CHAPTER  -  M

TOWARDS DIRECT RULE
We now turn our attention to the Garo Hills where a more direct form of administration was structured over the entire tract. Though David Scott and his successors continued to supervise British relations with the Garos, the actual work was entrusted to the Principal Assistant Commissioner of Goalpara since the Political Agents to the Goorpoorn of the north-east frontier had too many calls to attend over the problems of the entire north-east frontier. Indirect rule was very much apparent here during the early decades of the last century. Garo Laskars and S'ardars were entrusted with revenue, judicial and police functions under the supervision of Mirza Banda Ali Beg, the Sarbarakar of the hills, who in turn was responsible to the Goalpara authorities. The outbreak of the First Burmese War put a stop to Scott's personal attention to a settlement of the Garo problem for following his promotion he could give but little attention to the consolidation of the scheme of administration he had initiated. For the next thirty years or so the British could do little to establish their position within the Garo Hills since their attention was mainly drawn towards checking continued Garo raids and the demands of the Zamdars, to a greater control over the hillmen.

For some years after Scott left the Garo scene no European visited the hills till Captain Bogle, the Principal
Assistant of Kamrup made a circuit of the Garo hats in the winter of 1834-35, Bogle made an enquiry into the reasons why the Dussani Garos of Rungtapara evaded paying their revenue which was in arrears since 1832, and the fine imposed upon them following a disturbance in which four Burmese elephant hunters were murdered. On his arrival at Bengal Khatta the chiefs of the lower portion of the mahals came and tendered their submission, and their ryots affirmed that they had paid in their revenue annually to the chiefs appointed to collect it. Investigation showed that indeed several payments had been made by them which, however, had never been carried to the credit of Government. In 1835 Francis Jenkins took over from Robertson as the Governor-General's Agent he found the Garos much in arrears and in open resistance to the British. He, therefore, recommended that a European officer should be attached to the Goalpara district principally for the purpose of visiting the Garo hats to supervise the collection of revenue and to maintain the security of that frontier. Accordingly Government appointed John Strong in March 1835 as Sub-Assistant under the Principal Assistant at Goalpara, Soon after his appointment Strong visited all the tributary

2. C.S.Reynolds, op. cit., p.47.
Garo hats except those of Dumra duaEpduringo which he met most of the chiefs, enquired into the mode of conducting the hats and took measures for the collection of revenue. In time he made himself sufficiently acquainted with the Garo languages — something which no European officer had been able to do.³

Early in 1836 two events occurred that demanded British intervention with the Bemula Garos. Certain among these Garos had committed murder in British territory and their apprehension could not be effected without an invasion into their country. The second case involved the independent village of Seebkeéjora which had intimidated Sarbarakar's assistants from collecting revenue from the two tributary villages of Hallal and Khalgaon (which had themselves evaded paying the very nominal tribute of thirty tuo rupees), and also threatened them with vengeance should the two villages pay the Government demand.⁴ Denkins agreed with Captain A. Davidison, the Principal Assistant Goalpara that coercive measures of closing the border hats and sending a contingent of sebundys would put sufficient pressure on these Garo's to effect Government's objects. The Agent considered the independence of the Garos as "mere lawlessness of banditti."

⁴ F.P.C., 25 Duly 1836, No.45.
and it appealed to him "desireablels that we should never omit any occasion which their disturbances and wanton aggressions give to frequently offer to subdue all those concerned to strict obedience."  

The Government gave its approval to the measures that the two officers wished to adopt but the expedition could not be sent till the close of the year. In the meantime Denkings visited Singimari on his way to Cooch Behar, where he met many of the Garo chiefs in that region. Enquiry showed that the Garos had suffered much exactions from the native officers and having been deprived of the chance to make this grievances known had been driven to open resistance. For a closer management of the villages adjoining Goalpara, Jenkins proposed that a small cutcherry should be built at Singimari where Strong could reside for a few months in the year. Government approved this suggestion and sanctioned the construction of a cutcherry and out-offices at Singimari at a cost not exceeding one thousand rupees. While Jenkins remained at Singimari, Strong and Lieutenant H. Abbott, who commanded the troops at Goalpara, marched into the hills to coerce the Garos to submission, and hats in Goalpara and Plymensing'h which were frequented by these Garos were closed. This policy had its effects for arrears in revenue was paid, Seebkeejora agreed to

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid, no. 46.
8. Ibid., No. 56; Political Despatch to Court of Directors, Nb. 32 of 1837. David Scott had earlier built a house and cutcherry at this place.
become tributary and other villages in the western duars submitted to British rule.  

When reports came in May 1839 of the murder of two Burmese while returning from a market in Lukiduar by independent Garos beyond Dumra hat, Captain H. Rutherford, the Principal Assistant at Goalpara suggested similar measures be adopted as was done three years earlier. An expedition was nominally allowed by Government but it did not come off for want of troops. This incident called for a more definite control of the Garos by the British Government. Rutherford considered the existing management of the hills by the Sarbarakar as "perfectly useless." He preferred to place the whole of the Garo Hills under the control of an efficient British officer and that the hills should be kept completely separate from the control of the Zamindars, particularly those of Susung and Karaibaru. It was with this view that Jenkins had called for an officer to have sole management of the Garo Hills. Had Strong been entrusted with more authority by his superior more beneficial results would have been forthcoming. But since the Garo hats were so mixed up with the rest of Goalpara it seemed impracticable for an officer in charge of the Garos to be made entirely independent of the officer in charge of the district. Moreover, it was not feasible to have a separate establishment for the hills as the Sub-Assistant could at the longest reside in the hills for only five months in the year. Since so

9. Ibid., No. 55.
10. Ibid. 24 July 1839, Mo. 95.
11. Ibid., No. 97.
12. Ibid., No. 95.
13. Ibid.
little was known of the hills and there were reasons to suppose that the Zamindars had encroached extensively on the rights of Government, Jenkins suggested that a revenue survey should be made to map the whole of the Garo frontier and as much of the hills as might be accessible as a preliminary to other arrangements for the Garo Hills, Considering any arrangement for the hills as "premature and fruitless" till a survey was made, Jenkins found that he was unable to make any recommendations on Rutherford's suggestion. In reply Government noted that it could scarcely think the Garrou Mountaineers to be a race of sufficient importance to warrant the permanent employment of an officer specially to superintend their affairs in connexion the zamindars and population of the plains. 15

Government's policy towards the Garos was made even clearer in a reply Jenkins received to a proposition of sending a detachment of troops into the hills. The directive ran:

It appears very doubtful whether the direction of a military expedition against the offenders in the course of the operation of which it is too probable that the innocent would suffer along with the guilty and that great evil must be inflicted on a whole tribe to avenge an outrage committed by a few of their number is the persistent course to pursue with a view of restraining and gradually civilizing these savage tribes.

It went on to say:

The indiscriminate use of military force on

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., No.97.
these distressing occasions may inspire the barbarous inhabitants with a dread of the power of the British Government but its exhibition should be reserved for great and rare occasions which may justify the adoption of general retribution. It rarely happens that the petty military expeditions directed against uncivilized tribes are conducted with a fierceness which at once provokes retaliation as is contrary to all our feelings of humanity and honorable warfare, and his Lordship in Council requests such expeditions shall for the future be most sparingly and cautiously planned.\

These instructions were followed to the letter for some years. Despite further reports of raids and murders no force was sent into the hills. Efforts were made to win the confidence of the Garos by the Principal Assistant Goalpara during his annual tour where he personally communicated with the chief, receiving from them revenue and giving present in return, reminding them at the same time of the obedience they ought to give to Government. Jenkins himself visited the hills in the winter of 1845 when he distributed presents of cloth, turban, guns and coral beads to Garo chiefs.\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\]

Conciliation, however, failed and coercion had once again to be adopted. Towards the close of 1846 the Dussanis murdered the Laskar of Ri\'sugiri and his entire family when he demanded payment of tribute. A punitive expedition was first

16. Despatch from Court of Directors, No.17 of 1841.
17. F.P.C., 17 July 1847, No.22.
18. F.P.C., 7 November 1845, No.34.
sent under Lieutenant Dalton during April-nay 1847, which returned with some loss and exaggerated accounts of the seriousness of the opposition. In January the next year Captain C.S. Reynolds, who succeeded Dalton as Principal Assistant Goalpara, accompanied a detachment under Lieutenant Belli to bring the Dussanis to order. The force marched to Rissugiri which was found completely deserted. As there was no hope of inducing the people to surrender after the numerous proclamations that Reynolds had issued to them, offering pardon to all except the murderers and as these Garos "appeared to me to require a severe example of their contumacy in attacking us," and as the detachment could not be detained in the hills, the Principal Assistant directed the destruction of the village and its defences before commencing their retreat to the plains.

Both Reynolds and Jenkins saw the usefulness of constructing roads from the plains into the hills. Reynolds was more keen that roads should be constructed to connect the hats on the foothills with Goalpara and with each other to facilitate access to their markets both for the Garos and the traders from the plains. Only after these lines of communication had been laid down did he suggest extending them into the hills. Such roads would be of special use during the monsoon months when the roads along the Brahmaputra could not

be used due to the inundation of the river. Till such time Government could raise the te, 25,000 to 30,000 for the proposed lines of communication, Jenkins requested the sanction of Rs. 1500 to improve the roads (which were mere footpaths) from Goalpara to the hats at Jeera and Damra. Government could not sanction the larger amount for financial reasons and, therefore, Jenkins’ alternate plan was given effect to.²²

Raids continued. Between July and October 1852 seven Garo inroads into Goalpara were reported. The local authorities proposed an expedition to demand the surrender of the offenders, to levy fines on the concerned villages, or burn them in default of payment and to exact written agreements from the chiefs. It was also proposed that a survey should be made. Government approved generally of these proposals but did not see the use of taking written agreement. An expedition was accordingly despatched which burnt a Garo village, but little else came out of this expedition. Jenkins next proposed the closing of the hats, to which Government objected as no blockade however rigid could prevent them from getting supplies from Wymensingh, and as the main sufferers to such extreme measures were the people of the plains who depended for their livelihood on the cotton trade with the Garos. Nevertheless, Government was determined to try it if the blockade could be made tolerably severe to have some effect on the hillmen.²³

²¹ F.P.C., 21 October 1848, No. 22.
²² Ibid., No. 23.
²³ A. Mackenzie, History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes on the North-Eastern Frontier of Bengal, p. 257.
measures had some effect as the disruption in cotton trade was severely felt by the Garos. Three offenders were given up, the Oussani Laskar and three of his Sardars and two Cheanee Sardars met Captain Agngu, the Principal Assistant with promises to apprehend the offenders still at large. These Garos petitioned the authorities that if the hats were opened, the fugitive offenders would eventually come down to the plains which would enable the chiefs to apprehend them.  

A.3 Wills who was then touring Assam in preparation of his report commented that:

Nothing but dire necessity should, in my opinion, induce us to occupy and administer this country; its climate is most deadly, and unless a European functionary can reside in the interior, and superintend the administration which it is known he could not do, we should not attempt to extend our rule over unprofitable hills. All past experience proves that we cannot trust entirely to native agency in the management of the wild tribes. . . . . Matters have not yet, I think, come to such a crisis as to compel us to take possession of the country.

Mills' observations received but scant attention as the policy of Government continued to be one of non-intervention.

Radical Attitude

Garo raids continued and were on the increase by 1859. Denkins reported that the policy of closing the hats had proved ineffectual, inasmuch as it was never followed up by a military expedition to demand the surrender of offenders as had been done previously. He recommended a return to the old policy.

25 Ibid.
of coercion, which had been abandoned with no good results. 26 So alarming was the Garo problem that U.D. Allen considered whether the Garo Hills should be tagged to the Cherrapunji administration. He pointed out that no authority at Cherrapunji could have any real control over the Garos as there, were no roads from the Khasi Hills into the Garo Hills and as the latter hills had more connection with Mymensingh and Goalpara. "The Garro Hills," he said, "had better be left, as they are." 27 Things began moving with the appointment of B. U. D. Morton as Principal Assistant Goalpara. For a more effective supervision of the Garos bordering Goalpara and Mymensingh Morton proposed in January 1861 (i) the separation of the Garo villages from the estates of Susung and Sherpur and the extension of the same system of internal management as had been done in Goalpara by Regulation X of 1822; (ii) the construction of a military road from Goalpara to Sylhet joining all the intermediary hats; (iii) the raising of a frontier militia of one hundred men with its complements of officers; (iv) the appointment of a European officer for the Garo Hills who should reside at Karaibari with the power of a Principal Assistant; and (v) the reimposition of

27. U. D. Allen, Report on the Administration of the Gossyah and Dynteah Hill Territory, pp. 33-34. Similar views were expressed by General Showers: "With respect to the Garro Hills nothing is known either of the country or its inhabitants by the Khasyahs. There is no intercourse of any kind between the two classes. At the present time the transfer of the Garro Hills to the political control of the Superintendent of the Khasi Hills would be premature." H. P. P. 25 September 1862, No. 59.
a duty on cotton at the hats to meet the additional expenses.  

Government approved only the first proposal and negatived or postponed all the rest.  

Government, however, approved another of Morton's proposals that an expedition should enter the hills to apprehend those responsible for two "atrocious outrages" by independent Garos\(^\text{29}\) which had resulted in the death of twenty-five persons in Mymensingh. Two small forces consisting of military police were assembled in January-February 1861. Lieutenant Chambers commanded the force from Goalpara while Morton led the party from Mymensingh. Both the forces achieved their purpose, the villages of recusant chiefs were burnt and the crops were destroyed, dependant chiefs were made to pay arrears in revenue and Bemulwa Garos offered their submission. Three persons were executed. To give greater effect to the sentence the capital punishment was ordered by Morton to be carried out in the villages in which the men resided.  

Henry Hopkinson who succeeded Francis Denkins in February 1861 as the Agent to the Governor-General and Commissioner of Aggam agreed with Morton on the need of a separate officer to take charge of the Garo Hills, for military expeditions were only temporary in their effects. He also saw the need for the construction of a road around and across the hills for such communication would have the same effect on the

\(^{28}\) B.D.P., April 1861, No.254. 
\(^{29}\) Ibid., No.269. 
\(^{30}\) Parliamentary Papers: Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India during the year 1860-61. p.199.
Garos as it had in the Khasi Hills with the construction of the Sylhet-Gauhati road. These views were expressed when he forwarded to Government reports of the expedition under Morton and Chambers.

The Secretary of State for India in his despatch on 9 December 1861 commended the work of Morton and Chambers. He agreed that the Garos could not be "reclaimed for their savage habits or to introduce amongst them a higher state of civilization by the mere display of military strength." These objects could only be effected by peaceful means and by gradual increase in relations with them. He regretted Jenkins' remark that although the Garos had been under British jurisdiction for nearly a century, not a single officer could converse with them in their language. He, therefore, urged the Principal Assistant to make annual tours in the hills. He appreciated Hopkinson's recommendation of opening up the hills through roads provided the cost of construction could be met from the funds of the Public Works Department. Every effort should be made, he further added, to encourage the cultivation of cotton as "there is nothing which will tend more to the general improvement and civilization of the country than the increase of its commerce."

The next phase of the development of a more direct administration for the Garo Hills began in 1866, the important feature of which will be taken up presently. The frequency of

32. Political Despatch from the Secretary of State for India, Kb.133 of 1861.
raids and murders and the failure of coercive measures of military force and the closure of the hats brought a sea-change in policy towards the Garos. Government's object became one to make the tribe feel that they had a direct and tangible interest in the preservation of good order and to teach them to look upon the British Government as a "friend and benefactor and not as a powerful and vindictive enemy, "ever ready to seize on the slightest excuse for measures of retaliation and indiscriminate punishment." It became evident to Government that the presence of a European officer was necessary for the purpose of establishing direct influence over the Garos from within as control from without had never really solved the Garo problem. Sir Cecil Beadon, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, therefore, recommended to the Government of India that a special officer should be appointed to take charge of the Garo Hills. In 1866 Government decided to constitute the Garo Hills into a separate jurisdiction under a first class Assistant Commissioner. Lieutenant U.3. Williamson, the Assistant Commissioner of Goalpara was appointed on 12 July 1866 as the first officer of the Garo Hills with temporary head-quarters at Singimari. In November the following year Williamson set himself up at Tura which had been selected as the site for his permanent head-quarters. All December that year and January of 1868 was occupied by him in supervising the

34. F.P.C., April 1866. No.18.
35. B.3.P., August 1866, No.72.
construction of roads from Mankachar and Singimari, erecting houses for the new establishment and stocking provisions before the rains would set in.

Reorganization

(a) Revenue

It has already been noted that the Garo Hills was divided into three distinct sections on a political and revenue basis. The greater portions of the Garo Hills were attached to Gpalpara district and, was divided into those who paid revenue and those who paid tribute. Those in the Rhas mahals called Zamindari Garos though within the permanently settled estates bordering the hills were divested by Regulation X of 1822 from all control of the Zamindars. These Garos paid their revenue to Government through the Sarbarakar. Assessment was of two kinds, on the Nokpante (bachelors' dormitory) and on the villages and the amount collected was about rupees three. This system was in force in the eastern duars around Damra, Jeera and Nibari. Towards the west in Karaibari the assessment was on the individual house. The rate varied from rupees five for the large houses to rupees three for smaller houses. Of the total collection twenty five per cent, was deducted to defray the expenses of Government and the remainder was paid to the Zamindars of Karaibari and Mechpara. The Laskars and Sardars who collected the revenue were remunerated according to the, extent of collection varying from rupees eight to ten, besides presents.

of cloth and rum and expenses while on revenue duty.  

Beyond the Zamindari mahals were the Nazzarana mahals inhabited by Garos who had been brought under British subjection by military force. No revenue was collected but for a fixed tribute from the village collectively as a mark of submission. These Garos invariably evaded payment unless the authorities visited them with a military force and demanded payment. The total number of Garo Zamindari and Nazzarana mahals were seventy four. In the very heart of the hills and close to the Khasi state of IVongstoin were the Bemulua Garos who did not recognize any authority by the British.

(b) Police

David Scott had entrusted the police duties in the hills to the Laskars with whom he had entered into agreement in 1825. They were to report all murders and homicides in their jurisdiction and to apprehend all offenders and prevent the independent Garos from making raids into the lowlands. These Laskars were under the supervision of the Sarbarakar who was to proceed immediately into the hills with a party of sepoys from the Singimari detachment on reports of any criminal case and to enforce the surrender of the criminals. Besides the Sarbarakar there were five Garo police muharrirs stationed along the frontier at different posts whose duty were to attend the hats and to report any circumstance that might occur within their

40. Ibid.
jurisdiction, apart from general police functions. A military detachment was also stationed at seven of the principal hats and stockaded at the head of the village where the hat was held, for the purpose of protecting the traders.

The Garo frontier police had apparently failed by the time Mills made his report on Assam. The many years of its operation had shown that its management was faulty. Both Agneu’ and Denkins wanted a change in the police administration. The former wanted the office of Sarbarakar abolished or else the officer should be empowered by Government to proceed into the hills whenever his presence was required. Denkins preferred that the Garos should be made 'to manage their own police by strengthening the existing force. Hills agreed to these views. If the police were to be thoroughly reformed he first suggested that the Bengalis who hitherto comprised the police force should be discharged and their places filled by Garos, Kochs, (Rajongs and Rabhas. Secondly, he suggested that the detachment of the Sylhet Light Infantry in Goalpara bordering the Garo Hills should be dispersed and that a sebundy corp should be raised to protect the foothills. Finally he proposed that the

Sarbarakar should be dismissed altogether and that the Principal

41. Ibid., p.A.cxi. The outposts were at Batadurkata and Kakripara (in the Karaibari thana); Bengal Katta (in the Singimari thana) and at Damra and Mibari (in the Goalpara thana).
43. Ibid., p.A.cxi.
44. Ibid., pp.A.clxvii, clxx.
Assistant Goalpa'ra should assume his duties. No changes appear to have been made but for the abolition of the post of Sarbarakar in early 1857 and placing the Sub-Assistant at Singimari in charge of the 'Garo mahals. Three years later with the restoration of the Sarbarakar the office of Sub-Assistant was made redundant.

In May 1865, Morton proposed a police reorganization on the model of Scott's system under which the Laskars in return for annual payments would be responsible for the collection and punctual payment of revenue and the maintenance of law and order within their respective jurisdiction. The Laskars of the larger villages, under the proposed scheme, would continue their police duties and in that capacity they would be called Zimmadars. They were to have criminal powers in petty cases and civil powers for the trial of suits when the property in dispute did not exceed rupees fifty. They were to administer justice impartially in accordance with the prevailing customs, to maintain peace in their respective jurisdictions and to apprehend those committing heinous offences, to prevent human sacrifice, to report accidental death and to induce those not under Government to submit to its authority. As remuneration for these dual functions the Zimmadars were to receive specified annual allowances in money ranging from Rs.25 to Rs.80. The

45. Ibid., p. B.11
aggregate cost of the scheme was to be R3.1405.\(^{47}\)

Government gave its approval to the scheme as it did not involve much expenditure and as the principle of the arrangement had already been recognized,\(^{48}\) Williamson was entrusted with the duty of implementing the measures. He issued sanads of appointments and received written agreements from them. Each of them was also presented a musket and some ammunition.\(^{49}\)

(c) **Justice**

These administrative changes were followed by the appointment of Williamson as Assistant Commissioner of the Garo Hills. A scheme for the administration of the Garo posed a difficult problem, as Robertson remarked:

> We have to deal with the more complicated state of affairs, beginning with the most savage and anarchical independence and sliding off, by almost imperceptible degrees through various stages of subjection to our rule, into the ryots of Zemindars affected by all the machinery of the perpetual settlement.\(^{50}\)

On the recommendations of Williamson and Hopkinson, Government laid down instructions for the administration of the Garo Hills. Though the Code of Criminal and Civil Procedure were not to be introduced in the hills, the Assistant Commissioner was to be guided by its spirit. All criminal and

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47. H.Pol,P., 4 May 1866, No.4. The office of Zimmadar was made to correspond with that of the Dolloi of the Saintia Hills and the Goanbura in the Naga Hills.


49. T5:105, to.s.4-5.

civil cases beyond the competence of the Zimmadars were to be tried by the Hindu. He was to exercise the authority of a Magistrate for the trial of cases not punishable by death or which did not involve a punishment heavier than seven years imprisonment. With the aid of assessors he was to exercise the powers of a Sessions Judge for trial of cases punishable by death or other heinous offences, but no sentence of death could be carried into effect unless, confirmed by his immediate superior. In civil cases the Assistant Commissioner simply supervised the functions of the Laskars who were entrusted all civil cases except those which involved persons of different tribes and villages. There was to be no appeal from the decisions of the village authorities, but the Assistant Commissioner had the power to call for the proceedings of any case and give his final judgement. Williamson was vested the powers of Superintendent of Police over a force consisting of two 0 Inspectors, two Sub-Inspectors, 6 Head Constables and 100 Constables which was raised from the tribes in Goalpara, Cooch Behar and Rangpur. Only after Williamson had set himself at Tura did Government approve the construction of a bridle path from Singimari to Tura and on to Mymensingh. A sum of Rs.10,000 was set aside for this purpose in 1866-67 and a similar sum for the next year. 51

On January 1867 the Cooch Behar Commissionership was formed. Gcalpara, including the Eastern duars and the Garo Hills were separated from Assam and made part of the new administration. In the following year C. Haughton, the Commissioner of the division advised Government that the judicial duties of the eastern portion of the division might be made to revert to the Judicial Commissioner of Assam as there were serious inconvenience of communication. Accordingly this was done by a notification on 10 August 1868. The executive control of the districts, however, continued to be under Haughton's control. Hardly had this been done when the Commissioner expressed the inexpediency of placing the judicial administration of the Garo Hills under the Judicial Commissioner of Assam as the judicial system in these hills differed entirely from that in Assam. He therefore, went back on his words and recommended that the orders transferring the judicial administration of the Garo Hills from his jurisdiction should be cancelled and that the Garo Hills should be considered "as under purely political rule." The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir William Grey concurred with Haughton and a notification to this effect was published on 22 September 1868. The entire administration of the Garo Hills, therefore, remained under the Cooch Behar Division till Assam was constituted into a separate Chief Commissionership in 1874.

52. B.J.P., December 1866, No.16.
53. B.J.P., August 1868, No.79.
54. Ibid., Nos.81-82.
55. Ibid., November 1868, No.96.
56. Ibid., Nos.97-98.
The new arrangements could be carried out only in the northern and western portion of the Garo Hills. In the southern hills the disputes between the Garos and the Zamindars of Susung and Sherpur continued unabated for the latter did not relinquish their claims over portions of the hills adjoining their estates. Early in 1866 the inhabitants of the three independent villages of Baduree, Darrangiri and Dapsagiri made a raid into Nymensingh following the closure of the hats by the Zamindar of Susung on his failure to collect revenue from these villages, which he claimed formed part of his estate. Advantage was taken of this dispute by Government to send an expedition into the three villages which were made to submit to British rule by paying a fine for the outrage and an annual revenue. Friction had arisen between Government and the Zamindars of Susung and Sherpur as early as 1857. In the course of the revenue survey of Wymensingh that year, it became necessary to lay down the northern boundary of the district. It was decided that a line running along the foothills of the Garo Hills should be accepted and laid down as the northern boundary of the two estates. The Raja of Susung disputed this order, claiming a considerable tract beyond the survey boundary as forming part of his estate. His case passed through several revenue and civil courts with varied success.  

57. H.3. P., July 1866, No.1
It was finally decided by a full bench of the Calcutta High Court that the Raja had not established his title to the land specified in his plaint, but that on the other hand the boundary laid down was not the true boundary of his estate and that he was not bound by the map or the order of the Collector on the point and its subsequent proceedings.\(^5\)

From this decision Government appealed to the Privy Council. But the question involved a political difficulty which in the meantime demanded the serious attention of Government. As Government attributed Garo raids to the interference of the Zamindars in the plains it was considered necessary on grounds of public policy that the Zamindars and their agents should be strictly prohibited from having any direct relations with the Garos and that the whole of the hills including all parts where claimed by Susung and Sherpur should be administered by officers of Government and the revenues be collected by them. It was clearly with a view to secure these ends that Regulation X of 1822 had been passed, but the Regulation had failed in consequence of the High Court's decision declaring that the powers given by it affected only the tracts of Dhubri, Goalpara and Karaibari, and that the latter part of section 8 of that Regulation, which empowered the Governor-General-in-Council to separate from the Zamindar's estates any tract of country inhabited by the Garos applied only to estates in Goalpara.\(^6\)

\(^5\) Annual Report on the Administration of Bengal for 1870-71, p.70.

\(^6\) Ibid.
Closely following this case came the question whether the High Court had jurisdiction over the entire Garo Hills. Commissioner Haughton strongly argued against any interference of the court but the case just decided clearly allowed the High Court jurisdiction on the southern hills. He felt that such an assertion of the prevalence of the jurisdiction of the High Court "may not only be productive of political danger in virtue of the result of the particular case now pending, but which must undoubtedly clash with the working of the peculiar system of administration" for the Garo Hills.\(^6^0\) Government saw that the only way of this dilemma was to repeal Regulation X of 1822 as the Susung case itself had shown that to merely extend and amplify that Regulation as it stood, would not fully secure Government's policy.\(^6^1\)

Under these circumstances Sir William Grey considered it expedient that a new law should be enacted in the Legislative Council of the Government of India, to give effect to the intention of Regulation X of 1822 and to empower the Government to appoint a commission with final authority to ascertain the actual rights of the Susung Raja and to award him adequate compensation for the resumption of these rights, titles and interests in the tract beyond the boundary laid down. The Raja would be bound in the interim period not to attempt to exercise any authority or collect any revenue under penalty of being

\(^{60}\) B.D.P., November 1868, tos.99-100; B.J.P., nay 1869, to.231.
produced under section 8 of the Penal Code and of forfeiture of all claim to compensation.

The Government of India agreeing generally to these views Act XXII of 1869 was passed. The Act repealed Regulation X of 1822 and defined the Garo Hills as bounded on the north and west by the district of Goalpara, on the south by the district of Mymensingh "as defined by the Revenue Survey," and on the east by the Khasi Hills. The district (the Garo Hills was made a full fledged district under a Deputy Commissioner on 8 January 1869), was exempted from the control of the regular civil and criminal courts. The administration of civil and criminal justice and the superintendence of the settlement and realization of public revenue and all matters relating to land was vested in such officers as the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal might from time to time appoint. It empowered the Lieutenant Governor to prevent the collection therein by the Zamindars and others of any tribute, cesses and exactions and authorized him to make such compensation to those Zamindars as might seem reasonable. The Act further provided that in case of boundary dispute, the matter should be decided by such officers as the Lieutenant Governor might appoint whose decision would be final.

After consultation with J.C. Haughton Government

63. H.O.P., 6 February 1869, No.3.
64. The Calcutta Gazette, 22 September 1869.
notified in "The Calcutta Gazette that the Act should take effect from 1 March 1870. The Susung Raja then appealed to the Secretary of State for India to disallow the Act on the ground that a considerable tract beyond the boundary formed part of his estate. In his reply the Secretary of state informed he could not accept the Raja's petition, but he desired "that the pecuniary losses which he and other ∼emindars∼ may sustain in consequence of the policy now enforced may be compensated in a liberal spirit." Meanwhile in June 1870 Haughton had been appointed to investigate the claims of the Zamindars to compensation. In October that year he submitted a preliminary report which attempted to prove the weakness of the Susung Raja's claim. Haughton was able to expose several fraudulent practices of the Raja. He proposed to close the case without further investigation by offering the Raja a compensation of Rs.99,000 which the Raja had asked for in his original suit, for his subsequent claims under Act XXII of 1869 was for Rs.21,00,000. The Lieutenant Governor was not satisfied with the grounds for the recommendation and could not consent to a proposal which was inconsistent with the Commissioner's own statement of facts. He was quite prepared to give the Raja a more liberal compensation. In September 1870

65. The Calcutta Gazette, 2 March 1870.
70. Ibid.
the Zamindar of Sherpur also addressed memorial to the Secretary of State to disallow the Act. "Government did not consider it necessary to forward that memorial as it contained no grounds for disallowance which had not been urged with greater force by the Raja of Susung."  

Haughton had a "long and entirely private interview" with Raja Kristo Singh of Susung on 16 December 1870, during which the latter pledged himself to accept whatever terms Haughton outlined. They agreed that the Raja should have the exclusive right to hunting elephants in the tract he claimed, to have the privilege of cutting timber, bamboo and fishing for his own use and to have the revenue collected from villages which he could show his estate was possessed of before 1817. The Commissioner, however, stood up to his report and believed he had shown grounds which could not be contraverted that a number of documents produced by the Raja and accepted as evidence were unquestionably forgeries. He feared it was too late to urge such matters in appeal, but it was important with reference to the "gigantic" claims made for compensation that the "baseless nature of these claims should be fully exposed." Haughton thought that Government had strong grounds for looking with suspicion the documents supporting the Raja's claims, the

71. Ibid., pp.71-72; B.J.P., June 1871, No.250.
more so as it appeared certain to him that from 1789 to 1837 the Susung Raja never pretended to have any rights in the hills. On more than one occasion after 1820 David Scott had made the Garo chiefs come down to Durgapur in Mymensingh and sign, "agreements acknowledging allegiance to the British crown. Moreover, Haughton pointed out, the High Court itself had doubted and rejected the claims of the Zamindar and his predecessors. Eventually on 19 November 1872, on the strength of Haughton's finding, Government considered as illegal the Raja's claims for custom and transit duties, but it was decided that the Raja should be paid Rs, 2262-11-9 annually on account of his losses in revenue and trading speculations apart from a lump sum of Rs, 50,000 to compensate for loss of privilege for elephant hunting. In 1874 the Raja appealed to Government for a reconsideration of this decision, but he was told he had been treated with "great liberality" and Government was declined to reopen the case.

On the same day as Act XXII of 1869 came into operation in the Garo Hills was brought into force rules for the conduct of the police and the administration of justice. The Commissioner of Cooch Behar, C. Haughton, had taken time to draft these rules from "severe pressure of business" and a need to consult the rules he had framed for the Saindia Hills.  

73. Ibid., No. 137, Haughton to George Campbell, 16 March 1871.  
74. B. Bhattacharjee, op. cit., p. 175.  
75. F.P.P., March 1878, No. 28.  
These rules were a systematic compilation of the powers and functions of the various officers ranging from Laskars to the Deputy Commissioner, mention of which has already been made. These rules remained in force in the Garo Hills district (with slight modifications to suit the changing administrative structure) till the end of British rule. One change in the administration of the Garo Hills may be mentioned in this connection. In 1868, on the recommendation of Williamson, the office of Zimmadar was dropped and Laskars as before assumed fiscal, judicial and police functions. The title had caused much confusion as Morton, who had introduced the office of Zimmadar had not realized that it had originally been Scott's plan that Laskars were to perform all three functions.

Total Control

In 1870 when the survey of the Khasi Hills was completed it was decided to undertake the survey of that portion of the Garo Hills which acknowledged British rule. Williamson joined Major Goduin Austin who was in charge of the survey party, and the two officers marched across the hills from Susung to Damra. The only village to offer any opposition was Bangangiri, and this was overcome by the exercise of a little tact. A number of other independent villages received the party and tendered

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their submission and agreed to pay revenue to the British Government. In the winter of 1871 Captain La Touche, the Officiating Deputy Commissioner led a punitive expedition to the village of Rangmagiri whose people had earlier murdered a coolie sent in to collect labour in connection with the survey. The failure of La Touche's expedition led Government to determine to bring the remaining Bemulu Garos under the direct control of the Deputy Commissioner as these Garos were as if an island in the midst of British dominions. It was decided not to commence active operations till the middle of November 1872 by which time the climate would have cooled and a strategy worked out "to allow no possible chance of miscarriage." To make the operations more effective Williamson, who had resumed duty, suggested that the important hats round the hills should be closed from 10 October "just to convince the people of our complete control over them." He knew the measure he suggested would be open to criticism as a backward, obsolete and perhaps cruel step; but it should be borne in mind we are dealing with savages and recollect the measures necessary to convince them to our power, and not weigh the matter from a purely enlightened and European standard. For savages measures are necessary which would be both unnecessary and cruel and perhaps excessively wrong, were we dealing with a more enlightened race.

An expeditionary force of 580* armed police, supported

81. F.P.P./September 1872, No.282.
82. Ibid.
on the side of the Khasi Hills by three companies of regular troop's was collected. This force was divided into three columns. One column under Captain Davis, Deputy Commissioner, Goalpara, entered the hills by the Nibari duar, a second under Captain Daly of the Cachar Police, entered from Mymensingh and the main column under Williamson marched from Tura. The expedition was singularly successful and January 1873 saw the submission of the last of the independent Garo villages, Williamson appointed Laskars in the newly acquired tracts, who were made responsible for the management of the villages on the system already in force in the dependant villages. The police strength in the district was raised to three hundred men and a police post was maintained at Rongrengiri.

Patternalism

As in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills the work of 'civilizing' the Garos was left to the missionaries. However, whereas the English Baptists and Welsh Calvinists started their missions in the Khasi and Daintia Hills on their own effort, the local Government was in a way responsible for the opening of the Garo Hills to the American Baptist Mission. David Scott had approached Government as early as 1819 for its approval to invite missionaries to work among the Garos. The consent having

84. Ibid., T.P.P., November 1874, No.308. Williamson then made an interesting comment in a letter to Government: "Instead of our having to burn 'large quantities of cotton as punishment, as was unhappily necessary in a few instances, we may find here a new source of supply to Manchester." F.P.P., April 1873, No.175.
been given he first approached the Serampore Mission, but failing to secure their co-operation, Scott then got in touch with Bishop Heber of Calcutta, The Bishop's response was highly encouraging for Scott though nothing took shape. The Agent made another request to Government in April 1825 after which came some response. Government did not think that there would be any difficulty to extend financial assistance to Scott's plans, but since religious neutrality was the professed policy of Government, Scott was informed that the missionaries could only be given salaries if they were called schoolmasters.

Early in 1827 Scott opened a school for Garo in S Nathmari. On the advice of Bishop Herber he appointed Hurley as Garo schoolmaster. Hurley unexpectedly resigned in September that year. In his letter of resignation Hurley pointed out that when he was offered the post if was made clear that he would be entrusted with the medical duties of the mission and that he was to assist in the instruction of the Garo boys. He was "mortified" to learn that teaching was not to be in the English language but in Bengali' and Garo, and that the boys should also be taught farming and horticulture, of which he did not possess any knowledge. What really upset him was that he should reside "among the Garrou savages at a place

85. 3 B. Bhattacharjee, op cit., pp.72-74.
extremely unhealthy and destitute of the common necessitifes of European life."

James Fermie was appointed to succeed Hurley in 1828, but he died that November. Still in search of a missionary, Scott got in contact with C.A. Fenuick, a Baptist missionary residing at Sylhet, and Register to the Local Records office there, to take charge as Superintendent of the Singimari school. Scott proposed the clearing of an extensive space upon the summit of the Rangira Hill for the establishment of a mission station where fifty Garo families could reside permanently. Uith Hurley's resignation, Fermie's death and Government's poor response to the Rangira project came to a close Scott's scheme for educating and converting the Garos to Christianity. The Singimari school continued for some time under the direction of a Bengali master but was wound up in 1829.

Whereas the Government at Calcutta supported Scott's plans the Court of Directors did not. It reminded Lord Amherst, the Governor-General that the declared policy of the authorities in Britain then was religious neutrality towards its Indian subjects. "It is well known," the Court of Directors remarked that we would not engage in schemes for attempting to propagate Christianity among

87. B.3.C.C., 25 October 1827, No.55. Hurley was an Apothecary.
89. A .White, memoir of the Late David Scott, Appendix lbs.44-46, pp.138-143.
90. B.3.C.C., 26 June 1828, Wo.10.
91. W. Carey, op.cit., pp.41-42; F. Downs, Christianity in North East India, p.50.
the natives; it is a matter of surprise to us that an active part in the prosecution of this plan should have been taken by a Member of the Government, and neither the plan itself nor the very extraordinary mode in which it came to be recommended to your notice should have appeared to you unobjectionable. 92

All hopes of starting a mission for the Garos were, therefore, shelved for some years. With Scott's occupation in the Khasi Hills, Fenwick, who never went to the Garo Hills was entrusted with the construction of a very different settlement - the British sanatorium and cantonment at Cherrapunji. Enthusiasts for mission work, however, continued to see the need for sending missionaries to the Khasis and Garos. Suinton in a private letter to Benson, wrote that, "The Bishop talked of taking them in hand and I wish he would send an army of missionaries to preach the gospel to them." 93

Francis Jenkins' efforts to start a school for the Garos initially met with Government disapproval. In 1845 the Agent submitted a proposal to appropriate funds from the general revenue of the province and to place two missionaries among the Garos for their education. The Government was quick to remind Jenkins that a policy decision had already been made concerning Government financing missionary activity among the Garos and, therefore, his proposition could not be entertained.

92. Political Despatch from Court of Directors, 2 February 1831, para. 86.
93. Bentinck Papers PU3F 2781/XLIV, Suinton to Benson, 22 July 1831. This letter referred to Bishop Turner who had succeeded Bishop (jteber.
The Calcutta authorities, however, looked forward to some other mode for the general improvement of the tribe. Eventually, following a second proposal from Jenkins a school was set up at Goalpara. E.F. Dalton the Principal Assistant at Goalpara who superintended the school had much to say for the improvement of the school. Few Garo boys joined the school as their parents did not want them to be associated with the plainsmen "who regard them as an unclean and impure class and would not be likely to treat them kindly or receive them on a footing of equality." As such was the situation Dalton was of the opinion that the school should be wholly and exclusively devoted to the Garos, and that Hindus or Muslims should not be admitted either as teachers or as scholars. In the absence of any Garos to take charge as schoolmaster, Dalton suggested that Bengali converts to Christianity (students of Bishop's College, Calcutta or pupils of Reverend Krishna Banerjee) might be invited to take charge of the school. Dalton took advantage of the contemplated expansion of schools by Government by suggesting that two more schools should be set up for the Garos closer to the hills at Damra or Nibari and at Singimari. It is of interest to note that Omed and Ramkhe, the first two Garo converts to Christianity studied in this Goalpara school. A.3.M. Mills reported in 1853 that eight Garo boys attended the school.

94. Political Despatch to Court of Directors, Lib.28 of 1846.
95. S.B. Bhattacharjee, op.cit., p.222.
96. F.P.C., 17 July 1847, No.23.
97. Ibid.
which was supported by Government with a monthly grant of 50 rupees fifty.

The American Baptist Mission in Assam began their work among the Garos with the conversion of Omed and Ramkhe who had come into contact with them at Gauhati. The two were baptized at Gauhati in February 1863. They then determined to go among their own people to proselytize and to start schools. Ramkhe started a school at Domra and Omed established the first Christian community at Rajasimla. Encouraged by the success of these Garo missionaries, the American Baptist Mission in Assam set up a mission at Goalpara, after Miles Bronson, their most renowned missionary had toured the hills in 1867. Four years later in 1871 taking advantage of the creation of Tura as district head-quarters, and an invitation to make the new settlement one of its stations, the Garo mission was shifted from Goalpara to Tura. By then schools had been set up at Nibari, Rangjuli, Rajasimla, Bengal Khatta, Tura and at nine other villages. The expense on account of these schools during the year 1870-71 came to Rs.2400, of which the American Baptist Mission contributed Rs.1176 and Government Rs.1224.

As all the efforts of the missionaries were confined to the northern and western hills, Government took upon itself

98. A.D.M. Mills, op.cit., p.B.B.
100. Ibi, pp.94-95.
101. Ibi, pp.95-96.
the education of Garos on the southern hills. The first move towards this end came up by the Director of Public Instruction, Bengal, who suggested that four Government schools should be started in, east Mymensingh for Garos on that lowland. The cost of such schools, however, could not be properly charged to the imperial revenue as a permanent arrangement, as Government had "never recognized the duty of providing the means of education for the masses of the people." 103 Although Government eventually established twelve schools on political consideration, on the Mymensingh border, only one of them was in the hills for such was the "horror" of the Bengalis for the hills in this region that pundits sent to set up schools at some Garo village invariably set himself and his school at the nearest Bengali hat. 104 The Government of Bengal, therefore, sanctioned Rs.2000 for village schools in the southern parts of the hills under the superintendence of the Deputy Commissioner and Babu Chandra Nath Ghosh who was appointed Sub-Inspector of Schools. 105 This arrangement worked for only four years from 1874 to 77. Shirking its duly-Government approached the missionaries to take over the schools under Government management under a grant-in-aid scheme. The decision to entrust the whole of the schools of the district to the mission was taken in 1877 and by March the following year the transfer was near complete. 107

103. "B.E.P.,'' February 1869, No.4.
104. B.3.P., July 1870, No.86.
105. F.P.P.,'' November 1874, No.308.
106. B.E.P., August 1873, h.b.1.
From its very inception instruction in most of the Garo schools was through the medium of the Bengali language. No complaints were made by the Garo boys and girls when instructed in Bengali. The early American Baptist missionaries in Assam had one advantage over the Welsh Calvinists in the Khasi-ZJaintia Hills. While the latter came directly from Wales into those hills, the former had had Indian experience before moving into the Garo Hills and, therefore, it was not too difficult for them to converse and write in the Bengali language. The first missionaries to the Garos preferred the Bengali characters as better suited for the Garo language and more useful to the tribe "who are generally adverse to the acquisition of their own language and anxious only to learn Bengali and English." Haughton personally desired the Garos to be taught in the Roman letters but the missionaries had not done this as they said the difficulties they would have to contend with in changing the characters were very great. Williamson understood Haughton's object in this to be more a political one as the Commissioner had said that the use of Roman letters would facilitate the transaction of business and keep Garos and Bengalis asunder. Williamson himself preferred a continuation of the existing pattern in Garo and Bengali. He felt that English should not be taught for some time more and

107. F.P.P., December 1878, 1\b.66.
108.- F.P.P., October 1873, No.123.
109., Ibid.
that it should only be done after a thorough and good start had been made in educating the Garos. Sir George Campbell, Bengal's Lieutenant Governor concurred with these views.

The arrival of "Reverends Phillips and Mason in December 1874 was significant in more ways than one. It was these two persons more than any others who took the gospel to the Garos, TheIr colleague Keith, who left the field in 1876 was one of the last American missionaries familiar with Bengali and Assamese languages. Phillips and Mason were not familiar with these languages and, therefore, were inclined towards adopting Garo language in the Garo schools. They found that the Bengali language and script was cumbersome and tedious. Garo students had first to learn an alphabet of fifty one letters with many variations and a number of combinations including the use of sounds quite foreign to their tongue. They first prepared and printed a few primers in the Garo language and found visible signs of interest in reading among the Garos. Experimenting further they realized that twenty one Roman letters were sufficient to represent every needed sound in the Garo language. Moreover the use of typewriters enabled the missionaries to prepare the manuscripts and proof-reading with a fraction of the labour required earlier. Two thousand copies of a primer were printed as a feeler and educator to substitute

110. Ibid,
111. B.E.P., August 1873, Nb.1.
the Bengali by Roman characters. The American Baptist
Mission Conference of 1893, meeting at Tura resolved that the
Roman alphabet was the best for the hill tribes of Assam who
did not have their own written language. It was not till
some ten years later that a final decision was taken to make
this change effective towards the Garos.

The decision to completely change over to Roman
characters was taken in the mission’s annual conference of
1903. The decision met the "hearty" approval of the Assam
Chief Commissioner and the Government gave Rs.1000 to help
defray the cost of publishing text-books in this character.
This decision was in no way politically motivated and quite-
independent of the personal opinion of Haughton. There was no
official Government opinion on the question of what character
should be used in reducing the Garo language into writing. The
missionaries alone had come to such an agreement, for educating
the Garos was their charge. Basically it was a matter of
convenience to the missionaries that the Garos and other hill
tribes in north-east India should have the Roman script.

Whatever be the truth of the matter the Garos have
benefited from the decision of their missionaries as it has

112. M.S. Sangma, History of Garo Literature, pp.22-23, citing
uay to allied tribes in the region. The character controversy was unique to the Garos because the eventual shift to Roman characters was delayed. The Khasi-Saintia were already benefiting from the Romanization of their script as were the Ao Nagas.

Undoubtedly the missionaries did much for the Garos by setting up schools and dispensaries and by other humanitarian works. But, they seem to have taken much more credit than they actually deserve. William Carey concludes his work with the comment:

All their (Government's) policies had failed on the Garos, and they had been forced to the conviction that the most drastic measures of all must be resorted to. Extermination of the Garos had to be considered if surrounding people were to be rescued from their cruelty and saved from their wildest excesses.**

As if the Government had been a miserable failure he continues:

The coming of missionaries held out a hope that such desperate measures might be avoided. Eagerly did the wise British officials meet the missionaries with confidence and co-operation. Think of the contrast: The officials with the mighty forces of the Empire behind them yet, baffled; and the missionaries armed with nothing but their Christian purpose and the Gospel, yet greeted by the Empire as the possible conquerors.***

It is hoped that one is able to perceive that both apologies did what was physically possible to "civilize" and Q

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115. U.Carey, *op. cit.*, p.268. This and the following quotations appear in the first edition of the book in the final chapter: Retrospect and Prospect, which was not included in the second edition.

improve the lot of the Garos. What one catalyst of change could not do, the other did. The opinion of Carey is therefore grossly biased.

The education so introduced served as an effective instrument for social transformation of the Garos. It should however not lose sight that the purpose of education was envisaged by the British officers as an integral part of the overall policy of civilizing the Garos. The 'civilization' here meant affecting moderation in, such customs and habits of the Garos which proved to be deterrent to colonial interests. For example, the raids and head-huntings resorted to in the plains of Bengal and Assam was supposed to be customary by the people. These raids caused de-population of the revenue paying British villages and disrupted the frontier trade. The forward policy of occupying and ruling the Garo Hills to protect the revenue paying arrears also proved to be difficult as the Garos were not easily amenable to the rules and regulations. This called for fundamental change in the attitude and social behaviour of the Garos. Education and Christianization were identified as purposeful instruments at this stage. Interestingly education which is considered as a natural function of any Government in modern states was handed over to the missionaries who, on their part were guided by the humanitarian spirit of propagating the gospel. The Government
utilized the services of the missionaries in their own anxiety to passify the Garos. Education and Christianity before long brought about considerable social transformation. To end in the words of Reverend William Carey: "The Wonderful transformation that was to tame the hill tribes soon began." 117

117. Ibid.