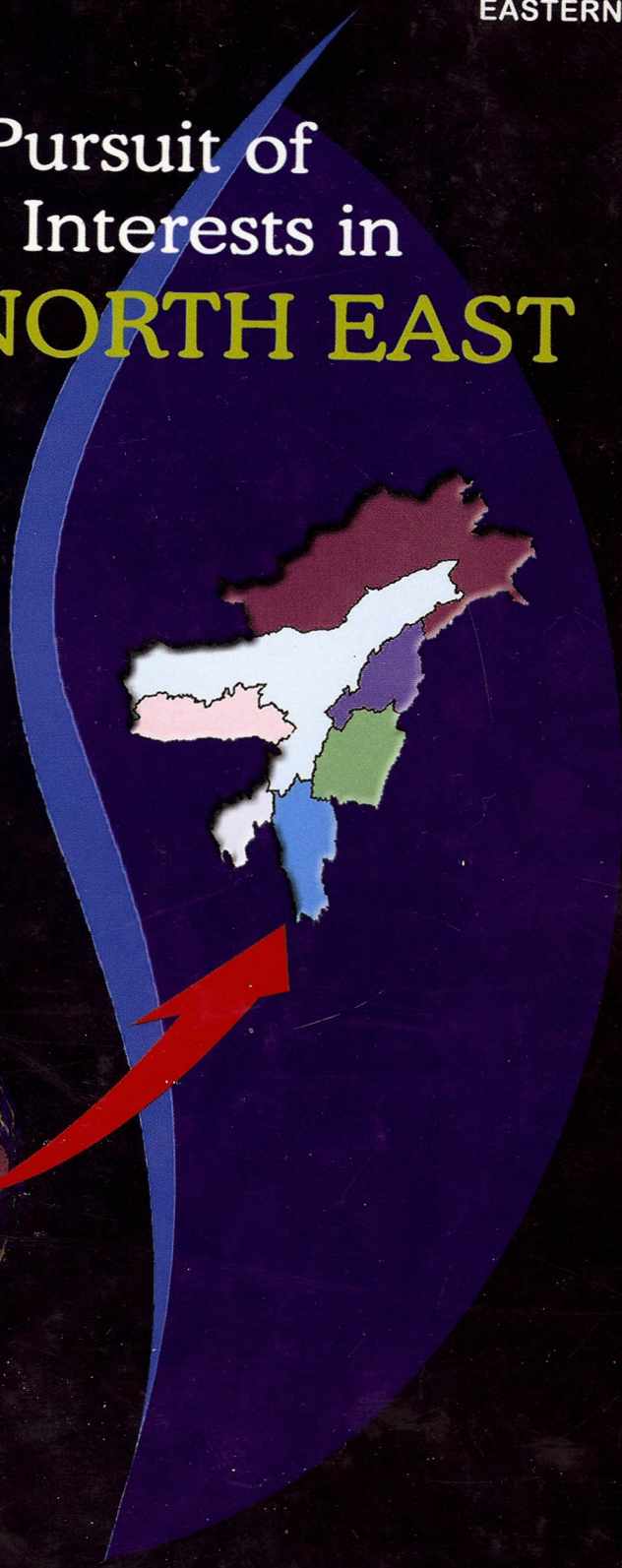


EASTERN

The Pursuit of  
Colonial Interests in  
**INDIA'S NORTH EAST**



*Ranju Bezbaruah*

# **THE PURSUIT OF COLONIAL INTERESTS IN INDIA'S NORTH-EAST**

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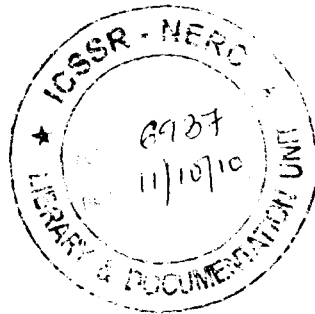
RANJU BEZBARUAH



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**Bezbaruah, Ranju**

**The Pursuit of Colonial Interests in India's North-east**



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*Dedicated*  
*to the memory of my*  
Parents

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## PREFACE

The possession of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam by the East India Company and the subordination of Manipur as a "Native State" in early nineteenth century brought the British into contact with the intermediary hill tribes. Some of them were brought into their knees by conquests. Others were practically left to themselves. Yet, the British claimed the whole region west of Burma as theirs. Having stepped into the shoes of the erstwhile Ahom Monarchy in its paramount position, the British also inherited all rights enjoyed by the Monarchy in the hills in the immediate proximity of the Brahmaputra Valley. Despite this claim, the East India Company brought under its direct rule only those territories which were identified as economically and strategically important. In the process, territories under the sovereign control of the erstwhile Ahom Monarchy, which the British perceived as economically and strategically insignificant, got separated from the regularly administered Brahmaputra Valley districts of Assam.

Inner Lines, as distinguished from the outer-most limits of the British territories, had been prescribed between the regularly administered British districts and the neighbouring hills in order to safeguard the colonial administrative and economic interests. These Inner Lines had been altered several times depending on the colonial requirements of protecting tea, coal and other economic interests.

The establishment of British paramouncy in the hills north of the Brahmaputra up to the confines of Tibet was however a long-drawn and tortuous process. The Chinese machinations in the Lohit Valley during the first decade of the twentieth century, followed by the murder of Noel Williamson, the Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya, in the Abor Hills in 1911, led to the Abor Expedition of 1911-12 and survey of practically the whole of the hill-tract south of the Tibetan Plateau. The whole frontier north of the Brahmaputra, including a portion south of that river, was organised into Tracts separated by Inner Boundaries. Outer Limits of these Tracts had not been defined, although shadowy British paramouncy was asserted by defining the McMahan Line. Establishing a "Loose Political Control" over the tribes within an unspecified

northern limit and by asserting paramountcy south of the Himalayan Divide, thus filling in the “power vacuum” in the region, the British had been able to inhibit the Sino-Tibetan presence south of the Himalayas. The Inner Lines of the Frontier Tracts had also been re-adjusted in order to fit in the changed requirements in pursuit of colonial interests.

In the southern frontier, arising primarily from the transfer of the South Lushai Hills from Bengal to Assam, the Chief Commissionership of Assam had inherited an undefined southern boundary of the Lushai Hills District. The southern portion of the district was flanked by an “unadministered” Tract from the south and the Chin Hills District of Burma from the east. South of this “unadministered” Tract was the Northern Arakan District of Burma. The internecine feuds involving the “administered” tribes of the British districts and those from the “unadministered” Tract constituted ever-present threats to the peace in the British districts. Further, the Koladyne River which flowed through the “unadministered” Tract was the most important trade-route of South Lushai Hills to Kaletwa and Paletwa in Arakan. The Lushai Hills District authorities therefore had a vested interest in the continued peace in the “unadministered” Tract. Further, flight of villagers from the Lushai Hills in order to escape being taxed, also endangered the economic interests of the district. The persistent efforts of the Lushai Hills authorities to have the “unadministered” Tract apportioned between Assam and Burma, on which the definition of the boundaries of the district with those of Northern Arakan and the Chin Hills depended, proved futile for a considerably long time largely on account of the Burma Government’s disinclination to assume responsibility for any more of the unprofitable Tract. The southern part of the district had to be administered within a provisional boundary as extended *de facto* further south up to the junction of the Sulla and the Koladyne rivers. While the boundaries had been finally defined in the 20’s and the 30’s of the twentieth century, ethnic groups were bartered away in order to safeguard colonial economic and strategic interests.

In the Manipur Valley, far-reaching changes in the archaic land revenue system and monetisation had integrated the State’s economy with the colonial economy. Manipur was opened for English goods. The abolition of the obnoxious systems of *lallup* and *pothang* and their replacements by money payments, apart from banishing these inequitable practices, had also served long-term colonial economic interests. For, circulation of more currency also meant more trade. In the hills of Manipur, colonial imposition of a burdensome house-tax without reciprocating in the form of welfare measures caused piled-up resentments among the people. The resentment of a section of the Kuki tribe against attempted recruitments of *coolies* for sending to the European theatre of the First World War gave them a rallying point against the British. The anti-recruitment agitation of the Kukis assumed the character of an anti-colonial national liberation armed struggle in no time. The anti-British resistance was put down. But the colonial establishment had also been impressed with the necessity for keeping the people contented by initiating a measure of welfare programme in the hills.

In-depth study on the above aspects of the colonial rule in North-East India is yet to be made by researchers. H.K. Barpujari's *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier* (3 Vols.), is no doubt a commendable pioneering study on the colonial penetration into the hills of North-East India. The wide canvas of the work however leaves enough space for further and nuanced analyses of several aspects of colonial policy. The scope of the Volume IV of H.K. Barpujari's edited, *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, which deals with the frontier in two of its chapters, is even more limited. M.L. Bose's *History of Arunachal Pradesh* is a lucid account of the developments in the frontier areas north of the Brahmaputra during the colonial period. The work is however of the nature of a very general study. Likewise, Birendra Chandra Chakravorty in his *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam* gives a very general account of British relations with most of the tribes and leaves very wide scope for further study on each one of them. Dorothy Woodman's *Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian and Russian Rivalries*, Alistair Lamb's *The McMahon Line: A Study of Relations Between India, China and Tibet 1904 to 1914*, Parshotam Mehra's *The McMahon Line and After : A Study of the Triangular Contest on India's North-eastern Frontier between Britain, China and Tibet, 1904-1947*, and Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* are very well-researched and widely acclaimed contributions in the field of frontier study. These works do not primarily deal with the nuances of the British relations with the tribes of the North-East frontier or the background and ramifications of the Inner Lines. References to these subjects in the above-mentioned works are not only spasmodic but also incidental. In case of the southern frontier, Suhas Chatterjee in his *Mizoram under the British Rule* discusses the expansion and consolidation of the colonial rule in the Lushai Hills District of Assam. The thrust area of the work is limited to the developments during the nineteenth century. A discussion on the developments leading to the final definition of the southern boundaries of the Lushai Hills therefore is not within the scope of the work. Alexander Mackenzie's *The North-East Frontier of India* is an official version of the British relations with the hill tribes of the region till the early 1880's. While the work is a major source for study in the field, it is short of an objective evaluation of the developments. Likewise, Captain St. John F. Michell's *The North-East Frontier of India* (A topographical, political and military report) may be better described as a source than an objective history of the tribes of the North-East Frontier of British India during the early phase of the colonial rule. Another very worth-mentioning official version of British relations with the frontier tribes and the subordinate "Native State" of Manipur during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is Sir Robert Reid's *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941*. It is the only work where some glimpses of the *pothang* system that prevailed in Manipur could be found. It also gives sweeping accounts on the *Lallup* system and the Kuki Uprising. They are however neither in-depth analyses nor complete pictures. Although an official version, Reid's work gives a good background of the formation of the Sadiya Frontier Tract and the Balipara

Frontier Tract, although the question of the “Inner Boundaries” and the Inner Lines has not received his adequate attention.

The present work is an effort to fill in these gaps.

A good number of scholarly works have been published on the different aspects of colonial rule in the Brahmaputra Valley and Cachar. H.K. Barpujari's *Assam in the Days of the Company*, his edited the multi-volume *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, S.D. Goswami's *Aspects of the Revenue Administration in Assam*, Priyam Goswami's *Assam in the Nineteenth Century: Industrialisation and Colonial Penetration*, and J.B. Bhattacharjee's *Cachar under British Rule* are among the important contributions in the field. Scholars like J.B. Bhattacharjee and David R. Syiemlieh, have also discussed in their publications on different aspects of colonial penetration into the Garo Hills and the Khasi Hills. The present work has therefore excluded from its scope the core areas of the Brahmaputra Valley, Cachar, the Khasi and the Garo hills. The present work is limited to those aspects of the colonial rule which practically continue to be the *terra incognita* hitherto untraversed by historians.

The work is based predominantly on archival sources mostly collected from official files, preserved in the Assam Archives (Assam Secretariat Record Room), Dispur, which have hitherto been practically left unexplored by scholars. These include several interesting and historically significant reports on frontier matters, including the one dispatched by Major W.M. Kennedy, quoting at length a Note by W.C.M. Dundas. The Note dispelled the Chinese claims over a part of the Mishmi hills in the neighbourhood of Walong on the basis of Tibetan habitation in the area. While the relevance of the report as an important piece of evidence to be adduced at the Simla Conference of 1914 was recognised by the then Assam administration, it escapes the attention of even the scholars studying the background of the McMahon Line. Important documents such as this have been incorporated in the Appendices.

Apart from the archival sources, other primary sources like collection of documents have also been consulted. Secondary sources, particularly Alexander Mackenzie's *North-East Frontier of India*, and Robert Reid's *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam* were of immense help in narrating developments for which adequate archival materials could not be traced.

Several rare and important official maps have been incorporated in the work and their sources recognised. While some of the maps have been reduced in size for the sake of convenience, their scales have been maintained.

While the author has tried his best to make an objective evaluation of the developments in the light of available materials, he dares not claim his study as the final word. He concedes

that possibly there will be scope for new interpretations as new materials are available for consultation.

The author is profoundly grateful to Parshotam Mehra, an eminent authority on frontier matters, but for whose advice and insistence for the publication of a work of this nature, this work possibly would not have taken its present shape and format. He is also grateful to his colleagues and friends with whom he shared and discussed many of his ideas. Most of the materials for the work had been collected in the Assam Archives (Assam Secretariat Record Room), Dispur. The archivists and staff deserve whole-hearted thanks from the author. The staff of the K.K.Handique Library, G.U., and the Sapru House Library, New Delhi, had also been helpful throughout. The author's thanks are also due to all of them. The author's family had been supportive throughout and he appreciates their co-operation very much. Finally, the author is extremely grateful to the EBH Publishers (India), Guwahati, for taking the onerous responsibility of publishing this work.

University of Gauhati  
3 October 2009

*Ranju Bezbaruah*

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# ABBREVIATIONS

Adm. Rep	:	Administration Report the Political Agency, Manipur
ASPAPPA	:	Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Appointment and Political, Political-A
ASPCA	:	Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Confidential -A
ASPFA	:	Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Foreign-A
ASPPA	:	Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Political-A
Astt.	:	Assistant
Capt.	:	Captain
Ch. Commr.	:	Chief Commissioner
Commr.	:	Commissioner
D.C.	:	Deputy Commissioner
Dept.	:	Department
Dy. Secy.	:	Deputy Secretary
EBAPCPA	:	Eastern Bengal and Assam Proceedings, Confidential Political-A
EBAPPA	:	Eastern Bengal and Assam Proceedings, Political-A
For.	:	Foreign
GOA	:	Government of Assam
GOB	:	Government of Burma
GOEBA	:	Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam
GOI	:	Government of India
LHA	:	Lushai Hills Authorities
Offg.	:	Officiating
Pol.	:	Political
S.D.O.	:	Subdivisional Officer
Secy.	:	Secretary
Under Secy.	:	Under Secretary
Supt.	:	Superintendent

## **SECTION ONE**

### **INNER LINES AND INNER BOUNDARIES**

## THE DARRANG AND LAKHIMPUR INNER LINES 1875-1904

The possession of the Brahmaputra Valley made the East India Company the paramount power in the region. With the transfer of authority, all rights and responsibilities pertaining to the region exercised earlier by the Ahoms devolved upon the British. Further, the East India Company's government "claimed as British territory the whole country up to the boundaries of Manipur and Burma".<sup>1</sup> This implied that territories of the neighbouring hill tracts could be taken over at will if and when it suited British interests.

Despite this claim, and despite the devolution of all rights enjoyed by the Ahom monarchy to itself, the East India Company brought under its direct administration only those territories which it considered either economically or strategically important. In the process, territories earlier under the jurisdiction of the Ahoms, but economically or strategically considered insignificant, were left outside the realm of regular British administration. Thus, territories over which the Ahom government earlier exercised exclusive administrative power, to the exclusion of all other neighbours, got separated from the territories now brought under direct British administration.

The inevitable disputes arising from large-scale presence of profiteers and investors beyond the settled areas led the Secretary of State for India in Council to pass an enabling legislation, Act V of 1873 ( Inner Line Regulation , 1873 ), effective from 1 November 1873. This enabling Act allowed the provincial government to prescribe an "Inner Line" from time to time for the specified districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, the Garo Hills, Cachar and the Chitagong Hills, beyond which all British subjects were prohibited from entering without a pass duly certified by the respective Deputy Commissioners. These Inner Lines were never intended to indicate the external limits of British territory although in certain cases they did coincide.<sup>2</sup>

During 1875 and 1876, Inner Lines from a point on the Disang, a southern tributary of the Brahmaputra (between the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts), to the Barnadi, a northern tributary of the Brahmaputra (between the Darrang and Kamrup districts), were comprehensively defined in accordance with the Regulation of 1873. These Lines covered

the whole length of the Lakhimpur and Darrang districts and separated the regularly administered settled areas of the two districts from the adjoining tracts inhabited by hill tribes. Entry of British subjects into the hills beyond the Inner Lines without a pass under the hand and seal of the Deputy Commissioner of the concerned district had been prohibited. The Lakhimpur Inner Line which was notified on 30 September 1875 was the first one to be defined. The Darrang Inner Line was notified on 8 March 1876. These Inner Lines had undergone several modifications before portions of these two districts were incorporated in the North-East Frontier Tract following the Abor Expedition of 1911-12.

The Lakhimpur District covered both the banks of the Brahmaputra, while the Darrang District was confined only to the north of the Brahmaputra. The hills to the east of the Disang River on the frontier of the Lakhimpur District, south of the Brahmaputra, was inhabited by the Naga, Singpho and Khamti tribes. North of the Brahmaputra, on the frontier of the Lakhimpur district, was inhabited by the Mishmis, Miris, Abors and other minor tribes. West of the Lakhimpur-Darrang boundary, the northern neighbourhood of the Darrang District was inhabited by the hill-tribes like the Abors, Miris, Daflas, Akas, and Bhutias.

Extension of tea cultivation up to the limits of the settled areas of the Lakhimpur and Darrang districts and beyond, prospects of minerals, and forest products like timber and rubber in the foot hills, constituted ever present causes of disputes between the concerned district administrations and the hill tribes. Many tea gardens like Namsang, Taurack and Hukanjuri in the Lakhimpur District on the south bank of the Brahmaputra protruded into the territory claimed by the Namsangia, Mithonia and Barduwaria Nagas. On the north bank of the Brahmaputra too gardens like Harmati and Joyhing were located on the very edge of the settled areas of the district. In the Darrang District, some tea gardens like Singli, Rangaghar and Bargang were also located on the very proximity of the foot of the Abor Hills.

That apart, many hill-tribes over the years had migrated to the plains of the Lakhimpur and Darrang districts. Their settlement in the plains had been regulated in order to confine their habitat in the valley to certain pockets only. Nevertheless, these hill-tribes living in the plains very often visited the hills and were involved in numerous disputes with their brethren in the hills. Further, the hill-tribes were in the habit of abducting people from the plains into slavery, and demanding ransom on account of their runaway slaves.<sup>3</sup> The peculiar practice of reprisals like *Lalik*<sup>4</sup> and claims for blood money on behalf of the female relations of victims or *akis*<sup>5</sup> endangered the peace of the frontier areas. Encroachments from the plains and raids from the hills inhibited peace on the frontier so necessary for the growth and prosperity of the tea industry and frontier-trade.

### THE INNER LINE OF THE LAKHIMPUR DISTRICT

On the South-eastern corner of the Lakhimpur District (adjacent to the Sibsagar District), recurring disputes between the tea planters and the neighbouring Naga tribes inhibited the necessary atmosphere of peace in the tea-belt. The managements of three gardens of Namsang, Taurack and Hukanjuri in particular had been facing enormous troubles from the Naga tribes.

Established in 1834 by the Government, these gardens were later sold to the Assam Company. Troubled by the Nagas, the Assam Company had entered into arrangements to pay them annual subsidy of Rs. 200. The Northern Assam Company which bought the gardens in 1865 continued to pay the same subsidy until the gardens were sold out to one Minto in 1871. In 1872 the Chief of the Nagas of Namsang claimed not only the subsidy for the current year but also for 1871 when the gardens were not owned by Minto. The Deputy Commissioner declined to entertain the appeal of Minto on the ground that the gardens were beyond his jurisdiction. Further, he maintained that the territorial jurisdiction of the district did not abridge the landed and other rights of the tribes. In this context, the Government decided to incorporate the tea gardens within the jurisdiction of the district and to prohibit European planters to settle beyond its limits.<sup>6</sup>

In the mean time, during the winter of 1874-75 the mineral potential of the hills east of the Disang was also ascertained under the instructions of the Government.<sup>7</sup> The prospect of transporting Assam-tea to Eastern Tibet through the Mishmi territory in order to compete with Chinese-tea was also conceived of.<sup>8</sup> Further, tribes like the Khamptis, Singphos, Duanias and Fakials living on the frontier of the south-eastern corner of the Lakhimpur District were in the habit of visiting their relatives beyond the Patkai (Patkoi) Range into Burma, and at times even raided villages across that range.<sup>9</sup>

North of the Brahmaputra, different Abor tribes of the Dihong Valley had been a constant threat to the peace of the Eastern portion of the Lakhimpur District. The Abors regarded the Miris as their slaves and prohibited their emigration to the British districts. On the other hand, the Abors themselves were interested in settling at the foot of the hills in order to find cultivable fields deserted by the Miris, although it was prohibited in 1835. They not only claimed lands within the settled limits of the district but also levied taxes on the inhabitants. All this led to disputes followed by raids. In 1858 and 1862 the Kebang and Rumkang Abors raided villages across the Brahmaputra in the very vicinity of Dibrugarh.<sup>10</sup>

In November 1862, through an agreement with the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, the Meyong Abors accepted the limit of British territory as extending to the foot of the hills. The right of the British to construct posts, forts and roads on the frontier had also been recognised. The Abors received the right to settle in British territory on condition of payment of revenue fixed by the Government. The Abors ensured that their disputes would be referred to the Deputy Commissioner rather than taking law into their hands.<sup>11</sup> An identical agreement was also signed with the Kebang Abors in January 1863.<sup>12</sup> Agreements were also reached with several other Abor tribes living between the Dihong and the Dibong rivers in 1862 and 1866.<sup>13</sup> These Abors recognised the foot of the hills as the demarcation line of the British jurisdictions and theirs. Nevertheless, in the winter of 1875-76 several Abor Chiefs objected to the survey of the Dipi and Nari peaks north of the Brahmaputra within British territory.<sup>14</sup>

In order to pre-empt situations that might drag the Government into meddling in avoidable disputes with the hill tribes, prescription of an Inner Line according to the Regulation of 1873

assumed importance. With this setting, the Inner Line of the Lakhimpur District was prescribed on 30 September 1875. The line ran (from West to East):

From the eastern boundary of the District of Darrang, that is, from a point on the Mora Sessa River, the line shall follow the course of the Rajghur Ali to the Subansiri river. It shall deviate from the Rajghur Ali, so as to follow the western, northern and eastern boundaries of the Harmati No. 95 and Joyhing No.65 waste-land grants. From the Subansiri to a point on the Sessi River, marked by a masonry pillar, it shall follow a line, to be hereafter marked out, along the foot of the Abor Meree hills. From the masonry pillar on the Sessi River, it shall follow the patrol path to the Dimu out-post; thence along the patrol path to the Pubha out-post. From the Pubha out-post it shall follow the patrol path to the confluence of the Lalli and the Brahmaputra Rivers; thence it shall follow the right bank of the Brahmaputra and Dibang Rivers to the junction of the latter river with the Sessiri opposite the Sessiri out-post. From the Sessiri out-post to the Dikrang out-post, the line shall follow the patrol path; thence to the masonry pillar on the right bank of the Brahmaputra River it shall follow the patrol path. From the said masonry pillar it shall run along the right bank of the Brahmaputra River to the confluence of the Noa Dihing with that river; then it shall follow the left bank of the Noa Dihing River to its confluence with the Kherampani River; thence along the right bank of the Kherampani and Dihing Rivers to the confluence of the latter river with the Namsang River; thence along the left bank of the Namsang River to a masonry pillar near the Hukanjuri tea garden; thence it shall follow the path connecting the Hukanjuri with the Taurack tea garden to a masonry pillar on the right bank of the Disang River, near the latter garden. Then along the right bank of the Disang as far as the Luedoigarh Alli<sup>15</sup>

The Lakhimpur Inner Line of 1875 thus included the Namsang, Hukanjuri, and Taurack tea gardens and the plantation lands of the Joyhing and Harmati tea gardens under the definite jurisdiction of the Lakhimpur District. The coal-fields of Tirap and Namdang were however left outside the Inner Line since they were unlikely to be obstructed by the small neighbouring Naga villages.<sup>16</sup>

Tea plantations very often encroached upon territories beyond the settled areas. Major Graham's Report of 15 March 1875, for example, mentions that the Harmati tea garden was situated on the high left bank of the Dikrang and was many miles in advance of the most northerly villages of the plains. It was therefore exposed to dangers in case of complications with the hill men.<sup>17</sup> The Inner Line of 1875 addressed these problems by practically incorporating all existing tea plantation areas within the regular district jurisdiction and prohibiting their extension beyond it.

On 30 September 1886, an alteration in the Inner Line south of the Dihing River was made. From the confluence of the Buri Dihing with the Kherampani, the line now followed the left bank, instead of the right bank of the Buri Dihing up to its confluence with the Tirap River, thus following an alignment somewhat south of the original line.<sup>18</sup>

As stated earlier, the Inner Line did not indicate the limits of the British territory. The then Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Charles Elliot, candidly recorded his views that the

Lakhimpur Inner Line was not going to remain as fixed in 1875. The northward advance of the Line was only a matter of time depending on the pressure on land within the settled areas of the district:

“Our policy of the *Inner Line* or in other words our claiming sovereignty over lands which we do not profess to govern... is only a temporary makeshift... The time will come... when population will increase round Dibrugarh and will tend to roll northward... we shall have (then) to advance our posts and protect them... Every endeavour need be made, in the mean time, to cultivate friendly relations with these tribes, encouraging them to trade with the British subjects and above all avoiding measures which might excite their anger or suspicion.”<sup>19</sup>

In tune with this policy, the *Assam Frontier Tract Regulation* of 1880<sup>20</sup> enabled GOA to appoint Political Officers to look after “any tract inhabited or frequented by barbarous, or semi civilised tribes adjoining or within the borders of any of the districts included within the territories under the administration of the Chief Commissioner of Assam.” The Regulation empowered such officers to recommend boundaries between such tracts and the adjoining British territories. It stated:

“Whenever any question arises as to the line of boundary between any tract to which the provisions of this Regulation have been extended as aforesaid and the adjoining territory in British India, such officer as the Chief Commissioner of Assam from time to time appoints may consider and determine such line of boundary; and the order made thereon by such officer, if confirmed by the said Chief Commissioner, shall be conclusive.”

On 8 November 1882, Francis Jack Needham was appointed as the first Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya under the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur. The Deputy Commissioner was instructed to conduct “matters relating to affairs on the Abor, Mishmi, and Singpho-Khampti frontiers, and the arrangements regarding the location of the frontier outposts” as well as the “political relations with the Abors and Mishmis” through the Assistant Political Officer.<sup>21</sup> The tract controlled through Needham was defined as the Dibrugarh Frontier Tract by a notification on 22 April 1884.<sup>22</sup>

Needham soon found that the Padam Aabors (Bor Abors) claimed a right to the land on the left bank of the Dibong near Nizamghat and threatened to expel the Chulikatta Mishmis from there. They also persistently staked their claim on a large slice of the plains within “undoubtedly” British territory bordering on the Dibong. They not only resisted the fishing rights of the Miris and Doms in the area they claimed, but also had the “audacity” to tell Needham that he had no business to interfere in the matter. They had been continually “bullying the Miris on every possible occasion.” They also demanded the removal of the posts at Bomjur and Sesserri.<sup>23</sup>

In April 1893, the Bor Abors of Bomjur seized and carried off three boats belonging to the Miris for carrying *sahibs* up the Dibong. On being warned that their acts of high-handedness might lead to the stoppage of their *posa*,<sup>24</sup> the Abor *Gams* arrogantly replied that they would make it up by realising it from the British subjects in the plains.<sup>25</sup>

An expedition was sent into the Abor hills in the winter of 1894. Although the Abors sent feelers for peace, they treacherously massacred 27 men at the British camp at Bordak.<sup>26</sup>

The Chief Commissioner, William Ward, had anticipated that if the *Bordak Massacre* was left unavenged, the British would “never succeed in bringing the Abors who live in the territory immediately contiguous to our own to a state of submission.” Ward was convinced that “imprudent demands and insolent behaviour”, which was expected from the Abors, might force the hands of the British to go in for more “annexation”.<sup>27</sup>

Since the Abor expedition of 1893-94, the Passi Meyongs too became increasingly assertive and obstructed the Miris of Hilonimur and Poba, and others engaged in timber cutting and dragging of timber logs on the banks of the Dihong and the Lali. They asserted that the land belonged to them.<sup>28</sup>

With this setting, the Inner Line of the North Lakhimpur Subdivision between the Dihong and the Subansiri rivers had been pushed northwards to the foot of the hills, *viz*, the *Outer Line*.<sup>29</sup> Between the Subansiri and Sisri rivers, it followed the already demarcated line along the foot of the hills. From the Sisri, the line left the foot of the hills and approached the Brahmaputra and following the right bank of that river for some distance crossed it at the confluence of the Noa Dihing.

The Lakhimpur Inner Line as modified on 12 March 1897 ran as follows :

From the eastern boundary of the district of Darrang, that is, from a point on the Mara Sessa river, the line shall follow the course of the Rajgarh Ali to the Dikrang river. From the Dikrang the line shall deviate from the Rajgarh Ali so as to follow the western boundary of Harmati, No.95 waste land grant, up to pillar No. 1, and run in a northerly direction to meet masonry pillar No. 2, erected at a distance of one mile east of the Dikrang river near Ali's Chang. Thence it shall follow a line along the foot of the Dafla and Miri Hills to a masonry pillar on the west bank of the Subansiri river. Thence it shall run in a southerly direction to the Rajgarh Ali where it crosses the Subansiri river a distance of 11/4 miles. From the Subansiri to a point on the Sissi river marked by a masonry pillar, it shall follow a line along the foot of the Abor Miri Hills. From the masonry pillar on the Sissi river it shall follow the patrol path to the Dimu out post; thence along the patrol path to the Dijmur (or Simen) river to the Poba outpost. From the Poba outpost it shall follow the patrol path to the confluence of the Lalli and the Brahmaputra rivers; thence it shall follow the right bank of the Brahmaputra and the Dibang rivers to the junction of the latter river with the Sissiri opposite the Sissiri outpost. From the Sissiri outpost to the Dikrang outpost the line shall follow the patrol path; thence to the masonry pillar on the right bank of the Brahmaputra river it shall follow the patrol-path. From the said masonry pillar it shall run along the right bank of the Brahmaputra river to the confluence of the Noa Dihing with that river ; then it shall follow the left bank of the Noa Dihing river to its confluence with the Kherempani river ; thence along the right bank of the Kherempani to its confluence with the Buri Dihing ; thence along the left bank of the Dihing river to its confluence with the Tirap ; thence along the left bank of the Tirap river to the mouth of the tributary stream flowing from the Lungtok hill ; up the stream to its source, and

thence across the summit of the Lungtok hill to the source of the stream flowing into the Dirak river, down that stream to the Dirak river, and thence along the Dirak river to its junction with the Dihing ; thence along the right bank of the Dihing river to its confluence with the Namsang river ; thence along the left bank of the Namsang river to a masonry pillar near the Hukanjuri tea garden ; thence it shall follow the path connecting the Hukanjuri with the Taurak tea garden to a masonry pillar on the right bank of the Disang river near the latter garden. Then along the right bank of the Disang as far as the Ladaigarh Ali.<sup>30</sup>

From the very alignment of the modified line two intentions of the British could be clearly discerned. It was intended to assert more authority on land disputed by the Abors and restrain them from troubling the Miris. It was also to facilitate settlement of land for more tea plantations. Before the actual demarcation of the modified Inner Line on the ground was made, the Subdivisional Officer of North Lakhimpur continued to invite fresh waste land applications from the tea planters seeking settlements within the limits of the foot of the hills.<sup>31</sup> The Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur suggested that the Subdivisional Officer should take special care in demarcating the Inner Line so that the waste land grants applied for settlement were not left out of the ordinary district jurisdiction.<sup>32</sup> While the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur originally instructed that pillars indicating the Inner Line be placed at the first low range of hills, it was not found to be feasible between the Jayhing Grant and the Dirjee River as the area was covered by thick jungles.<sup>33</sup> In this context, the Government of Assam (GOA) finally decided that pillars should be erected at each river or stream crossing the line, and at any paths leading to the hills.<sup>34</sup>

The implication of the modified Inner Line in relation to the tribes can be understood from the following statement of the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur made on 5 November 1897:

“... We claim the whole of the country up to the foot of the hills. This claim the Abors have only recently understood and admitted.”<sup>35</sup>

On 13 January 1898, the Chief Commissioner, Henry Cotton, had ordered the eviction of settlements of the Passis on the banks of the Poba River. He had also instructed the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur to assess poll-tax on the Passis settled at Lali Chapori. On their failure to pay poll-tax, they should either be ejected to their hills or if they wanted British shelter, they should be allowed to take refuge in the Kopsam Chapori – a shelter for the manumitted Abor slaves. Abor settlement was prohibited in other places. The Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, explaining why the poll-tax was insisted upon, had stated:

“The Chief Commissioner insists on the payment of poll tax, in order that there may be no misconception in the mind of these settlers or of the Abor people generally in regard to their status when allowed to settle in the plains. The impression that they are settling in their own territory must be dispelled, and the simplest method of doing this is by subjecting them to taxation.”<sup>36</sup>

Cotton also gave his consent to burning of villages and display of strength of the Military Police to enforce eviction as a last resort at the discretion of the Assistant Political Officer.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, Abor settlements on the banks of the Dihong were allowed provided they did not occupy land on either side of the river below Sibiyamukh and pay poll-tax.<sup>38</sup> In the mean time, the Miris who had settled in the plains outside the Inner Line too were brought under the net of poll-tax although they did “not claim independence”, in order to prevent the Abors from claiming rights on the territory that the Miris had occupied.<sup>39</sup>

Thus by the end of the nineteenth century, *Pax Britanica* had established itself on the northern hills beyond the Lakhimpur District and the fiat of the *Raj* succeeded in overawing the tribes.

### THE DARRANG INNER LINE

The British district of Darrang on the north of the Brahmaputra, had on its immediate northern proximity from west to east the territories inhabited by the Bhutias, Akas, Daflas, Miris and Abors. The district was separated from the Kamrup District on the west by the Bar Nadi and from the Lakhimpur District on the east by the Mara Sessa River. The northern boundary of the district was left undefined at the time of its constitution. During the decay of the Ahom monarchy, the Bhutias occupied land south of the Gohain Kamal Ali, some distance to the north of which was the original boundary. The annexation of the Khaling and Buriguma *Duars* on the north-west frontier of the district in 1841<sup>40</sup> and several treaties signed by the British with the Bhutiyas and Akas in 1844 implicitly made the foot of the hills the jurisdictional demarcation line between the territories of these tribes and those of the British by stipulating provisions regulating entry of the tribes to the “plains”.<sup>41</sup>

Although no written agreement was signed between the British and the Daflas, since the British occupation of Assam the Dafla Garh, an old road running along the frontier from south-west to north-east, was assumed to be the boundary. But the British regarded the low outer hills as belonging to them.<sup>42</sup> Further, the prohibition of the entry of the Charduar Daflas into the plains by the British following their raids in 1835,<sup>43</sup> in effect meant the *de facto* fixation of the line of demarcation on the foot of the hills, where in any case the paths between the hills and the plains had to be blockaded in order to give effect to such a policy. In 1836-37, 180 Dafla *Gams* of Char Duar, and 58 Dafla *Gams* of Na Duar had given up their practice of demanding annual ransom from plains people whom they regarded as their *Bohoteahs* (one which bound to render personal service to the overlord), in lieu of subsidy from the British.<sup>44</sup> Thus the British territory in their neighbourhood covered up to the limits of the plains.

In the 1870's the Daflas took to several raids into the plains in order to settle disputes in most cases arising from enticing away of hill-women or slaves by the plains Daflas. Despite two blockades in 1872 and 1874, their raids did not end. Disturbance to the peace in the tea-producing plains by a major raid led to the expedition of 1874-75.<sup>45</sup>

Apart from the general policy of defining Inner Lines which was set in motion with the notification of the Lakhimpur Inner Line, the disturbances on the Dafla frontier in the early

1870's must have impressed GOI of the necessity for identifying an Inner Line on the Dafla foot hills without loss of time. It is also worth-noting that in 1872 Major Trotter visited the western Dafla villages to prospect for coal and two of the Chiefs, Pareng and Keleng, offered to lease their land for Rs. 200 as rent.<sup>46</sup>

If the experiences of the Sibsagar and Lakhimpur frontiers were any indication, a mad rush of speculators was anticipated. Apart from this, the general objectives mentioned in the Inner Line Regulation of 1873, such as preservation of natural resources like rubber, wax and other jungle products, and protection of wild elephants, warranted the definition of the Darrang Inner Line in 1876.

The Inner Line of the Darrang District was defined by a notification of 8 March 1876. The line ran:

From the eastern boundary of the district of Kamrup, that is, from the pillar No. 98 on the Bor Nadi, the line shall follow, in an easterly direction, the southern boundaries of Bhutan (including the countries of the Kariapara and Charduar Bhutias) and of the Akha and Duffla Hills, as defined by the Revenue Survey in the years 1872-73-74-75, and demarcated by pillars Nos. 98 to 160 inclusive. From pillar No. 160 the line shall run in a south-easterly direction to the point where the Balum River cuts the northern boundary of the Singlijan waste land grant No. 18. Thence the line shall follow the eastern boundary of the Singlijan grant No. 18 to the point where the boundary cuts the Duffla Gar. Thence the line shall follow the Duffla Gar to a point on the Mora Sessa River, being the north-westerly extremity of the "Inner Line" of the Luckhimpur District, as notified in the *Gazette of India*, page 452, of the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1875.<sup>47</sup>

### THE LAKHIMPUR FRONTIER : ASSESSMENT IN NOA DIHING-KHEREMPANI-BURI DIHING TRIANGLE

In 1897-99, on the basis of a report of Tongyangnong, the Duania Mauzadar of Buri Dihing, it was decided to assess ten Singpho, Khamti, and Duania villages situated in the triangle, within the Inner Line bounded by the Noa Dihing, Kherempuni, and Buri Dihing rivers. Jauhing Gam (Singpho Bisa Raja) objected to the measurement of the land being made by the Mauzadar of Buri Dihing.<sup>48</sup> On 8 March 1899, Tongyangnong the Mauzadar, whom Jauhing regarded as "a dog of a Duania" was supposedly shot dead by the latter's henchman Sikan Nangang.<sup>49</sup> By October 1900 however, about 1093 bighas of cultivated and 48000 bighas of uncultivated lands in these villages were measured with the help of an influential Duania and brought under assessment.<sup>50</sup> Needham observed that the assessment was made "partly because we already assess villages further down, but mainly to show the displeasure of Government at the murder of the Buri Dihing mauzadar."<sup>51</sup> The Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, W.J. Reid, maintained that:

"Jauhing is the man of most local influence, and it is absolutely necessary to disabuse him of the idea that he can escape obedience to orders, or evade the payment of revenue by causing the murder of a mauzadar."<sup>52</sup>

By the end of the century therefore, the Noa Dihing- Kherempani- Buri Dihing triangle was definitely brought under ordinary administration.

### ANNEXATION OF SARKARI NAGA TERRITORY AND PUSHING OF THE LAKHIMPUR INNER LINE

Beyond the Inner Line, the Nagas residing close to Margherita who called themselves *Sarkari* Nagas<sup>53</sup> generally maintained excellent relations with the British, albeit occasional feuds amongst themselves that endangered peace on the routes to the plains. But the Nagas living to the south of the Patkai, called Rangpang Nagas,<sup>54</sup> were a constant source of danger to the British tea gardens, collieries, and the Assam Railways and Trading Company. In collaboration with the Singphos and several Naga villages loyal to them, the Rangpang Nagas since the middle of the nineteenth century indulged in raids, massacres, thefts, and abductions for human sacrifices. On the very first occasion, they attacked and burnt the Kolagoiya village, subordinate to Namsang, and killed its Chief and twenty others. Since then they raided two other subordinate villages of Namsang – Wachok and Dongsong - killing more than 40 people. Further, in another raid, they killed 50 odd people of the village of Saban. In November 1901, they killed several men at the village of Panthai and carried away women and children.<sup>55</sup> They also very often enticed or kidnapped *coolies* from the coal mines and Makum garden for human sacrifices.<sup>56</sup> Between 1896 and 1898, the Assam Railways and Trading Company at Margherita continually complained of thefts by Nagas.<sup>57</sup> Needham however maintained that every time the Rangpangs visited Margherita, they lost no opportunity to steal properties of the Assam Railways and Trading Company.<sup>58</sup> The basis of the belief that it was the Rangpangs who were really responsible for the thefts, for which the *Sarkari* Nagas were blamed, was obviously based on the fact that the *Sarkari* Nagas earlier caught Rangpangs with iron sleepers and other pieces of iron they had stolen from Ledo.<sup>59</sup>

Sharing Needham's apprehension, the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, J.F. Gruning recorded his concern that:

“Panthai is only about an hour's journey from Mr. Holder's garden, Makum, and it is a very serious matter that the Rangpang should dare to raid so close to the Inner Line. Mr. Needham informs me that, in order to do so, they have to cross two passes 7,000 feet high. If they are allowed to raid the *Sarkari* Naga villages close to our territory with impunity, there seems to be no reason why they should not venture a little farther and raid the Makum garden.”<sup>60</sup>

Both the Assistant Political Officer and the Deputy Commissioner strongly pleaded for the establishment of a post of 20 men on the Lungchang Hill in the *Sarkari* Naga territory, ten to twelve miles south of Margherita, and close to the Tirap River, which formed the boundary of the *Sarkari* Nagas.<sup>61</sup> It is worth-noting that the Agent and General Manager of the Assam Railways and Trading Company, Mr. Hawkins, was made a party to the decision making process of the district administration while selecting the site of the proposed post at Lungchang.<sup>62</sup>

Following the sanction of the Government of India (GOI) on 19 January 1903, a Military Police out-post consisting of 20 men was established on the Lungchang Hill in the country of the *Sarkari Nagas* to the south-west of the Lakhimpur District on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, beyond the then prevailing Inner Line, on 9 February 1903. The guards previously maintained at Tikak and Ledo were removed.<sup>63</sup> While sanctioning the establishment of the Lungchang post, the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, had no doubt that it would accelerate the process of pushing the Inner line in that direction; and his Foreign Secretary had foreseen that "it was expected that on account of the rise of the Tirap river in flood" the Lungchang post "would result in extension of the Inner Line to that river".<sup>64</sup>

The writing on the wall was more than clear. Already on 17 December 1902, GOA had proposed to GOI for consideration of the formal annexation of the territory of the *Sarkari Nagas*.<sup>65</sup>

The capture of two Tusa Nagas within British territory, while they were going along the railway line to the Namdang colliery in search of work, by six Nagas of the Yogli village at the time of the establishment of the Lungchang outpost, and the subsequent defiant attitude of their Chief convinced the Government of Assam (GOA) of the urgency for the annexation of the *Sarkari Naga* territory. Although the Deputy Commissioner, accompanied by Needham and 30 Military Police under the command of Major Chatterton, had visited the offending village on 18 March 1903 and rescued one of the captives, he could not persuade the headman of the village even to see him. The village was however burnt as a punishment. Three of the Nagas implicated in kidnapping the two men from British territory, were taken prisoners, tried by the Deputy Commissioner and sentenced to terms of rigorous imprisonment.<sup>66</sup>

Both, Needham, Assistant Political Officer of Sadiya, and Gruning, Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, strongly favoured the annexation of the *Sarkari Naga* territory in order to put an end to the disturbances on the border and to extend effective protection both to its inhabitants and to the industrial belt in the neighbouring British territory.<sup>67</sup>

The rationale for the proposed annexation was mentioned in GOA's letter of 24 September 1903 in the following words:

"...The Chief Commissioner considers that this measure should be carried into effect without delay, with the object of affording to the important settlement of Margherita, with its tea gardens and coal-mines, security from molestation by the savage Naga tribes to the south of the *Sarkari* country. The reality of this danger has been still further illustrated by a case which occurred about the time of the establishment of the Lungchang outpost, in which two Tusa Nagas were captured by six Nagas of the Yogli village... in British territory as they were going along the railway line to the Namdang colliery in search of work."<sup>68</sup>

The area that was proposed to be annexed was also bounded by good natural boundaries. The Tirap River on the east and south-east and the Dirak River on the south-west, and the source of the Tirap in Topson Hill, close to that of the Dirak in Changyok Hill, provided very

clear natural boundaries of the territory. Further, the local officers were also convinced that the *Sarkari* Nagas themselves would welcome the annexation of their country, and that in return for the protection thus afforded, they would be willing to pay house-tax to Government.<sup>69</sup>

GOA while requesting GOI's sanction for the annexation of the *Sarkari* Naga territory, had also suggested its incorporation in the Lakhimpur District and the modification of the Lakhimpur Inner Line of 12 March 1897.<sup>70</sup> On 6 January 1904, GOI sanctioned the proposed annexation and approved the new Inner Line of the Lakhimpur district.<sup>71</sup>

The Inner Line of 6 January 1904 ran as follows :

“The line shall follow its present course from the eastern boundary of the district of Darrang to the confluence of the Tirap river with the Dihing river; thence along the left bank of the Tirap river to its source in the Tapson Hill; thence along a straight line to the source of the Dirak river in the Changyok Hill; thence along the Dirak river to its junction with the Dihing.”<sup>72</sup>

The pursuit of colonial interest in supporting British capital while pushing the Inner Line was obvious. Within a month, GOA specifically instructed the Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts to communicate the modification of the line to the Assam Railway and Trading Company, and the tea planters in the neighbourhood.<sup>73</sup>

The January 1904 line was however based on inaccurate maps. This line lasted only for a year and was further revised on 19 December 1904. It was pointed out that if the description of the line in the notification of 6 January 1904 was strictly adhered to on the ground, it would run along the left bank of the Tirap to its source about eight and a half miles south-west of Laju and then turn in a north-easterly direction in a straight line to the source of the Dirak river.<sup>74</sup> It was also realised that extension of the line up to the source of the Tirap had involved “a more extensive annexation of territory than the Chief Commissioner had contemplated.”<sup>75</sup>

GOA accordingly candidly admitted that the line was “based on an incomplete map” and intimated GOI that “in the Chief Commissioner's opinion there is no sufficient reason for extending the line so far south as the source of the Tirap river.” He preferred to adopt a line between the Tirap and Dirak further to the north, following tributary streams of those rivers. Further, one advantage of this alignment was that the streams identified as parts of the Inner Line had been accurately mapped; and therefore the line would practically require no artificial demarcation.<sup>76</sup>

On 3 November 1904, GOI sanctioned <sup>77</sup> a proposal of GOA to modify the January 1904 line.<sup>78</sup>

On 19 December 1904 GOA notified the modification of the Lakhimpur Inner Line thus:

“The line shall follow its present course from the eastern boundary of the district of Darrang to the confluence of the Tirap river with the Dihing river; thence along the left bank of the Tirap river to the mouth of a tributary stream flowing from the Lungtok Hill;

up the stream to its source, and thence across the summit of the Lungtok Hill to the source of a stream flowing into the Dirak river, down that stream to the Dirak river, and thence along the Dirak river to its junction with the Dihing.”<sup>79</sup>

GOA instructed the Commissioner of the Assam Valley Districts to communicate the December 1904 modification of the line to the Assam Railways and Trading Company, and the tea planters in the neighbourhood.<sup>80</sup> The rationale for the 1904 alteration of the Lakhimpur Inner Line was stated in a later official record thus:

“It [the *Sarkari* Naga territory] included the area where the coal mines of the Assam Trading Company were operated. In 1904 the Inner Line of the district was thrown toward to (sic) the Tirap river in order to check the depredations of Nagas on the tea gardens and coal mines of the company and check the raids in which coolies had been kidnapped. The villages were then assessed to house-tax.”<sup>81</sup>

Between 1875 and 1904 the sub-Himalayan hill-tribes on the borders of the Darrang and Lakhimpur districts, between the Bar Nadi on the Darrang-Kamrup boundary on the north of the Brahmaputra and the Disang River on the extreme south-east of the Lakhimpur District on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, touching the Sibsagar District, had been separated by Inner Lines. The safety of the tea-plantation and industrial area in the two districts was the most dominant objective of prescribing the Inner Lines. Although the Inner Lines were expected to serve the interest of protection of forests and elephants, there is no doubt that, in their actual utility, they were merely Tea-plantation cum Coal-mine Protection Lines. The primacy of safeguarding tea and coal interests was so dominant that the alignment of the lines was determined by the changing necessity of these industries. After the formation of the North-East Frontier Tract in the second decade of the twentieth century the strip through which the Lakhimpur and Darrang Inner Lines passed was incorporated in that Tract. As a consequence, the Deputy Commissioners of Lakhimpur and Darrang had had no jurisdiction to regulate entry of people into the hills north of the Brahmaputra. A small portion of the Lakhimpur Inner Line south of the Brahmaputra continued to pass through the district as that area was not transferred to the Frontier Tract. These developments will be related elsewhere.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- <sup>2</sup> See, Appendix-I; Appendix-II; Appendix-III.
- <sup>3</sup> GOA allowed a quantum of ransom to be paid by the slaves (escaping to British territory) to their masters. See, Appendix-VI.
- <sup>4</sup> See, Appendix-IV.
- <sup>5</sup> See, Appendix-V.
- <sup>6</sup> Captain St. John F. Michell, *The North-East Frontier of India* (A topographical, political and military report), Delhi (reprint), 1973, p.211. Also, M.L.Bose, *History of Arunachal Pradesh*, New Delhi, 1997, pp.117-118.
- <sup>7</sup> Government of India (By Order of His Excellency the Governor General of India in Council), *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India*, Vol. XII, Part II, Calcutta, 1876, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>8</sup> Michell, 1973, n 6, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
- <sup>9</sup> A.G. Patton, D.C. Lakhimpur, to Commr., Assam Valley Division, No. 53T., 22 Aug.1928, . *Assam Secretariat Proceedings, Appointment and Political: Political-A*, (hereafter, *ASPAPPA* ),March 1929\* (\* wrongly printed as 1928,corrected manually, hereafter, 1929), No. 120.
- <sup>10</sup> Michell, 1973, n 6, *op.cit.* pp. 55-57.
- <sup>11</sup> Text in, C.U.Aitchison (Comp), *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, Vol.XII, Delhi (reprint), 1983, pp. 156-159. Also, Michell, 1973, n 6, *op.cit.*, pp.57-58.
- <sup>12</sup> Aitchison (Comp) Vol.XII, n 11, p. 159.
- <sup>13</sup> Texts in, *ibid.* pp. 160- 162.
- <sup>14</sup> Michell, 1973, n 6, *op.cit.*, p.63.
- <sup>15</sup> *Foreign Department, Notification No. 2427P.*, 30 Sept. 1875, in, Mackenzie,1989,*op. cit.*, pp.395-396.
- <sup>16</sup> Bose, 1997, n 6, *op. cit.*, pp.117-118.
- <sup>17</sup> Michell, 1973, n 6, *op. cit.*, p.270.
- <sup>18</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Asstt. Surveyor General, in charge, Drawing Office, No. 1618, 30 June 1888, *Assam Secretariat Proceedings: Foreign-A* (hereafter, *ASPFA*), Jan. 1904, No. 4.
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in, Barpujari, 1981, n 1, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
- <sup>20</sup> Text included in, Bose, n 6, *op. cit.*, p. 275. Also see, Ministry of External Affairs, (GOI), *Report of the Officials of the Government of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question*, New Delhi, 1962, p.202.
- <sup>21</sup> Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941*, Guwahati (reprint), 1997, pp.183-84.

<sup>22</sup> Foreign Department Notification No. 990, 22Apr.1884, cited in, W.J. Reid, Ch. Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Secy. to GOI, For. & Pol. Dept., No. 1394P. 24 Mar. 1914, *Assam Secretariat Proceedings: Political-A* (hereafter, *ASPPA*), Apr. 1914, No. 2.

<sup>23</sup> F.J.Needham, Asstt. Political Officer, Sadiya, to D.C., Lakhimpur, 19 Mar. 1894, *ASPFA*, July 1895 (Unnumbered), para.4.

<sup>24</sup> *Posa* has been described as “customary and primeval rights asserted by the hillmen” to receive annual contribution earlier from the Ahoms and then from the British. In some cases it had also its genesis in treaties between the British and the hillmen. This type of *posa* was described as “Treaty-*Posa*”. It was also perceived to be a kind of “black-mail” to protect the plains from hillmen’s raids. The British replaced the old system of payment in kind and services by fixed annual amount to each tribe. See, Mackenzie, 1989, *n 1, op. cit.*, pp, 7, 21; Bose, 1997, *n 6, op. cit.*, pp. 195-196. For related matters, “Extract from the Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam in the Judicial Department , No. 718, dated the 4<sup>th</sup> May 1885”, *ASPFA*, Mar. 1904, No. 9.

<sup>25</sup> F.J. Needham, Asstt. Political Officer, Sadiya, to D.C., Lakhimpur, 19 Mar. 1894, *ASPFA*, July 1895, Unnumbered, paras. 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> Capt. R.M. Maxwell, Commanding the Abor Expeditionary Force, to Inspector General of Police, Assam, No. 201, 8 Apr. 1894, *ASPFA*, July 1895, Unnumbered, para.22. For further details, see Durgeswar Borah, *Assam Under Sir William Erskine Ward (1891-96)* , Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Gauhati University, 1995, Chapter VI, pp. 234-269.

<sup>27</sup> Reid, 1997, *n 21, op. cit.*, p. 198.

<sup>28</sup> F.J. Needham, Asstt. Political Officer, Sadiya, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 269, 26 Feb. 1902, *ASPFA*, Apr.1902, No. 6.

<sup>29</sup> See, Appendix-I & Appendix-III. Also, Reid, 1997, *n 21, op. cit.* p. 213.

The “Outer Line” took an unclear formation generally about the foot of the hills and beyond in case of positing advanced posts, or supported by prescription or treaties. This inchoate state of things can be grasped from an instruction of GOI to GOA regarding how the lines should be shown in official map. Text in, Appendix-III.

<sup>30</sup> “Description of the Lakhimpur Inner Line”, *ASPPA*, Dec.1917, No. 13. Also see, Parshotam Mehra, *The McMahon Line and After: A Study of the Triangular Contest on India’s North-eastern Frontier between Britain, China and Tibet, 1904-47*, Delhi, 1975 p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> F.E. Jackson, S.D.O., North Lakhimpur, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 70, 22 Apr.1897, *ASPFA* , Apr. 1898, No. 26.

<sup>32</sup> F.C.Henniker, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Commr., Assam Valley Districts, No. 1236G., 12 Mar. 1898, *ASPFA*, Apr. 1898, No. 28.

<sup>33</sup> H.A.C. Colquhoun, S.D.O., North Lakhimpur, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 954, 2 Feb. 1898, *ASPFA*, Apr. 1898, No. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Offg. Commr., Assam Valley Districts, No. 172For.-1292P., 14 Apr. 1898, *ASPFA*, Apr. 1898, No.30.

- <sup>35</sup> L.J. Kershaw, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 688G., 5 Nov. 1897, *ASPFA*, Jan. 1898, No. 13.
- <sup>36</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 499For.-149P., 13 Jan. 1898, *ASPFA*, Jan. 1898, No. 14; also, Offg. Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Offg. D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 225For.-1482P., 23 Apr. 1898, *ASPFA*, Apr. 1898, No. 15.
- <sup>37</sup> Offg. Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Offg. D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 225For.-1482P., 23 Apr. 1898, *ASPFA*, Apr. 1898, No. 15.
- <sup>38</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 214For.-1586P., 8 Apr. 1902, *ASPFA*, Aug. 1902, No. 5.
- <sup>39</sup> Offg. Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Offg. D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 597For./5068 P., 20 Dec. 1898, *ASPFA*, Dec. 1898, (Unnumbered).
- <sup>40</sup> B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers: Vol.V (Darrang)*, Allahabad, 1905, pp. 53-54.
- <sup>41</sup> Texts of these treaties are in, Aitchison (Comp), Vol.XII, n 11, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-151.
- <sup>42</sup> Michell, 1973, n 6, *op. cit.*, p.255.
- <sup>43</sup> Aitchison (Comp), Vol.XII, n 11, *op. cit.* p. 99.
- <sup>44</sup> Michell, 1973, n 6, *op. cit.*, p.264.
- <sup>45</sup> Aitchison (Comp), Vol. XII, n 11, *op. cit.* p. 99; For detailed account, see . Michell, 1973, n 6, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-32.
- <sup>46</sup> Michell, 1973, n 6, *op. cit.*, pp.265-6.
- <sup>47</sup> *Notification by the Government of India, Foreign Department*, No. 631P., 8 March 1876, included in, Mackenzie, 1989, *op. cit.*, p.395. The same description of the *Inner Line* has been incorporated in GOA's notification of 18 Sept. 1913. Included in, G.E. Soames, Under-Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, Pol. Dept., to Commr. Assam Valley Districts, No.5461. 16 Oct. 1913, *ASPFA*, Oct. 1913, No. 79, encl.
- <sup>48</sup> W.J. Reid, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 1002G., 25 Oct. 1900, *ASPFA*, Nov. 1900, No. 1.
- <sup>49</sup> "Final report by Babu Biresvar Sen, Inspector of Police, dated the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1899, in case No. 5 of March 1899, regarding the murder of Tongyangnong, mauzadar of Buri Dehing", *ASPFA*, Mar. 1899, No. 18; W.J. Reid, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 9G., 6 Apr. 1899 *ASPFA*, May 1899, No. 29; Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 251 For.-2005P., 26 May 1899, *ASPFA*, May 1899, No. 31.
- <sup>50</sup> W.J. Reid, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 1002G., 25 Oct. 1900, *ASPFA*, Nov. 1900, No. 1; Offg. Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to D.C., Lakhimpur, *ASPFA*, Nov. 1900, No. 2.
- <sup>51</sup> *Political Report of the Lakhimpur District: for the year 1900-1901*, p. 3.
- <sup>52</sup> W.J. Reid, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 1002G., 25 Oct. 1900, *ASPFA*, Nov. 1900, No. 1.
- <sup>53</sup> F.J. Needham, Asstt. Political Officer, Sadiya, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 298, 21 Mar. 1902, *ASPFA*, Aug 1902, No. 19.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> J.F. Gruning, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 138G, 30 Apr. 1902, *ASPFA*, Aug. 1902, No. 18.

<sup>57</sup> Offg. Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 327For.-2702P., 14 June 1902, *ASPFA*, Aug. 1902, No.20.

<sup>58</sup> F.J. Needham, D.C., Lakhimpur, *ASPFA*, Aug 1902, No. 19. *n 53, op. cit.*

<sup>59</sup> J.F. Gruning, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 449 G, 30 July 1902, *ASPFA*, Aug 1902, No. 21.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> F.J. Needham, Asstt. Political Officer, Sadiya, to D.C., Lakhimpur, No. 298, 21 Mar. 1902, *ASPFA*, Aug. 1902, No. 19 ; J.F. Gruning, D.C., Lakhimpur, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 138G, 30 Apr. 1902, *ASPFA*, Aug. 1902, No. 18.

<sup>62</sup> J.F. Gruning, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., *ASPFA*, Aug. 1902, No. 18. *n 61.*

<sup>63</sup> F.J. Monahan, Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Secy. to GOI, For. Dept., No. 406 For.4479P. ,24 Sept. 1903, *ASPFA*, Dec. 1903,( unnumbered).

<sup>64</sup> Parshotam Mehra, 1975, *n 30, op. cit.*, p. 8., read with *f.n.*

<sup>65</sup> Letter No. 533 For. -5639 P., cited in , F.J. Monahan, Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Secy. to GOI, For. Dept., No. 406 For. 4479P. , 24 Sept. 1903, *ASPFA*, Dec. 1903, (unnumbered).

<sup>66</sup> F.J. Monahan, Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Secy. to GOI, For. Dept., No. 406 For.4479P. ,24 Sept. 1903, *ASPFA*, Dec. 1903, (unnumbered).

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> S. M. Fraser, Offg. Dy. Secy. to GOI, For. Dept., to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 2847 E.B., 7 Dec. 1903, *ASPFA*, Sept. 1904, No. 61.

<sup>72</sup> Notification by the Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 37P., 6 Jan. 1904, *ASPFA*, Sept. 1904, No.62.

<sup>73</sup> Under Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Commr., Assam Valley Districts, No. 673 For.- 366 P., 25 Jan. 1904, *ASPFA*, Sept. 1904, No.63.

<sup>74</sup> Major J. M. Fleming, Asstt. Surveyor-General, Drawing Office, to Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 310D, 18 Feb. 1904 , *ASPFA*, Sept. 1904, No. 65.

<sup>75</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Asstt. Surveyor General, in charge , Drawing Office, No. 418 For. – 2396P. 2 June 1904, *ASPFA*, Sept. 1904, No. 80.

- <sup>76</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Secy. to GOI, For. Dept., No. 555 For.- 3917P., 30 Aug. 1904, *ASPFA*, Sept. 1904, No. 89.
- <sup>77</sup> Asstt. Secy. to GOI, For. Dept. , to Ch. Commr., Assam, No. 3745 E.B., 3 Nov. 1904. *ASPFA*, Jan. 1905, No. 1.
- <sup>78</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Secy. to GOI, *n 76, op. cit.*
- <sup>79</sup> Notification by – The Chief Commissioner of Assam, No. 5326P. 19 Dec. 1904. *ASPFA*, Jan. 1905, No.2.
- <sup>80</sup> Secy. to Ch. Commr., Assam, to Commr., Assam Valley Districts , *ASPFA* ,Jan.1905, No.3.
- <sup>81</sup> *ASPAPPA*, Sept. 1931, Appendix, pp. 5-6.

The present study is an attempt to identify and scan the under-currents that had shaped British policy towards the peripheral areas of India's North-East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The author examines the influence of the tea-plantation and mining interests in determining the Inner Lines between the hills and the Brahmaputra Valley districts of Assam. The evolution of the Inner Lines of the Lakhimpur, Darrang, Sibsagar, and Naga Hills districts and those of the Frontier Tracts has been discussed at length. Gradual assertion of British paramountcy beyond the Inner Lines, establishment of a loose political control in the northern and eastern extremity of Assam in order to inhibit China's expansionist tendencies and the Organisation of the frontier Tracts that had finally emerged as the Sadiya, Balipara, and Lakhimpur Frontier Tracts have also been focused upon. The nuances of British policy towards the Trans-Inner Line tribes have also been examined.

Another focus of the book is the question of defining the Arakan-Lushai and Chin-Lushai boundaries and the final disposal of the "Unadministered" Tract south of the Lushai Hills. It also deals with the abolition of the Lallup and Pothang systems in Manipur and the integration of the State's economy with that of the rest of the Indian Empire. An analysis has also been made on the nature of the Kuki Uprising, which according to the author had assumed the character of a national liberation movement. He observes that colonialism and nationalist aspirations are always at variance with one another and indeed at cross purposes. Colonialism bargained only with those who had the potential either to bestow benefits or inflict injury to its interests. The author also observes that altruistic or charitable considerations of the most enlightened among the colonial echelons were but a veneer of hard-headed calculations in pursuit of colonial interests. The work is based predominantly on hitherto unexplored archival sources. It also contains a number of valuable Appendices and official maps of the frontier. This well-documented book should be of interest to researchers, policy-makers and the reading public.



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