a memoir). Unfortunately we have failed to find any trace of them anywhere in England and Scotland.

[30] Major A. White, *A Memoir of the Late David Scott, Esq.*, pp. VIII-IX.

[31] *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

[32] *Ibid.*, p. 66. See also App. 40, p. 133.

Contemporary officials were unanimous in reporting Scott's "uniform kindness of manner" and his high sense of justice towards the natives.[33] He also entertained a high opinion of their intellectual capacity, and Col. Watson, when he visited Scott at Gorakhpur in 1808 found that it was often a subject of complaint with him that Europeans, in general, should evince so little regard for the feelings of natives of rank or respectability with whom they had occasion to associate either in business or in the ordinary intercourse of life.[34] In a communication to one of the correspondents of *The Bengal Hurkara and Chronicle* Scott expressed his conviction that "on liberal and extensive employment of the natives depended the result, whether the judicial system could or could not be rendered efficient."[35] With regard to the lower ranks of the natives also, Scott seldom exhibited any sense of the moral superiority of Europeans and he was full of praise for the honesty of the native servants in all matters entrusted to their charge. Scott's paternal treatment of his native servants was such that they were devotedly attached to him. Watson writes on this: "I am convinced that, to a man they would at any time, have hazarded their lives in his service had occasion called for such a proof of their attachment."[36] In this Scott was considered a second Cleveland and the man who brought the government into honour and won for the European name a high respect among 'the countless inhabitants of the mountains, village, and desolate wild.'[37] We are told that the leading feature in Scott's character was an "enlarged and

[33] J. M. Bhattacharya (ed.), *Assam Buraji* (of Haliram Dhekial Phukan), Appendix A, Nos. 7 and 8, Notes from *Samachar Chandrika,* March and August 1832; A. White, *Memoir,* App. Nos. 39 and 40, notes from *Bengal Hurkara* and *The Calcutta John Bull,* Sept. 1831; See also App. 5, p. 83 Lt. H. Vetch to Col. Watson, Jorhat, 9 Dec. 1831.

[34] White's *Memoir,* pp. 20 and 25.

[35] *Ibid.,* App. 39, pp. 127-128, a news item from a correspondent of *The Bengal Hurkara and Chronicle,* 15 Sept. 1831.

[36] White's *Memoir,* p. 25.

[37] *Ibid.,* App. 39, pp. 129-30.

expanded" benevolence which influenced him to exert himself in advancing individual interests of all under his charge, both Europeans or natives in as much as his limited means would permit."[38] "The more intimately one became acquainted with Mr. Scott", wrote one of his subordinates, "the more it must have been to esteem so excellent and benevolent a man. His ear was always attentive to the voice of complaint, by whomsoever preferred, or at whatever hours, however unreasonable; and won for him the hearts of the injured, and the respect of all." The same gentleman however hastened to add: "Exerting himself to the utmost in the performance of his duty, he exacted the same from all under him, and his example gave stimulus to the most indolent."[39]

The story of Scott's devotion to duty is most incredible not only for the highest degree of conscientiousness which it represented but also for the circumstances under which he had to work. The period between 1825 and 1831 was the busiest period of his career. It was during this period that he applied himself most vigorously both mentally and physically, to propounding and carrying out most of his administrative ideas—ideas known not only for their novelity but also for their peculiar suitability to the areas and peoples concerned. And yet it was also the period when, because of his diseased heart and various other physical ailments, he was under the constant fear of being carried off suddenly.[40] In 1825 while recommending a particular measure for the welfare of the Garos he beseeched the government that his suggestion, being the best solution under the existing condition, should be immediately accepted so that he could also fulfil his desire before his death [41] In 1827 after a full diagnosis of Scott's case, Beadon, the medical officer looking after him, came to the conclusion that as in any case Scott was dying

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

[39] *Ibid.*, App. 5, pp. 84-5, Lt. Vetch to Col. Watson, Jorhat, 9 December, 1831.

[40] *Ibid.*, Apps. 30 and 40, pp. 118 and 133.

[41] See *infra*, p. 177.

it would be justified if he made Scott's remaining days 'much more comfortable' by means of a strong tonic which would, however, shorten his life otherwise.[42] But the irony was that the brave and dashing Beadon died three months before the ailing Scott in May 1831 for not following the advice given by his patient. Beadon died due to the severe wound that he received from the hostile khasi archers whose arrows penetrated into his nose, arm and leg. Beadon was determined to take revenge upon the Nongkhlaw Khasis for their cruelties and thereby exposed himself dangerously without caring for Scott's 'remonstration.'[43] In fact until May 1831 when he finally became incapacitated for any physical exertion, Scott had been vigorously active alike mentally and physically. In the letter of April 1827 where Beadon stated the incurable condition of Scott's health, he made a note also of the latter's remarkable endurance: "His appetite is good; he drinks three or four glasses of wine daily; has taken a good deal of exercise—having been shooting almost every evening; pulse rather less, and not so full; the thrill, I thought last night, for the first time, rather less than before; and what I think a very good symptom was, that having had information of a tiger the day before yesterday, we did not return to dinner until past nine o'clock whereas every day previous we had dined at four."[44] In September 1829 when too he was "suffering considerably from his complaint, and in low spirits for the loss of three of his most intimate friends," he was found by another of his subordinates, Lt. Hamilton Vetch of the Assam Light Infantry, to be agile to the extent of exposing his person "to much unnecessary danger." In Lt. Vetch's words:

"His [Scott's] disease, at this time, often obliged him to sleep in a sitting posture, and frequently prevented his getting any sleep at all; his application to business never relaxed, and generally, he

[42] White's *Memoir,* App. 7, Beadon to Lamb, Singamaree 28 Apr., 1827.

[43] *Ibid.,* Apps. 26, 27 and 28, Scott to Lamb Nangundee, 21 May, Myrung, 26 May and Myrung, 10 June 1831 respectively.

[44] *Ibid.,* App. 7.

commenced hearing petitions, and cases read to him, by daylight in the morning, and often continued at work till it was dark. Sometimes we used to ride through the country, to visit different villages, and endeavour to bring the people to our interest, or gain information of the outlaws; that means might be taken for their capture—for, at this time, the Cassyas had given up all attempts at resistance, but had commenced on a more annoying system; that of attacking coolies coming with supplies, or cutting off their own countrymen who seemed favourably inclined to our government. Although Mr. Scott could scarcely walk from the palpitation of his heart, and, indeed, seldom attempted it, still this was no obstacle to his undertaking long and difficult journeys. Mounted on a small, but strong and active mule, dressed in his tartan shooting jacket, with his double-barrelled gun in his hand, (for he rarely quitted it), I have seen him climb hills, and descend ravines, where it was astonishing his mule kept its footing, or he his seat."[45]

White informs us that Scott's official work commenced at sunrise and he remained in the *Kutcherry* until sunset when he strolled in his garden. But even at that time if visits were paid to him he was in the habit of listening to and entering freely into conversation with the natives around him.[46] In an undated private letter, most probably written in 1829 we get the following information from Scott himself:

"Although I am very desirous of proceeding to Calcutta, the urgency of my business there is not, however, so great as to induce me to go, should you think it likely to prove injurious to my health; and I should therefore be glad to know your opinion on this head; and, also whether you think it likely that any benefit would be derived from a voyage to sea, or residence in a colder climate. Although I do not think that too much attention to business has been the cause of this illness, as I never found myself fatigued, or otherwise affected by it at the time; I may as well mention, that before the accession of the present fit, and, also of the one I experienced in February, last year, I had been much occupied in court, for several months, usually going at seven in the morning, and with exception to an hour or two at breakfast, sitting till sun-set."[47]

[45] *Ibid.*, App. 5, pp. 76-79.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

[47] *Ibid.*, App. 17, Scott to Lamb., n.d.

There is no doubt, therefore, that his health deteriorated due to his excessive application to the official business. His anxiety for the well-being of the numerous population under his care is most conscientiously shown in his last words: "I wish you, gentlemen," he told his death-bed attendants, Lt. Col. Watson, Dr. Rhodes and Lt. Day, "to bear witness to Government, that I am no longer able to conduct the affairs of the country."[48]

Scott is described as being possessed of a vigour and grasp of understanding rarely to be met with and one which exercised itself more readily in moral and political discussion and in scientific pursuits than in imaginative studies.[49] The appendices to White's *Memoir* containing some of the letters written by and about him give an ample proof of the vast range of his mind. A few excerpts from the letters that he wrote to his friend Lamb, will prove the point so far as his interest in scientific and agricultural pursuits was concerned:

"Many thanks for the drawings, and the promised oat seed. I never saw this lizard—in colour it resembles the biskopra, but the latter has a shorter tail, and is considered (I believe without foundation) poisonous by the natives. We had a tremendous storm of hail a few days ago; which if it extended so far, must, I fear, have greatly injured your coffee crop. I collected a sufficient quantity of the stones to enable me to ascertain the rate at which ice melts; and the result leaves no doubt as to the feasibility of supplying Calcutta from Churra Poonjee. The contents of a small basket, weighing about 14 lbs., and not exceeding eight or nine inches in diameter, took about 40 hours to melt, so that a mass of—[ ? ] inches every direction would not entirely consumed in less than about a month; and, as the voyage might, by proper means, be performed in fifteen days, a sufficient portion of every cargo would reach the presidency."[50]

"Did you hear anything about the cave which was said to be on the top of the hill, and have you seen, or have you any intention of again visiting, the one at Pandua ? I have been requested by Mr. Swinton particularly, to examine it for fossil bones; which, indeed, I

[48] *Ibid.*, App. 43, extract from a letter from H. T. Prinsep, Secy. to the Governor-General to Mr. Swinton, Simla, 20 September, 1831.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[50] *Ibid.*, App. 8. Scott to Lamb, Singamaree, 8 May [1827].

did, as far as we went in 1824; but, if there is anything of the sort, I think it is most likely that they will be found at the bottom of the deep pit, from which they could not still be removed by the action of the water, that may be supposed to have swept the part we examined."[51]

"I have the pleasure to send, for comparison with your register of the state of the wind, the account kept in this quarter. There has been an unusual prevalence of westerly wind for this season of the year, which is perhaps an advantage, as it will more clearly show whether or not there is any corresponding irregularity at Decca. The observations in May were made at Singamaree, from the 8th of June to 4th of this month, at Gowalpara; and subsequently, above it. The man has only put down E. and W.—N. and S; but generally speaking, the wind, when from the former directions, blows due E or W, as it may be: when from the S. it is generally a little to the eastward of it; and when from the north, usually to the westward. I hope you will observe, hourly, on the 17th of this month; which has been appointed for observation of thermometer, barometer, hygrometer, and all other metres, all over the world. This intimidation will, I fear, prove too late; but I hope you may have seen the notice in Brewster's Journal."[52]

"My cow-boat was wrecked yesterday; and I tried this morning a bottle of milk, prepared with (sugar ?) in thee Lukeerja river, which was perfectly fresh, and, I really think, not distinguishable, in coffee or tea, from new milk—I observe that this mode of preserving milk is noticed by Dr. Paris in his Pharmacologia."[53]

"This is a very fine part of the country, quite level enough for the use of the plough, and already productive of rice, Indian corn, etc. to which I have little doubt, that wheat, barley, and other grain may soon be added. It is elevated nearly 1,000 feet, and there seem to be none of those mists so prevalent at Churra and Nunkhlow, owing to the proximity of the plains. Could you oblige me by sending, up, in a small boat, to Pundua, three or four maunds of fresh wheat, for seed, and the same quantity of barley, oats, boot-gram, making up the remainder of the cargo with potatoes, and anything that Mr. Mascarenhas or Callogreed may have for me."[54]

[51] *Ibid.*, App. 11, Scott to Lamb, Nunkhlow, 14 Apr. [ ? ].

[52] *Ibid.*, App. 13, Scott to Lamb, On the Burhampooter, near Gowahatty, 11 July [ ? ].

[53] *Ibid.*, as above.

[54] *Ibid.*, App. 26, Scott to Lamb, Naugundee, 21 May, 1831.

At the same time Scott's attainments as a linguist were of no mean order. He was well acquainted with Persian, Hindustani and Bengali languages, and had attained considerable knowledge of the local dialects including those of the Garos.[55] But it was the diversity of his pursuits which characterised his mind more than anything else. It is said that he was interested in philosophy, chemistry, geology, minerology, natural history, and zoology, and from his early years he had been much addicted to the study of mechanics and practical surveying. Being often alone, at a distance from medical aid, he had been compelled to study medicine and the contemporary medical officers working in his area of jurisdiction were of the opinion that his proficiency therein was very respectable.[56] He was in the habit of subscribing to, and reading the different medical periodicals, and to

[55] *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. One example of Scott's knowledge of Bengali is his translation of Kishan Kant Bose's *Account of Bootan* printed in the volume on *Political Missions to Bootan* by Ashley Eden and others.

[56] White's *Memoir,* pp. 52-53; Scott took enormous care of his health, noting and studying every odd symptom carefully with the help of books and journals on medical sciences that he subscribed to. He wrote to Lamb once: "After an attentive perusal of Laennec's book, both Mr. B. [Beadon] and myself agreed, as to the probability of the disease being what he terms, a hypertrophy of the heart, in all probability, conjoined, as seems often to be the case, with nervous affection of the same organ." When at one stage his case was referred to Sir Henry Halford the latter observed that Mr. Scott "appears to have observed closely the symptoms of his disorder, and has described his sensations in a striking and accurate manner." In one of Beadon's letters to Lamb we have another interesting account of Scott's medical expertise. Beadon writes on 28 April, 1827 thus : "Your letter I received yesterday, and feel particularly obliged for Mr. Scott's case, previous to my joining him; but I hope the world will not benefit by it for a long time yet... About three days after you left us, Mr. Scott observed, that he thought the sensation conveyed to his fingers was what Laennec describes as the cat-mutter. I told him I thought not exactly that, although evidently not altogether a natural action of the heart; and I *luckily* added, that the sensation from the instrument was just what he would suppose from feeling it with his hand.... At the former part of my letter, I made use of the word luckily, and I will now tell you why. Last night I went, as I usually do every

the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta he sent a paper on *Chutwan, a febrifuge bark used amongst the Natives.*[57] Adam White writes about the range of Scott's mind: "On seeing Mr. Scott for the first time, it struck me with astonishment how he had been able to acquire this diversity of knowledge, knowing that throughout his career in India, he had been busily employed: but I ascertained afterwards, that he was in the habit of reading late at night, after his friends had left him for the evening."[58]

Col. Watson tells us a little more about Scott's insatiable love for books. When he visited Scott in 1808 at Gorakhpur, he found that one of the latter's main leisure occupations was general reading. He found Scott particularly interested in chemistry and practical mechanics etc., the last chiefly in connection with his agricultural pursuits and gardening, on both of which he was extremely keen. "Scott's library then, though not extensive, was well chosen and arranged, so that the general reader was sure to find abundant amusement, and the more studious something adapted to his particular train of thought, in whatever branch of research his views might lead him. The translation of the Greek and Roman classics; some of the best historians and most celebrated writers on the subject of natural and moral philosophy and political economy; books of reference; dictionaries of most language; ancient and modern maps etc. occupied select corners of his collection." Watson also makes it clear that the library was not entirely serious and practical in its contents. Fiction, chivalry, romance were all included and acquaintance might be renewed with Defoe, Richardson, Anna Radcliffe, or even with Amadis de Gaul and the renowned son of Mandi. At a later date Scott's "own casket selection" included Russels, Burton's *Anatomy*

second, or third night, to use the stethoscope, and, to my surprise Mr. Scott called for something, which, when produced, turned out to be a tin stethoscope, so made, that he could use it himself." See White's *Memoir,* Apps. 7, 10, 20.

[57] *Asiatic Journal,* 1827, Vol. 23, p. 507.

[58] White's *Memoir,* p. 54.

*of Melancholy,* Shakespeare, Thomas a Kempis, *Paradise Lost,* the select works of Bishop Hall and others.[59]

Scott was often moved by the beauty in nature and he always wanted to share his enjoyment of a sceneric beauty with his friends either by recommending the places to them or by just describing his experience. Once in the month of May he was describing to a friend a place in the Khasi hills, some twenty-two miles away from Nangkhlaw : "some evenings ago, after a shower of rain, the scenery towards Assam was beautiful beyond anything we ever saw, or what, judging from its cold weather appearance, I could have expected. We saw the course of the Burhampooter for 90 miles downwards, and about 40 upwards; the view being there closed by the hills. The gradation of tints, from the rich velvet-green of the hills, in our immediate neighbourhood, to the different shades of those various distances to 100 miles, was most superb."[60] To the same friend he also described his natural gratification at seeing a Khasi dance: "The costume was most elegant; and the dresses, considering the situation of the parties, really splendid. I never saw anything, in the way of dress, off the stage, to be compared to it."[61] Bold and adventurous as he was Scott loved mountain climbing. Archery was his favourite game and while in the Khasi hills he acquired considerable skill in it. In his early career at Gorakhpur Scott was also particularly fond of hunting and shooting and even in Assam amidst official preoccupations he was always ready, at the call of his youthful friends to join in a tiger, rhino or boar hunt.[62]

The same dash and boldness, the same vigour and enterprise which he displayed in such sports he displayed in no less measure, as will be seen, in his administration or in the skirmishes in which he was involved whether with the rebel Khasis or the Burmese in Assam.

[59] *Ibid.,* pp. 54-56 n.

[60] *Ibid.,* App. 12, Scott to Lamb, 23 May, [1829].

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] *Ibid.,* pp. 53 and 60, see also App. 8.

It was a fact that 'the further the European went into *mufassal* the less he was subject to official control.'[63] But it did not necessarily mean, as Professor Furber has rightly pointed out, that the East India Company had become a mere device for the achievement of private ambitions. The civil servants were not entirely devoid of ideals and a standard or sense of duty to the alien people among whom their lot was cast.[64] The first half of the nineteenth century in India, although it saw a rapid British territorial expansion, was also the period when the duties of the British officers, agents of the paramount power, were greatly extended. This dual growth raised the urgent question of British purpose in India. The period being also famous for the activities of many brilliant young British officers with firm belief and ideas of administration, various answers to the above question were not wanting. Since in the last decade or so, many systematic studies have come out on the attitudes and policies of these administrators—taking them either individually or in groups, representing different schools of thought—, it has been possible now to classify the answers to the question of the British purpose in India under a few broad headings such as, conservative, paternalist, imperialist, liberal, evangelical and utilitarian. It is not however, suggested that any of these attitudes appeared in rigid and clear-cut form having precise demarcations from the allied or opposite attitudes. It was not possible. The younger followers of the departed masters had to modify occasionally their time-honoured policies to suit the changing or newly-encountered political, social and economic conditions of the areas under their jurisdictions. The Munro School paternalists, for example, although they did not believe in any doctrinaire policies, exhibit an authoritarian strain even in their measures seen around 1829. This was because of the changing situation and pragmatic reasons.

David Scott favoured British territorial expansion and played an important role by his advocacy of a forward policy

[63] H. Furber, *John Company At Work*, p. 329.

[64] *Ibid.*, p. 342.

in Assam during the first Burmese war (1824-26). His imperial vision also extended to the creation of European contonments and even military colonies in the healthy Khasi hills, the basis for a possible fourth presidency centered upon Assam. He encouraged Christian missionary effort, and was a pioneer in advocating its application to the tribal areas of the frontier. Through all his ideas and measures, on the whole, he emerged as a Paternalist of the Munro School, although in some cases an 'authoritarian strain of Liberalism'—to use the expression of Professor Stokes —was not altogether lacking in him. In Scott, as Mackenzie pointed out,[65] we undoubtedly see the most of the characteristics of the Paternalist School of Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe—although he never served under any of them and, so far as our research could trace, had no private correspondence with them either.[66] The paternalists' liking for personal paternal government; their brand of conservatism (not just a desire to return to the pre-Cornwallis era, but an opposition to the wanton uprooting of the time-honoured system of society on speculative principles); austerity of their lives and their commanding sense of public duty; their liking for the *ryotwari* system of land settlement; their imperial vision; their constant awareness of the historical significance of their work; their romantic bent of mind; their dislike of uniformity in the name of reform; their appeal to history and experience; their disbelief in the possibility of sudden improvement[67]—all these we see in Scott's attitudes and his administrative measures. It was the spirit of 'regulation' that the Paternalists fought tooth and nail, in all their lives,[68] and it is important to note that Scott was the original author of the Regulation X of 1822 which was the basis of

[65] See supra, p. 2.

[66] Except that when in 1827 Sir Charles Metcalfe became a member of the Supreme Council some of Scott's measures came under his scrutiny.

[67] E. Stokes, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-25.

[68] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

the non-regulation type of government in the newly annexed territories on the eastern frontier of Bengal.

The study of Scott's ideas and actions are specially important because here we see how he understood the people whom he himself conquered, for there are many who hold the opinion that the servants of the East India Company in its early years understood the people whom they had conquered, better than did their grandsons.[69] In the final chapter we have made some retrospective observations.

[69] See Furber, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

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the creation of European cantonments and even military colonies in the healthy Khasi hills, the basis for a possible fourth Presidency centered upon Assam. He encouraged Christian missionary effort, and was a pioneer in advocating its application to the tribal areas of the frontier. His uncle, Director David Scott, had been deeply involved in the question of Indian trade and commercial relations. Scott likewise actively pursued the possibilities of trade with Burma and China, and showed great practical enthusiasm in developing the resources and commerce of the areas in his charge. But he was basically a Paternalist and whether it was the question of slavery in Assam or restoring a native regime or christianising the Garos this aspect of his philosophy of government played a dominant role.

The book traces from a variety of interesting angles the career of this fascinating personality and in the process contributes much fresh material not only to our understanding of paternalism as a philosophy of government but also to our knowledge of political, economic and social history of the north-eastern region of India in the early years of the last century.

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