Chapter 2

'SMALL WARS' AND THE UNSETTLED FRONTIER

The conclusion of the first Anglo-Burmese war was attended by dreams of peaceful commercial expansion for the British. As one contemporary journal hopefully wrote: “The miseries occasioned by the late invasion of the Burmese territories, having fortunately been arrested by peace, we trust that commerce will hasten to repair, as far as it may be able, the ravages which its greatest enemy, war, has committed.”1 In fact, the desire for peace and the advancement of economic interest was central to the negotiations before the treaty of Yandabo. The first article of the treaty of Yandabo, ratified on the 24th of February 1826 reads as follows: “There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honourable Company on the one part and his Majesty the King of Ava on the other.” According to the second article, “His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty states of Cachar and Jyntea.” The article further continues, “With regard to Munnipore, it is stipulated, that, should Gumbheer Singh desire to return to that country, he shall be recognized by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof.” The third article was aimed at avoiding any future confrontation between the two empires and this was expected to be achieved by conquering Burmese provinces and making concrete boundary lines. However, it was already anticipated that there was still the possibility of future boundary dispute and with this anticipation the article says, “Any doubts regarding the said line of demarcation, will be settled by Commissioners appointed by the respective Governments for that purpose, such Commissioners from both Powers to be suitable and corresponding rank.”2 Further articles talk about more cession of territory to the British and the furtherance of

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economic relations between the two. Though the third and the fourth articles clearly mentioned the cession of the territories of Arakan, and the provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, Mergui and Tennasserim to the Company there is no mention in the treaty of what would be the future political status of Assam, Kachar and Jaintia. The second article merely says that the Burmese king has renounced all claims and that it would abstain from future interference in these territories. And in the case of Manipur, Gambhir Singh, if he desired to return, was to be recognised by the king of Ava as Raja.  

However, there being no formal treaty, as in the context of other territories, the British, immediately after the conclusion of the treaty, assumed the territories of Assam, Jaintia, and Cachar to be British territories. Since Manipur had been separately mentioned in the treaty as independent, the British did not assume it to be its territory, leaving Gambhir Singh in an ambiguous position. Manipur, at times, was considered to be a ‘protected’ state, but at other times, considered to be independent. Surprisingly, many of the scholars have unwittingly

3 Ibid. In the second article, there would be a difference between the English version and the Burmese version. This, as will be discussed in the next chapter, would create misunderstanding and different interpretation between the two empires. The Burmese version read as, “With regard to Munnipore, if Gan-bee-ra-shing desire to return to this country and remain ruler, the King of Burma shall not prevent or molest him, but let him remain.”

4 It is difficult to find out the real meaning of the term protectorate at this time. After the end of the first Anglo-Burmese war different polities with which the British government, through the East India Company had relations were classified under the following: 1. Foreign Independent States; 2. Native States not under British Protection; 3. Native States with which Subsidiary Treaties exist; 4. Native States under British Protection but without Subsidiary Treaties; 5. State Pensioners. The polities on the east of Bengal, not included in the British administered areas after the treaty of Yandabo, were termed as ‘Burmese frontier’ and put under the category of ‘Native States under British Protection but without Subsidiary Treaties’. But no specific names are given. Reports from Committees: East India Company’s Affairs, Session 6 December-16 August 1832, Vol. VIII, pp. 79-84. A much later work defines the term to refer to “a device for guarding a frontier by avoiding direct contact with a rival, or as a more or less conscious step preparatory to the advance of the frontier”. C.N. Fawcett noted that it was “a feature common to the expansion of many empires over territory occupied by weaker states at the same or a slightly lower stage of civilization.” Fawcett further wrote, “Here we may add that for many states which are nominally independent it is largely true that their independence does not rest wholly, or mainly, on their own powers of self-defence, but on the interests and policies of great powers concerned.” C.N. Fawcett, Frontiers: A Study in Political Geography, Oxford: Clarendon, 1918, pp. 88, 91. It could, perhaps, be the case that the British attitude towards Manipur was also defined by these understandings. Curzon makes a finer distinction. For him, a protectorate was a plan adopted for political or strategic expansion “as distinct from the administrative Frontier of a country over regions which the protecting Power is, for whatever reason, unable or unwilling to seize and hold itself, and, while falling short of the full rights of property or sovereignty, it carries with it a considerable degree of control over the policy and international relations of the protected State.” Keeping a policy of protectorate “involves the obligation to defend the latter from external attack, and to secure the proper treatment of foreign subjects and property inside it.” At the same time, he noted, “To what extent it justifies interference in the internal
accepted the fate of the annexation of these territories after the treaty as legitimate. This, of
course, has its precedents in the colonial writings after the end of the war. The hurried and
questionable manner in which these territories were assumed under British authority seems to
have a rationale. As one account in the middle of the nineteenth century wrote: "The
provinces of Cachar and Assam, though holding out less promising prospects to commerce,
helped to form a well-defined and strong frontier, and in the approximation they afforded to
Thibet and China it was thought that our trade, in process of time, might possibly be
extended in those directions."⁵

After the annexation of the areas lying between Bengal and the Burmese empire, it was made
into the north-east frontier. The British established its colonial rule in some portions of the
frontier and maintained political control in the others. The imagery in this narrative is of a
smooth transfer and acquisition of a territory from one empire to another. However, such a
picture does not reveal the various ways in which colonial rule was actually established in the
frontier. This chapter looks at the decade after the war to see the various colonial experiments
and schemes, on the one hand, and resistances and hurdles, on the other, in the process of
establishing colonial rule and the making of a frontier. The moment the north-east areas of
Bengal were annexed into British territory after the war there were various cases of
oppositions from different quarters and the effort to bring it under their political control was
not easy. There were many wars at different frontiers that the Company had to face within
the annexed territory of the frontier.

RESISTING COLONIAL EXPANSION IN THE KHASI AND GARO HILLS

In the Khasi and the Garo Hills, rebellions erupted soon after the end of the war. The
Company officials had to fight every inch of territorial and political acquisition by using

⁵ Julia Corner, China: Pictorial, Descriptive, and Historical with account of Ava and the Burmese, Siam, and
various methods. Various chiefs of the Khasis and the Garos resisted the intrusion of the new power over their territories though some submitted to the new power. The politics of submission or resistance to the British created internal divisions amongst the Khasis and the Garos. Those chiefs who had already submitted to the authority of the British were usually asked to furnish information and endeavour to trace out the perpetrators whenever an outrage occurred. For instance, the Chief of Ram Roy (or Ramrye), Zubber Singh, submitted to the Government in October 1829. The Agent to the Governor General, David Scott reported, “since that time no further dispute had occurred with the people of his District.” But he was very soon murdered allegedly by his kinsmen Nychun Koonwar and Lall Sing, who resented his submission to the British authorities. The attacks were made on the Sylhet areas, the duars of Pantan, Bogy and Bangam. In this attack several police and revenue officers were killed and a number of houses burnt.

These ‘estates’ were “under attachment”, the first in consequence of the rebellious role of the Raja against the British, and the latter two for the recovery of arrears of Revenue. Scott reported that there was plausible reason to think that the “irruption of the mountaineers was favoured and connived at by the [native] local authorities”. He wrote, “[M]ost of whom are necessarily ill affected towards our Government owing to the strict control now exercised over them and to the deprivation of the illicit emoluments they used to derive from fines from criminals and other illegal cesses which they were in the habit of levying under the Assam

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6 Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 12th January 1831, Foreign Department Political, 1831 February 11, Nos. 26-32, A, National Archives of India (NAI).
7 The number of native British subjects killed was estimated to be 23 and 4 individuals were carried into captivity. Lall Chand Singh, was supposed to be the main instigator of these excitements. By this time he was claiming the Raj of Ram Roy (also spelled as Ramryee) in the mountains and that of Pantan on the plains after the killing of Raja Zubber Singh. At the beginning of these attacks the colonial officials did not know of the real attackers since the attacks were made at night. A close reading of the information on the ‘tribes’ in the frontier, which had been encouraged in the frontier, was taken to be a clue to ascertain the real attackers. The description given of their arms (arrows and two headed swords) was inferred to be that of the Khasis of the higher range of hills, which led the officer to believe Lall Singh as the main instigator. See Letter from A. White, Officiating Magistrate, Lower Assam to D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General N. E. Frontier, dated 10th January 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI. Based on the conclusion, thus drawn, a reward of Rupees Five hundred was offered for the apprehension of Lall Chand Singh. Letter from G. Swinton to D. Scott, dated 11th February 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI. Wherever the modern names for the places and the individuals are not familiar, the spellings used in the colonial texts have been used.
Government.” Scott was also of the opinion that the people of the duars were treacherous and refractory during the Ahom rule and that “petty revolutions attended with the murder of rival chiefs and their adherents was matter of frequent occurrence.” According to him, the Ahom rulers were “under the necessity of tolerating” such acts. At the time of the British annexation of these areas, the chiefs of the duars exercised criminal jurisdiction and waged war upon each other without much intervention from the Ahom monarchy or at the most subjected to the payment for forgiveness of a fine. These observations suggest that the ‘irruption of the mountaineers’ goes much further than mere resentment against the deprivation of the illicit emoluments they enjoyed earlier. It involved the question of ‘sovereign’ authority over the territory of the duars. But the new rulers found it “impossible to tolerate such proceedings”. From an understanding that the “Chiefs of the Dowars possessed no legitimate independent authority in the plains,” the colonial authority subjected them like other Assamese subjects to the ordinary laws. At the same time, the colonial officials tried to conciliate “as far as practicable”. As Scott informs, “a separate court was established composed of the Chiefs themselves and a few of their principal local functionaries before which all civil and criminal cases have hitherto been tried” in order to “ensure to them the observance of the peculiar customs of the tract in question”.8

Scott was well aware that under the Ahom administration the territories of the duars did not pay any regular annual revenue though the inhabitants were bound to furnish paiks for the public service. Since the Company took over the administration, this arrangement was commuted to a monetary payment retaining only a few paiks for local purposes. And the demand for revenue was fixed though there was abatement made in favour of the Chiefs. However, it was reported that few of the chiefs were able to fulfil their engagements of revenue payment as a result of which several of their ‘estates’ were attached. And this, David Scott knew believed, played an important role for the ‘irruptions’. As he reported, “[The

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8 Letter from D. Scott to Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 17th January 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
attachment of ‘estates’] has probably in some degree led to the recent catastrophe.”

Often, the chiefs were induced to account for their conduct and required them to reimburse the loss sustained by the colonial authorities and also to give security for their future conduct. The change as a result of the introduction of a new system under the Company rule, and the subsequent loss of authority of these chiefs seem to have played a role for these attacks. The chiefs attempted to regain their loss authority and the attacks seems closely related to that purpose as Scott informed that the “object of the invaders having been to conciliate the ryuts and to reestablish their authority in the Dewars.”

The officiating Magistrate of Lower Assam, A. White, was afraid that the “the object of this combination [of the Nungklow Khasis, the Ram Roy Khasis, Bangam Garos of the Lower Hills, and the Dumella Garos of Bagoe] was to expel the officers of the British Government from the district adjacent to the hills that the Cossyahs and Garrows might enjoy, that share on the produce of the soil which they were wont to do, when under the Assam Government.”

He further informed that the force was stated to be commanded by the Rajas, Teerut Sing, Lall Sing and Sunta Sing. And all the Khasis, “warriors of reputation are said to have engaged in this expedition, and the amount of their force is stated at not less than 4 or 500 men.” The successful attack made upon the Revenue and Judicial stations in Pantan, Bangam and Bogy led to an increase of this force since a number of “the ryots of Dooars . . . joined the invading force from a dread of the progress of their arms, and a natural wish to preserve their property.”

White was convinced that the disposition for other peasants to follow suit could be checked only when the colonial force was able to repulse the Khasis and the Garos

9 Ibid. The question of defining and treating these chiefs was a difficult task for the colonial authorities. On the one hand, Scott insisted that these chiefs did not possess any legitimate independent authority in the plains and were to be subjected like other Assamese subjects to the ordinary laws. But on the other, those persons who were taken as prisoners in the fight being “subjects of petty independent states”, were to be treated as “Prisoners of War” rather than a criminal. Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 27th January 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.

10 Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 27th January 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.

11 Letter from D. Scott, to G. Swinton, dated 1st February 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.

12 Letter from A. White, Officiating Magistrate, Lower Assam to D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General N. E. Frontier, dated 29th January 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
leading to the peasants returning to their homes. The loss of economic and political power
definitely played a crucial role for the rebellion of the chiefs. Destroying of Revenue, police
thanahs and papers therein were main targets in their attacks. The houses of several Mahajans
were also destroyed. As a mark of regaining and asserting their authority the peasants were
asked to provide the rebels with provisions.

The estimate of the number of rebels according to Captain Haslam was about 400 of the
Khasis and Upper Garos and 40 Mauns with muskets together with 1000 villagers, which
formed a formidable force. Apart from the strength of the force they also occupied the
strategically important narrow passes, which was surrounded by forests on both sides,
making it extremely dangerous for the colonial troops to dislodge them. In order to
subjugate the authority of these chiefs, Scott recommended that the only course that could be
advantageously pursued was that of “reducing to practical subjection of the tribes bordering
on the Dowars who have perpetrated the late outrages and who are at present independent of
our authority, and establishing amongst them the same sort of internal Government which has
been maintained amongst the Garrows of the N. E. parts of Rungpore since the year 1817.”

Ascertaining the principal villages from which the rebels proceeded and the maps showing
their location were crucial for the colonial authorities, information, which at this point, was
scantily available. The duars, being considered insalubrious, rendered it unadvisable to
employ the regular troops for the object of subjugating the population near the duars. The
want of a sufficient disposable force made it even more difficult to employ the regular troops.
In order to push for the weight of the recommendations that Scott proposed, he put it
forcefully

Should Government consider it inexpedient to adopt the proposed measure, I apprehend that
it will be impossible to continue to collect the revenue in the Dowars with any degree of
regularity and I am of opinion that it would in that case be the best plan to remit it wholly or

13 Letter from Captain Haslam to D. Scott, dated February 4, 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes
1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
14 Letter from D. Scott to Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 17th January 1831, Foreign
Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
in part and to distribute the land on the tenure of Jageers for military services which under proper rules might be made available for useful purposes and which would at all events provide for the future security of the inhabitants themselves and remove those causes of discontent which originate in the necessity which often arises for depriving incapable Chiefs of the management of their lands.\textsuperscript{15}

The lack of information on the terrain and the peoples inhabiting the area made matters worse for colonial troops to operate and subdue the rebels. As Scott put it,

> With reference to the frequent calls for troops in Assam and to the peculiar nature of the duty to be performed against the rude and savage tribes with which the country is surrounded, and of whose strength and military character and means, very little is in general known by officers of the Regular army; I think it would be highly desirable that Government should avail itself of Captain White's superior experience and information on these points, by appointing him to command at Gowahatty, so long as the detachment stationed there may not exceed what is usually placed under an officer of his rank in the army.\textsuperscript{16}

The intensity of the resistance by the Khasis was so forceful that Scott admitted there was "but one way of putting a stop to these outrages viz. that of holding responsible for the discovery and arrest of the offenders, the Cossyas through whose lands they may have descended to commit the trespass". He recommended a policy, which he had already implemented, in anticipation of orders. The policy was to address Circular letters to the Khasi Chiefs warning them of the consequences of permitting the outlaws who committed these attacks to pass through their territory and to hold the Khasi chiefs responsible if they allowed the rebels to pass through their territory. They were responsible for the discovery and arrest of these rebels. Another plan was that of stopping the markets in the plains on the Sylhet side from which the mountaineers drew their supplies. But Scott was aware that this measure had to be adopted as the last resort, since it would mean much loss to the inhabitants of the plains.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 9\textsuperscript{th} February 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
as well as those of the hills. In order to meet these challenges, the services of two parties of Shan musketeers were used to the extent of 120 men each and as proposed by Scott an additional party of 150 for a temporary period.

17 Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 12th January 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.

18 Letter from G. Swinton to D. Scott, dated 25th February 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI. The Shan musketeers were drawn from a Shan settlement formed by Mr. Scott at Singamaree in the north eastern parts of Rungpore. During the first Anglo-Burmese war when Colonial Richards reached the fort of Rungpore, it was found to be in the possession of two rival Chiefs, Bogly Phukan and Sham Phukan, who however each held commission from the king of Ava. The former adhered to the interests of the king of Ava and was permitted by the Treaty of Yandabo to return to Burma via the Singpho route. At the time of his return to Burma via the Singpho territory, the colonial officials were informed that he had been cut up by the Singphos. But later he was found to be in conjunction with the Singphos and there would be many reports of his threats to invade Assam, as discussed later in another section, near the Sadiya frontier. The latter had by executing the Burmese Governor General of Assam named Mhonghee Maha Nan Queada committed an act of open rebellion against the state of Ava and consequently sought for and obtained the protection of the British Government together with his adherents to the amount of about 5 to 700 people and these were settled by Scott at Singamaree on the west side of the river Brahmaputra on the banks of the small river named Jeirja Ram in the estate of Arungabad, the property of Dhur Chunder Zamindar of Rangamutty. This estate which had been formed by Scott on behalf of the Government consisted of about 10,000 Beegahs of land and by Scott's agreement with Sham Phukan, the Shans were excepted, during the continuance of the Government lease on a military tenure, from paying rent for the land they cultivated. The condition was that they, to the amount of one fourth of their numbers (the remaining 3/4 being required to attend to their cultivation), were bound to act as may be required, within the jurisdiction of the north eastern parts of Zillah Rangpur (in which they were located) as soldiers against the Garos or others who might prove troublesome to the colonial authority for about one anna per man per day. And there were occasions when the force was frequently called upon to act up to their tenure with such satisfaction for the colonial officials in situations in which regular troops could not have been made available from the effects of climate and their being useless without being regularly supplied with a commissariat establishment and carriage for the baggage and coolies. The employment of the Shans also proved to be much cheaper since they supplied themselves with food and carriage. They were also cultivators and additional quantity of land was required for them, which was supplied out of the adjacent estate in which they settled. For the settlement of disputes amongst themselves not including acts of a highly criminal nature, which was subjected to the Magistrate’s Court, Scott appointed Sham Phukan and four inferior Chiefs as a Court of Arbitration and punishment and this arrangement was attended with the happiest effect for the colonial officials. In the beginning of the 1830s the original settlers were reported to have died from natural causes but the population increased in the colony from birth. Although the Shans were bound to serve the British Government out of the jurisdiction of the north eastern parts of Rungpore and were employed against the Bhotias and Khasis repeatedly. The small corps of sebundees amounting from 200 to 300 fighting men were merely an armed corps of Burkundazes and not subject to Military law but as all other subjects to the Magistrate’s Court, they performed all military duties in guarding the Jail and Treasury, escorting treasure and prisoners, etc. These Shans were prized possession of the British and in the words of Davidson, “I must do the Shams of Singhamarry the justice to state, that as Magistrate of the District since 1824 I have received little or no trouble from them and that I consider them as industrious, peaceable and truly valuable subjects of the British Government.” Note by Captain Davidson containing some account of the Party of the Shans settled at Singamaree who are styled by Mr. Scott in his recent dispatches – “Shaum Musketeers”, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
Apart from the direct military subjugation of the rebels the colonial officials attempted to win the hearts of the peasants by displaying the benevolence of the new authority. Injunctions were issued in those territories from which the control of the rebels had been dislodged to prevent the destruction of the villages of the peasants, “upon the grounds of their having sided with the Cossyas”. This policy was carried with an understanding that the peasant “had no option of acting otherwise, while military protection was withheld from them and the authority of the officers of Government having been immediately re-established without having recourse to violence”. This possibility of employing ‘pacific’ means to subjugate the Khasis was commonly shared amongst the colonial officials. T.C. Robertson wrote, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier wrote, “On taking charge of this office I indulged a hope that it might be possible by mild and conciliatory measures to win over many of the hostile Khasias and bring them to acquiesce in our occupation of a portion of the mountains”. But this hope was only possible once the Khasis were “made to perceive that” in his words, “we did not seek to subject the whole region directly to our sway.”

Though Scott claimed the pacific means of bringing the people under colonial authority through this measure, in many instances the houses of those people who had sworn allegiance to rebel chiefs and who failed to supply the necessities of the colonial officers were destroyed. Many of the villages that did not submit immediately were burnt and, usually a great quantity of the agriculture was destroyed by the colonial forces if they were unable to carry them. Many villagers also deserted their villages on learning the arrival of the colonial forces. Moreover, there were proclamations being made by the colonial officials with the threat of destroying their property, and execution for siding with the rebel chiefs. At the same time, the chiefs who had been declared rebels were offered an agreement in which they were expected to give security for the future, repay the damage and expenses incurred, and

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19 Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 9th February 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830-1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
20 Letter from the Agent to the Governor General, N.E. Frontier to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, dated 19th June 1832, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1832 July 9, Nos. 89, NAI.
21 See letter from Captain Haslam to D. Scott, dated February 5, 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830-1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
deliver up all the subjects of the British. If they agreed to these terms their villages were promised to be spared of being destroyed by the colonial authority.

However, bringing the chiefs to agreements was a complex phenomenon without any guarantee for bringing about a lasting peace. For instance, Ensign Brodie with a detachment of 42 Irregulars went into the Ram Roy areas as a part of subjugating the rebels. On reaching Nunglong he found Youngmah, the ‘Raja’, waiting for his arrival. The ‘Raja’ at first protested against his involvement in the plundering of Assam though later acknowledged that he did so, and promised to agree to whatever terms that were laid down. But instead of delivering ‘hostages’, he accompanied Brodie. The objective was, in Brodie’s words, “with the clear understanding that the moment he leave my party without permission, the treaty between us is to be considered broken.” Brodie thought that he would comply with any terms, which was in his power “rather than suffer almost total ruin by the destruction of his villages”. But he was only one of the three accused – his two uncles the Ooroo Rajah and Soman having equal, if not superior authority to him. This added to the difficulty of subjugating the population. Brodie wrote, “therefore without they also agree[ing] to the terms and deliver hostages, I cannot come to any satisfactory understanding with the Nonglong people.”

As a result, the only option left with Brodie was to induce Youngmah to produce his uncles with the threat that should they not appear, it was to be concluded that they did not intend to submit. But many of the villages that did not submit immediately were burnt and, usually a great quantity of the agriculture was destroyed by the colonial forces if they were unable to carry them. Many villagers also deserted their villages on learning the arrival of the colonial forces.

Apart from the physical difficulty of subjugating the population, the colonial officials were immensely handicapped in their effort by the lack of accurate information about the place and the people. Many of the villagers were known to the British by a different name than the one which was known to the local population. For example, the village Nongsingpho, a Nustoming village, was marked in the maps that Scott had as Nuspoo. But when Brodie

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22 Letter from Brodie to David Scott Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
enquired the Khasis that accompanied him they responded that they had never heard of a village called Nuspoo. Many of the villages that were marked in the maps were said to be unknown to the people who inhabited them but instead these names were used in the plains. It was also difficult for two parties of the colonial forces to coordinate with one another since they found it hard to get the information from the inhabitants. However, the rebels followed the marches of the colonial forces acutely. For instance when Brodie marched to the village of Rengsee "in the hope of being able to surprise and take prisoner Sheebah the Rajah", he found the village entirely vacated. He ascertained that on passing Norringyou to the westward, information of his movements was sent to Sheebah, by the inhabitants of that village, and the following day he and all his followers removed to the jungles. The rebels sometimes followed the movement of the colonial forces though the jungles nearby the path that the colonial officials took. They made every effort in such cases to block the paths with felled trees and brushwood apart from the weapons that were laid down to deter the marching forces. The deserted villages were usually burnt but the colonial officials found it hard to follow the proceedings with many of the villages in which there was no direct information of their involvement in rebel activities. But this did not deter them from detaining the chiefs with a demand to deliver up the hunted rebels. 23

Scott often claimed that conciliatory measures were successful in bringing about the submission of the rebellious chiefs and their subjects. But he also found it necessary to employ the direct violent means of subjugating the refractory chiefs. He approvingly said of Brodie's violent measures after the latter's death: "[H]e has clearly indicated the means that we should in future adopt in the petty warfare that may be expected occasionally to take place with the rude tribes encircling a frontier of 1,500 miles in extent." Instead of the prolonged and protracted ways of subduing the people Scott celebrated the swift and violent means of subjugating the people in order to submit to the colonial authority.

Short however as has been his career he has clearly shewn the inexpediency and impolicy of wasting men and money in such a contest by ineffectually employing large bodies of regular

23 Ibid.
or local troops to do that which a handful of irregulars properly commanded, and retaining the powers of locomotion, can so easily effect. The reduction of the whole of the principal chiefs to the Westward of Nungklow has been accomplished and although the death of the man who struck them with such terror may have the effect of again detaching some of them from their agreements, they have got a lesson that will not be forgotten during the existence of the present generation and which I have no doubt whatever will for a very long time to come put a stop to all acts of depredation in the domains amongst the most important consequences however of Brodie’s expedition I am inclined to count the high character that he has established amongst our Cossya friends and foes, of European courage, activity and perseverance, qualities which they are naturally led to value very highly and which when conjoined as in the present instance with a kind and conciliatory demeanour would have given this young man a most powerful influence over their minds and rendered him a very efficient instrument for their ultimate reclamation.²⁴

The political and military incursions into Khasi and the Garo Hills had already started before the war. But it was with the annexation of these territories after the war that various means were employed to annex these areas. The contiguity of these areas to Bengal played a crucial role for the zeal with which the rebellion in these areas were sought to be controlled.

THE THREATENED FRONTIER

The end of the war, as we saw, did not bring any calm for the British in the frontier. In the decade after the end of the war the question of the ‘Burmese threat’ was not yet fully solved for the British in the frontier. Every time violence irrupted on the frontier, the colonial officials suspected the handiwork or at least the implicit acknowledgment of the Burmese. As Neufville, Political Agent, Upper Assam wrote:

There are other reports on the subject of Wackum Koomjun’s raid, the grounds of which I have not the same means of investigating, which state that it was prepared, if not by the express desire, certainly with the connivance of the Burmese Government, and it seems

²⁴ Extract from a letter from Mr. Scott, dated Goalpara 28th April 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
difficult to imagine how so large a body could assemble from distant quarters on the border of the Shaum province, for a purpose openly avowed, and well known for nearly three years to be in agitation, without the knowledge of the Governor of Mogauum whose duty it assuredly was to have prevented an inroad into British Territory.25

The stories of intrigues and the complexity of the situation reached a high point when one Assamese prince was arrested, disguised as a Khampti priest at Sadiya earlier. According to Subedar Zalim Singh, who arrested the prince, the latter made proposals to the Subedar for “bringing over the troops and assassinating the European officers at Upper Assam.” The prince declared in a communication made to David Scott that his Assamese name was Godadhar Singha and his Burmese appellation was Hoowang or Eyang Goomendao. According to his statement, before the Anglo-Burmese war began he and his father Dhuttowa Gohain, who was then the Governor of Menda tim Myo, a princess relative was sent by the then Rajah of Assam and this woman married the then heir apparent who became the king of Ava. After the woman acquired great influence over the king of Burma, she was continuously urging the king to place her brother Dhananjoy, who was in Ava and known by the Burmese name of Atan Menda, on the throne of Assam. As per the statement, the king finally consented and gave orders “to allow an inroad being made by the border tribes inhabiting Mogoung and the neighbouring countries, and that the Governor of that province is now preparing troops and provisions for the purpose of invading Assam next year, the present season having been declared inauspicious.”26 According to the communication that he made to Scott, “he was deputed by his father and relations to sound the Assamese nobles and ascertain how far they were willing to second the views of the Court of Ava”. He was also to make himself acquainted with the number and disposition of the British forces, but that he made no proposals of the nature stated by Zalim Sing, and only said to the sons of a havildar of the local corps that “if his prisoners, relations were re-established in the sovereignty of

25 Letter from Neufville, Political Agent, Upper Assam to David Scott, Agent to the Governor General North Eastern Frontier, 29th March 1830, Foreign Department Political, 1830 May 7, No. 48, A, NAI.
26 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 June 25, Nos. 4 – 6, NAI. The woman referred to here was Atan Meengh Burkuwari, the Ahom princess who ex-Raja Chandra Kant Singha was said to have offered as a present to the Burmese king. See H. K. Barpujari, Assam in the Days of the Company (1826 – 1858), second edition Gauhati: Spectrum Publications, 1980, pp. 53 – 4.
Assam, they, the boys, might expect again to get sixteen rupees a month as . . . soldiers, as their fathers had . . . before them.”

Scott was not able to ascertain whether or not Godadhar Singha really was the person that he claimed to be. Despite this being a compelling claim, due to “some inconsistencies in his story, which tend to discredit it,” Scott did not consider it a matter of “sufficient consequence to trouble His Lordship in Council”. But the object of his making a detail communication was, he said, “merely to suggest the expediency of directing the attention of our envoy at Ava to the subject.” Though there were opinions of Burmese plots of similar nature, Scott was convinced that the Court of Ava had no immediate interest in putting Chandra Kant or Purandar Singha to the throne. A copy of Scott’s dispatch was sent to the Resident at Ava and put up against the Burmese Ministers who denied any knowledge of the individual. The Resident was asked not to make any remonstrance but to place before the Court of Ava cautiously that an improper use of the king of Ava was being made by the rebellious British subjects.

However, at the beginning of the next year, the events took a serious turn as there were reports circulating of a large force, which was approaching from the east for the express purpose of invading Assam under the command of one Boglee Phukan. The colonial officials did not know very well the composition of the force but it was believed to be a large body of Singphos. The news alarmed the colonial officials in the frontier so much so that David Scott, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, requisitioned for one steamboat to be placed in Assam for a few months. But, the veracity of these reports could never be ascertained. As Scott wrote, “If these reports turn out to be unfounded, an experiment, which

27 Foreign Department Secret Consultation 1830, June 25, Nos. 4 – 6, NAI.
28 Godadhar claimed himself to be a relative of the ex-Raja Jogeswar Singha.
29 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 June, 25 Nos. 4 – 6. It was expected of Major Burney, the British Resident at Ava, to be acquainted and deal if any such scheme existed.
30 Foreign Department Secret Consultation, 1830 December 10, No. 1, NAI. C. A. Bruce was of the opinion that it was the “restless and ambitious people” around Chandra Kant, who was a “weak prince” that drove the plans for rebelling against the British. Though he might not have been aware of all these intrigues, his name was used to effective use since it was expected at that time that he would be king of Assam. Letter from, Mr. C. A., Bruce, Commanding Gun Boats at Sadiya to Captain Jenkins, on special survey duty, dated 26th March1833, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 11, No. 91, NAI.
may prove of future utility, will have been laid, and if on the contrary a large force should really enter the country, the vessel may be employed to great advantage in many ways, and particularly in conveying reinforcements up the river from Gowahatty and Jumalpore.\textsuperscript{31} Such similar reports to the one that Scott referred to were circulating frequently without anything happening.\textsuperscript{32} Nevertheless, it did not fail to impress the vulnerability of the newly acquired frontier to the colonial officers.

The demand for more weaponry had already been demanded before this incident. Prior to this incident there were already many plans, which were floated, to counter this lingering perceived threat. As one of the means to resist such threats, Captain Neufville, the Political Agent, in the Upper Assam, wrote to David Scott on the 7\textsuperscript{th} of March 1830:

\begin{quote}
Should it meet your approbation I solicit the favour of your making application to Government to grant me some of the Iron 12 P. cannonades from the Gun boats ... to be planted on the forts at this place ... and at the small stockades I propose constructing ... I should be grateful for as many as Government may think proper to grant with ammunition and ... with my description of carriages that may be at hand but the ship slides as used in the Gun Boats would be preferable. I also beg to suggest the very great advantage I should derive on this frontier by the possession of one or two small portable mortars to throw shells and carcass into stockades.\textsuperscript{33}
\end{quote}

The “unhealthiness of the climate on the Eastern frontier, and the difficulty of reinforcing a party stationed there” were cited as the main reasons “to add as much as possible to their

\textsuperscript{31} Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General, N. E. Frontier to the Chief Secretary to Government, 28\textsuperscript{th} February 1831, Foreign Department Political Proceedings, 1831 March, 18 No. 36, NAI.

\textsuperscript{32} There were plenty of similar reports of invasion from the Burmese side. Another party came into Sadiya and informed Subedar Zalim Singh, who was in change of Sadiya, that they entered with an intention of personally meeting Lieutenant Matthie, whom they had addressed a letter earlier. They informed that Bogly Phookun had collected a body of 6,000 Burmese from Ava, with a view to invading Assam, which they claimed to have seen with their own eyes, that the force was certainly to come in the month of Phalgoon. Phookun was reported to have been confident of the Assamese nobilities and chief persons of Assam to side with him. See ‘Translation of Zalim Singh Soobadar of the Assam Light Infantry to Lieutenant Matthie’, dated January 9\textsuperscript{th} 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.

\textsuperscript{33} Letter from Captain Neufville, Political Agent, Upper Assam to David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General N. E. Frontier, 7\textsuperscript{th} March 1830, Foreign Department, Political Consultation, 1830 April 16, Nos. 93 – 95, NAI. There was a gunboat stationed at Sadiya at this time.
defence". Soliciting Neufville's demands to be implemented, Scott added that the addition of maximum amount of arms and ammunition "would render it possible materially to reduce the number of men that might with safety be posted at Suddeya and elsewhere on that frontier."\(^{34}\)

Though the reports of 'a large force', approaching Assam from the east could not be verified, and even if these reports turn out to be unfounded, Scott could not take any chance. He had worked out a whole plan of defence ready for the unseen attackers. In order to fight the attackers, the troops would not advance to the frontier but would make a stand in the neighbourhood of Jorhat. This decision, he explained to the officials in Bengal, was with reference to eventual invasion by a large force, coming with the aim of occupying the territory, and not to any mere raid, "for the purpose of catching slaves or revenging some private quarrel and for defence against which the party stationed at Suddeya and the militia organized there, will suffice."\(^{35}\) Considering the report of 'a large force', Scott had already decided the motives of the 'invaders'. He explained the rationale behind such a decision:

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\text{[A]s the danger is problematical, it would not answer to remove the whole of the Local Corps by water to Saddeeya, to guard against an occurrence which may not take place, and that supposing that they did not leave Jorehath until certain intelligence of the arrival of the enemy was received, it would be necessary that they should advance by land, via Burhath, where supplies must be carried the whole of the way, where the want of roads and cattle would in a great measure deprive them of the aid of the large train of artillery available below, and where the climate would in all probably reduce the number of effective men to one half in the course of less than a month.}^{36}\]

Scott defended his plan since he believed that the native troops, unsupported by artillery, were "exceedingly ill adapted to offensive operations against any of these Eastern tribes" who habitually fought from behind entrenchments. In addition to that if the troops were dispirited by sickness and the want of supplies in opposition to a "strong stockade garrisoned

\(^{34}\) Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General, N. F. Frontier to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Govt, 21\(^{st}\) March 1830, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1830 April 16, Nos. 93 – 95, NAI.

\(^{35}\) Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General, N. E. Frontier to the Chief Secretary to Government, 28\(^{th}\) February 1831, Foreign Department Political Proceedings 1831 March 18, No. 38, NAI.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.
by perhaps ten times their numbers of an undisciplined but nevertheless a cool and
determined enemy", 37 he was afraid that there would be a very strong probability of their
being repulsed with severe loss including the expulsion of the British from Upper Assam.

The panic of the colonial officials in the frontier reached such a height that the British
officials in Manipur were asked to inform Raja Gambhir Singh on the subject. In case of the
Raja's readiness to co-operate with the British troops, a portion of the Manipur Levy was
requested to march from Manipur into Upper Assam by a route which was familiar to the
Manipuris. Captain Grant in Manipur was also asked to open a direct communication with
the officer commanding in Upper Assam to receive the earliest intimation of the advance of
any hostile force into Assam. 38

The decision to leave the frontier of Sadiya and withdraw the forces to Jorhat went against
the purported claim in the past to protect the British subjects. However, Scott gave his
rationale for choosing such a decision:

I am quite sensible of the claims of the inhabitants of the borders for protection but I have no
hesitation in saying that in the present state of the force in this frontier it is out of our power
to afford it, without incurring very serious risk of losing the country of Upper Assam
altogether. . . . [I]n the case of such an invasion as that which is now said to be contemplated,
they must necessarily succumb to the enemy and in all probability appear, for a time at least
opposed to us in his ranks. There is in this case only a choice of evils, and we must either
consent to pay a body of troops for the defence, a tract which yields no revenue, or leave the
inhabitants unarmed at the mercy of every gang of ultramountain plunderers, or by giving

37 Ibid. The regularly disciplined British sepoys in Upper Assam at that time was less than 500 out of which 350
were disposable force after deducting at the very least 150 men for detached duties. Scott perceived that they
would be made to oppose, perhaps, a contingent of 10,000. With the aid of artillery, he thought that the
British would be able to fight a defensive battle at Jorhat. Moreover, there were various reasons that Scott
gave for the choice of Jorhat over Sadiya. Considering the 'unhealthiness' of the border areas of Assam, he
felt that the troops should not advance beyond the neighbourhood of Rangpur. At that time of the year the
river leading to Rangpur was navigable except for very small boats and considering that the attackers might
choose to use river ways for transport, it was easier to stop river navigation because of the forested banks.
From the earlier experience, it was also learnt that the area near Rangpur being heavily forested suited the
military tactics of the Burmese. The area in the neighbourhood on the contrary was well cultivated and open,
which suited the British military tactics.

38 Foreign Department Political Proceedings 1831 March 18, No. 40, NAI.

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them arms and enabling them to resist such petty attacks, run the risks of their being pressed into the service of the enemy, when he comes in sufficient force to over run that part of the country. 39

Though Scott had been given the authority to exercise his discretion because of his local knowledge, the question of abandoning and sacrificing the British subjects at the frontier raised serious political issues. G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Governor General, informed him, "[It was] obviously the duty of the Governor General to provide for the due protection of the lives and property of those who are subject to its authority or to whom we are bound by engagements such as subsist between us and the Singpho chiefs inhabiting the low lands about Suddeeya as dependencies of Assam." In order to ascertain the 'obvious duty' of the Governor-General, Scott was asked to report the “precise extents of the obligations which have been contracted with the twelve gaums or chiefs”. 40 Scott was also asked for his opinions with regard to the competent defence of the north-east frontier of Bengal and its future security against such 'incursions'. In the event of such an invasion from the Burmese side, Scott suggested a defensive operation. He was also asked whether “by any means a sufficient force could be raised to strengthen the outposts and to repel or arrest the advance of the invaders.” His opinion was sought on whether a body of Irregulars competent to perform this duty and in whom he could repose confidence could be collected and if such a measure should be implemented “in preference to the defensive operations”. 41 He was asked if the Shan musketeers could be considered for raising the Irregulars for the task of fighting the threat from the Burmese.

Scott reported that the want of arms was an incomparable objection to raising a sufficient force even if they could be depended upon which he doubted "unless they were previously

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39 Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General, N. E. Frontier to the Chief Secretary to Government, 28\(^{th}\) February 1831, Foreign Department Political Proceedings, 1831 March 18, No. 38, NAI.
40 Letter, from G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Governor General, to the Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, Foreign Department Political Proceedings 1831 March 18, No. 40, NAI.
41 Letter from G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Governor General, to the Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, dated 18\(^{th}\) February 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI. There was very strong opinion at this period of the inexpediency of employing the regular army in the frontier. It was believed that they were unfit for particular performance of duty in the frontier, especially on account of their reliance on commissariat supplies.
organized and settled under proper superintendence as Jageerdars.” On the advisability of mobilising the Shan musketeers he reported that they were procured from the colony of Burmese prisoners taken at Rangpur in 1825 and settled at Singamaree, north-east of Rangpur district, and had been hired for service in Lower Assam. From these altogether about 400 could be raised “but although admirably adapted for operations against the Garrows, Cossyas, Bhooteyyas and other tribes surrounding Assam,” Scott reported, “they could not well be trusted in a contest with their own countrymen and former Chiefs of whom Boglee Phookun is one.”

There were various rumours and reports, which circulated around about the possible attack from the Burmese side. There was a fear that the Burmese might make an alliance with various communities like the Singphos in order to attack Upper Assam to seek revenge for their defeat in the war. In view of the possible recurrence of hostilities with Ava, or “to its position in the vicinity of the barbarous and numerous tribes of Singphos”, the only people which have disturbed the peace of Assam since British possession according to Jenkins, Sadiya, the eastern most British station in Assam, yielded to be very important militarily. It also commanded over the Moamarias, “the only warlike race of the Assamese”. However, Jenkins noted that despite all these importance, the station had been neglected. Considering the extreme difficulty at any season of navigating the Brahmaputra upwards and the lack of roads between Sadiya and the British stations below, Jenkins believed that it “should be placed on such a respectable footing as regards its military establishments that it might be able to punish aggressions of the neighbouring tribes and be able to repel independent of support from lower Assam.” Keeping a strong detachment at Sadiya rendered it available of almost immediate employment in any part of Assam below for the descent of the Brahmaputra was made with a facility in proportion to the difficulty of ascending it. He gave two reasons why a strong detachment would be advantageous considering the Burmese threat. First, the Burmese would not attempt to invade by that route, except in great force

42 Letter from D. Scott, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to the Governor General, dated 3rd March 1831, Foreign Department Miscellaneous Volumes 1830 - 1831, Serial Number 241, NAI.
43 Letter from Captain Jenkins to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to Government, Political Department, dated 22nd July 1833, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 11, No. 90, NAI.
knowing that there was a detachment of British troops stationed there. Second, it was improbable that the Burmese would venture to detach a large body of their army to undertake a journey, which under the most favourable circumstances would take more than 100 days in marching from their capital. Such a long march, if undertaken, would have meant an exposure of their southern and western provinces to attacks from British, which became more vulnerable after the end of the war. But he also cautioned that this, however, did not mean that there would not be any Burmese threat. The distance from the valley of Hookoom to the first British subjected villages to the south of Sadiya was calculated to be only 9 days march without any material difficulties to encounter on the route. The road, though formerly travelled with elephants by the Burmese, was by then developing into continual intercourse between the Sinhphos on both sides of the border between Burma and Assam. As Jenkins noted, “it would therefore seem quite practicable for the Burmese Governor in communication with the Singphos of either border to invade upper Assam with any provincial army of irregulars that he may have at his disposal and to be at Sudiya or to enter the Moonmarya country before succours reach from Bishenath.” Such a possible invasion, Jenkins thought, would not be of any great danger were Sadiya garrisoned with a part of the British “troops of respectable strength, joined by the forces” of its allies and “should these allies be disposed to yield as their hearty cooperation.” But this assistance from the ‘native allies’ was dependent upon their views of the adequacy of British force to meet the impending danger, British “previous policy towards them and the degree of prosperity and respect they have enjoined” under the British protection. 44 Jenkins went on to propose that if a division of an army could be supported in Sadiya, in the event of war with the Burmese, this could be used for an offensive campaign, thus, making it one of the most vulnerable points of the Burmese empire. As stated above, because of the British attacks on Rangoon from the south and Aeng from the west, the Burmese would be occupied in opposing those fronts. Jenkins pointed out that an exhibition of an invasion from Sadiya would create an alarm and diversion to the Burmese and if necessary it could be turned into a real attack if the Burmese were to neglect this frontier from necessity or if the Shans were disposed to the enterprise.

44 Ibid.
From the earlier suggestions of David Scott to withdraw the troops from Sadiya to Jorhat because of its vulnerability in case of an attack from the Burmese to that of Jenkins's plan for making Sadiya a formidable station reflected the increasing aggressive measures of the British to consolidate its power.\(^\text{45}\) It also reflected the confidence of the colonial authorities in allowing the various ‘frontier peoples’ to certain form of mobility across the frontier. According to Jenkins’ plan, if the British had to retain Upper Assam, military posts should be established at the mouths of all the rivers on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, “for the purpose of protecting merchants and encouraging the formation of villages among the great river that travellers of all kinds might obtain the supplies and assistance they might stand in need of”.\(^\text{46}\) This proposal was irrespective of the arrangements with Rajah Purandar Singha, whom David Scott had suggested of restoring to take charge of Upper Assam.

The plan to increase the militaristic presence of the colonial authorities in the frontier went hand in hand with economic considerations.\(^\text{47}\) Sadiya, according to Jenkins, was no less important from a commercial point of view also. Its trade was reported to be considerable with articles of value as imports amongst which included musk, amber, ivory, gold, silver, lead, steel, Burmese silk dying drugs, cotton, etc. It had communications with the “Lama country”, Ava, and through the San provinces to China. By the beginning of the 1830s the Marwari traders had already started building their trade networks across the border from Assam into the Burmese side. The Khamptis kept their occasional intercourse with the Shans beyond the Irrawadi. This traffic was thought to be profitable except for the Singhphos who refused to acknowledge the colonial authority. As a consequence, it became an urgent task to coerce or conciliate the Singhphos to submit to British paramount authority if both the aims of

\(^{45}\)The plan for keeping more force in Sadiya was not necessarily to fight the Burmese threat or the various ‘hill tribes’ who inhabited around it. But it was intended as a measure to benefit in the long run since it was meant to intimidate all the disaffected and keep them from breaking out, thus, saving treasure and vexation to Government. Of course, the fear of the Burmese threat was a major factor but the understanding of the colonial officials that since ‘wild and warlike tribes’ inhabited the frontier, the fear of trouble breaking out any moment was compounded.

\(^{46}\)Letter from Captain Jenkins to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to Government, Political Department, dated 22\textsuperscript{nd} July 1833, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 11, No. 90, NAI.

\(^{47}\)C.A. Bruce reported that the trade in the frontier was already increasing. Letter from, Mr. C. A., Bruce, Commanding Gun Boats at Sadiya to Captain Jenkins, on special survey duty, dated 26\textsuperscript{th} March 1833, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 11, No. 91, NAI.
making Sadiya as a military post and increasing the trade in the frontier were to be achieved. The principal clans of the Singphos who inhabited on this road between the Khamptis on the Brahmaputra and those on the Irrawadi were Luttora Gam on the Tengapanee and the Dupha Gam on the Dupha Ranee and Noa Dihin rivers. The Luttora Gam was one of the chiefs of the formidable force of Singphos that threatened in 1829-30 and later forced back into the hills after a fierce battle with the British troops led by Captain Neufville then Political Agent in Upper Assam. Since Luttora Gam suffered heavily, it was believed that there would be no repetition of such an effort as long as a “tolerable detachment” was deployed at Sadiya. The reason for the attack, Jenkins wrote, “no doubt originated from the smallness” of the British force posted at Sadiya and the “consequent misapprehension on the part of these barbarians of our real strength.” He was convinced that Luttora Gam was aware of his mistake and was willing to cultivate a connection with the British. Dupha Gam, who was also part of that confederacy, had made overtures of submission but it was supposed that he was prevented from coming into Sadiya to tender his formal allegiance by the intrigues and jealousy of the Beesa Gam occupying the intermediate territory, who apparently wished to reserve for himself the medium of intercourse between the British and the Singhphos. The colonial officials, in Jenkins opinion, should encourage these chiefs to communicate with them to respect the paramount authority of the British. Even though the Singphos of Assam did not carry on a flourishing trade with the Shans and the Chinese of Yunnan through the territories of Ava with those on the other side of the border, Jenkins was convinced that under the “fostering encouragement of the British Government” there seemed to be “no reason to suppose that it might not be greatly extended”. Jenkins proposed a co-ordinated effort to support the ‘rising trade’ on the frontier and in this the Resident in Ava was asked to supply information of the state of the province of Hookoom and Mogoum through which the trade route traversed. This effort on the part of the Resident was, however, meant not only in the furtherance of trade between Assam and Burma, “but with a view to acquire military information”. He even suggested that if the “Resident apprehended no danger of exciting the jealousy of the Ava Government” he might even dispatch an intelligent messenger to the Political Agent in Upper Assam to acquaint himself with the territories on the Burmese side.
and smoothen the way for the removal of any objections to the "journey being undertaken under some pretence by a European officer."

The Resident at Ava was asked to ascertain from the Government of Ava on what terms the merchants of Assam would be permitted to resort to Ava. And whether they could safely pass through the state of the two frontier provinces of Hookoom and Moongkoom. He was also asked to convey to the Court of Ava of the advantages that would ensue to the two empires from the intercourse between the subjects. On his part, the Resident at Ava replied that "a very extraordinary degree of ignorance regarding the whole of the Shan States" prevailed among the Burmese Ministers. He informed that not one of the officials in the court really knew anything of the condition of the country lying between Mogoung and Assam. Pointing out the difficulty of gathering information he wrote:

All the information I was able to collect on the subject whilst residing at Ava, I took much pains to do so, was, that the Shan States and numerous wild tribes named Bwon, Kadoo, Kakhyen, and Thein Ban (our Singpho) occupying the territory between Mogoung and Assam, are subject to the Governor of Mogoung . . . that the seat of the Shan chief of the province of Hookoung (our Hookoom) is Main Kwon (our Moong Koom, Moun Khom and Muen Kon), 7 or 8 days journey beyond Mogoung and that 20 days of very difficult journey beyond main Kwon, is the Burmese frontier chokey called Taban Ken (our Tapan).

48 Letter from Captain Jenkins to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to Government, Political Department, dated 22nd July 1833, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 11 No. 90, NAI. However, Major White thought that there was no necessity for the interference of Government in support of this trade and in fact charged Jenkins of advocating a continuance of the endeavours of Government to carry on commerce by means of their own servants. According to Jenkins, when Lieutenant Burnett was sent in 1828 to examine the pass over the Patkai mountains he was led to believe that the Shans or Singphos would have gladly received him at the head of 300 men and would undertake with that assistance from the British to drive the Burmese out of the Hookoom and adjoining areas. Stressing on their earnest to obtain the British aid, he goes on to state that they even threatened to invade Assam and Sadiya if such a proposal was refused. Jenkins, however, was not sure whether aversion of these people to the rule of the Burmese was still there. For this purpose and for the purpose of ascertaining the resources to furnish for a division of an army, he suggested the deputation of an officer. It is with this thought that he proposed cultivating good relations with the neighbours whether for purposes of peace through trade or war. And in this effort the Resident at Ava was to play an important role.

49 Letter from Lt. Col. Burney, Resident at Ava to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to the Govt of India, Political Department, dated 14th February 1835, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 24, No. 23, NAI. The British had been interested in this 'China trade' much before the outbreak of the first Anglo-Burmese war. There were several envoys sent by the East India Company to Burma from 1700 to 1824,
The information on the distances, he found to “correspond pretty accurately with those given in the route of the Burmese army in 1820 from Mogoung . . . towards Rungpoor in Assam in the geographical sketch of the Burmese Empire which was compiled at the office of the Surveyor General of India in 1825.” He informed that Mogoung, earlier, was the capital of a powerful Shan Chief who conquered Ava and that as late as Colonel Symes’ visit in 1795, it was the seat of a tributary prince. But it was now governed by a Burmese Governor and managed to get a copy of his report to the King of Ava on first taking charge of his Government in January 1830. In the report, he informed, “It represents the country before his arrival to have been in a state of desolation, all the wild tribes dispersed and removal to other quarters and mentions as the first act of his government, the measure of having deputed a secret Agent to Assam, in order to ascertain what we were about in that country.” It was also further noted that the Court of Ava were extremely jealous of foreigners having any communication with the Shan States, over most of which Burmese supremacy was not very secure. Burney, however, failed in his attempts to obtain some authentic information regarding the country to the north of Ava. He tried sending British and Parsi merchants with merchandize but they were refused by the Court. Nevertheless, he was of the opinion that the Burmese Government exercised “very little authority over the Sinphos . . . and other wild tribes” who occupied the country between Assam, Yunnan and Ava. The Chinese caravans, which were numerous in the area, had been attacked by these mountaineers. The chance of

which reported on this trade from upper Burma. Colonel Symes who was sent as an envoy in 1795 reported of an extensive cotton trade between Burma and Yunnan in China. He reported that amber, ivory, precious stones, beetle nut brought from the eastern archipelago were articles of trading and the Burmese in return procured raw and wrought silks, velvets, gold leaf, paper, etc. See Michael Symes, Embassy to the Kingdom of Ava in 1795, with additions by Henry Glassford Bell, new edition, Vol. II, Edinburgh: Constable and Co., 1831, p. 64. For an effort to have commercial transactions with the Burmese after the war see John Crawfurd, Journal of an Embassy from the Governor General of India to the Court of Ava, in the year 1827, London: Henry Colburn, 1829. John L. Christian argues that Crawfurd’s account might have aroused the interest of the Company leading to publication of a map showing overland routes to Yunnan along with numerous surveys. But the British could not participate in the overland trade with China. John L. Christian, “Trans-Burma Trade Routes to China,” Pacific Affairs, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 1940, pp. 173-91. For an indication that there might be a “more extended commercial intercourse” all the villages in the eastern frontier see R. Boileau Pemberton, Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, Guwahati: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, 1991[1835].

50 Letter from Lt. Col. Burney, Resident at Ava to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to the Govt of India, Political Department, dated 14th February 1835, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1835 February 24, No. 23, NAI.
the Government of Ava giving up the 10 percent duty levied on all transports into their country was not to be expected since the amount of this duty had been fixed by their oldest code of laws, and was considered as ancient as the Empire itself. The Resident recommended that no proposition should be made to the Court of Ava and no questions mooted except that such of the British subjects in Assam as might desire to visit the Burmese territories for the purpose of trade should be furnished with the ‘certified pass’ provided for by the 1st article of Mr. Crawford’s commercial Treaty with the Burmese. Whenever traders with such a pass meet with obstruction or extortion, a remonstrance was to be made to the Government of Ava and an enquiry into the conduct of the local or frontier officers insisted upon. Apart from this the traders were to be recommended to travel in strong parties, well armed, and warned that by the Burmese law, gold and silver and any precious stone of a valuable exceeding 500 ticals were prohibited to be exported. The quantity and description of goods possessed by each trader was to be specified, as particularly as possible, in order that a claim for compensation in the event of his being robbed and plundered might be more easily proved according to Burmese law.\textsuperscript{51}

The desire to send missions from Ava to the Burmese frontiers towards Assam remained with the colonial officials. Taking the opportunity of the fight between the Beesa Gam and Duffa Gam, and of restraining and settling the Singphos and other ‘wild tribes’ subject to Ava, Captain Hannay went for a mission for the purpose of meeting there a party of Company’s officers and ascertaining in concert with them the best mode of extinguishing these feuds from the Burmese side. But in the process, he also managed to gather more information on the topography and inhabitants of the place north of Ava.\textsuperscript{52} On the new opportunity, which gave the much-desired plan on the part of the British, it was written,

To an act of aggression on the part of a Singpho tributary of Ava against a chieftain of the same clan residing under our protection, are we indebted for the opportunity of acquiring the information now gained, and the feud of two insignificant borderers may prove the immediate

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{52} For the proceedings of Captain Hannay, and other interesting points see Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1836 July 18, Nos. 39 – 46, NAI.
cause of a more intimate communication than had ever previously existed between our recently acquired possessions in Assam and the northern provinces of the Burman empire.\textsuperscript{53}

The settling of the feud was also envisioned to admit of a safer and more frequent trade and intercourse between the two empires. The Burmese Ministers suggested the name of Mr. Bayfield rather than Captain Hannay on the ground that the former knew the Burmese language and would be able to facilitate the Burmese officers of rank to fix the boundary between Assam and Ava properly fixed as a part of the mission. However, Burney answered that the negotiation about the boundary was a matter of discussions between the Company officers in Assam and the Burmese authorities and not for the European officers in Ava to intervene.\textsuperscript{54}

**Conclusion**

The British after the first Anglo-Burmese war annexed a large tract of territory lying between Bengal and Burma to form the north-east frontier. However, despite the formal cessation of the war with the Burmese, there were many ‘small wars’ that the British continued to fight. Some of these ‘small wars’ were against those rebellious chiefs who lost their authority as a result of the changes that the British colonialism introduced. At the same time, the ‘threat’ of the Burmese was a continuous concern for the British while dealing with the inhabitants of the frontier. In order to counter these challenges, there were various plans (discussed in the next chapter). For instance, the encouragement of trade in the areas near Sadiya was closely related to its military importance. The supplies and every article of subsistence for the troops in that station had to be conveyed up against the strong current of the Brahmaputra causing its maintenance to be very precarious and excessively expensive. Encouraging trade and conciliating with the inhabitants were part of the arrangements to secure the position of the


\textsuperscript{54} Letter from Burney, Resident at Ava to W. H. Macnaghten, Secretary to the Government of India, Political Department, dated 10th October 1836, Foreign Department Political Consultation, 1836 December 5, No. 78, NAI.
British on the frontier. At the same time, there seems to be a lurking desire to connect with the Chinese provinces through these routes on the frontier.

From the foregoing discussion it is noticeable that despite the declared claims of bringing about peaceful existence between the two empires at the conclusion of the first Anglo-Burmese, the question of the 'threat' to the British territories did not diminish. As discussed in the earlier chapter, the war had been fought with the expressed justification of defending the Burmese threat to the British territories of Bengal. With the annexation of Assam, both rebellion from within and threats from across the frontier continued.