CHAPTER FOUR

ADMINISTRATIVE AREA OF THE CHIEF COMMISSIONERSHIP OF ASSAM
CHAPTER IV

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Under Proclamation No. 379 of the 6th February 1874, the Governor General in Council, with the sanction and approval of the Secretary of State for India, took under his immediate authority and management the following territories than under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, that is to say, the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Naga Hills, Cachar and Goalpara.¹

By another Proclamation of the same date, the Governor General in Council formed the territories mentioned in the above Proclamation into a Chief Commissionership, to be called the Chief Commissionership of Assam.²

The headquarters of the Province of Assam was fixed at Shillong, approval to which was accorded by the Governor General.³

In recommending Shillong as the headquarter station of Assam in preference to Guwahati between which stations

²Ibid. (Proclamation No. 370 of the 6th February, 1874).
³C.O.'s C.P. May 1874, No. 4. P.10.
alone the selection was confined, Colonel R.H. Keatinge, the first Chief Commissioner cited several advantages which Shillong enjoyed over Gauhati. Amongst them, the more important ones were: the salubrious climate of Shillong unparalleled in this part of the country; its nearness to the district of Cashar "perhaps the most important in the Province" as Keatinge considered, its nearness to the larger part of the population under the Chief Commissioner's charge should the district of Sylhet with a population of 17,19,539 ever to be added to it; the availability of necessaries of life at reduced prices than that at Gauhati which Sylhet could provide with the improved means of communication; availability of a Kashari building and a residency and barracks for accommodation; feasibility of constructing buildings more cheaply and more expeditiously at Shillong than at Gauhati; and easy and simple means of road making which would remove the then existing inaccessibility of Shillong.4

The district of Sylhet was included in the Chief Commissionership of Assam by a Proclamation of the 12th September, 1874.5 The inclusion of this district was

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5No.2343 of 12th September, 1874 and Notification of the same date published in the Gazette of India, R.D. Part I, dated 12th September, 1874.
delayed because, at first, the Secretary of State did not approve of it apparently in consideration of the fact that Sylhet was a Bengali speaking area and in every way a part of Bengal proper and that there existed no real grounds to segregate it from Bengal and then tag it to Assam with which it had nothing in common except the foreign government. The Secretary of State also feared popular opposition to such a transfer. The decision was taken when he was assured by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal that there was no such strong feeling although the fact was that the people of Sylhet submitted a memorial to the Governor General when he visited Assam in early 1874 and he himself admitted that he received objections to the transfer. 6

The Province of Assam as constituted in 1874, comprised of two river valleys with a lofty hill tract between. Bounded on the North by the Himalayas and on the south by a broken range of hills, lies the Brahmaputra Valley covering an area of 20,683 square miles or one half of the whole Province, through which flows the mighty Brahmaputra east to west giving its name to the Valley. From its southern edge rises the hill country, a wild broken region of 14,447 square miles, inhabited by

6 Extra Supplement to the Gazette of India, September 21, 1874.

The territories forming the Chief Commissionership of Assam in 1874 have been indicated in Map No. 2.
non-aryan tribes. To the south of these intervening mountains, again, lies the Valley of Burma, extending over 6,660 square miles. The whole of the Province was divided for administrative purposes into eleven districts, with an aggregate population of 41,32,019 persons, and an area of 41,798 square miles.  

Since the creation of Assam into a Chief Commissionership in 1874, its territorial jurisdiction in the main remained unaltered. The only extensions of territory that had taken place was in the Naga and Lushai Hills and the North East Frontier Tract.

**The Naga Hills:** The Naga Hills district was formed and included in Assam even before the creation of Chief Commissionership. But the district was enlarged by subsequent annexations of territory.

In 1878, it was decided by Colonel Keatinge, the first Chief Commissioner of Assam to make Kohima the headquarters of the Political Officer of the Naga Hills district. His recommendation was approved by the Government of India in March 1878 and by the end of the

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7The above figures are based on the Census of 1871-72 and reckon the Eastern Duars as part of Goalpara district. The Parliamentary Return, 1878, left the population untouched but took the total area at 56,394 square miles, owing to the fact that it included in estimate the unsurveyed tracts in Cashar, Naga and Lakhimpur Hills.
next cold weather, the transfer of headquarters from Samaguting to Kohima was completed.8

The whole question of the Naga policy was reviewed in 1861 and it was decided to retain the British position at Kohima and to station permanently a regiment in the hills. It was also decided that the district should be administered as a British territory.9

Wokha Subdivision: The Subdivision at Wokha was opened in 1876 which was situated in the country of the Lhota Nagas, who were separated from the Angams by the Rengmas and the Semas. The British were determined to occupy this important site to strengthen their position. This tract had been in charge of a tahsildar since 1869, when the Mokokchung Subdivision was formed.10

Mokokchung Subdivision: The reason for the formation of this Subdivision was the need for the protection of the Aos from raids by trans Dihum tribes. The leading Ao villages had petitioned the Deputy Commissioner for their incorporation in the British territory. The tract in question was known as the

8Report on the Administration of Assam, 1901-02, P.40.
10Ibid. P.41.
Mokeh Chang Gubdirtelon of the Naga Hills district. The territory included in it measuring 733 square miles was annexed to the Naga Hills district in 1889. The effect of this step had been to include in the district the whole Ao tribe, excepting the single large village of Langsa, three new Sena villages, the four Lhota villages not hitherto annexed and two villages of the naked tribe.

In 1898, the detached mass of mountains known as the Mikir and Rengma Hills, which formed the most northerly portion of the Naga Hills district as originally constituted, with the level tract separating it from the Naga Hills proper and including the extensive Hamor forest, was transferred to the district of Nwong and Sibsagar. On the extension of the Assam Bengal Railway through this area it became difficult to administer it from Kohima.

Re-establishment of the North Cachar Subdivision.

At the close of the Naga war of 1879-80, Sir Stewart Rayley, the then Chief Commissioner, recommended the re-establishment of the North Cachar Subdivision.

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11 Ibid for the year 1911-12, Chapter I, Paragraph 104.
12 Ibid for the year 1890-90, Chapter I, P.1.
13 Ibid for the year 1901-02, P.41.
Since 1866, no officer had been located there. The Subdivision was opened in December 1870, and placed in charge of an Assistant Superintendent of Police, who was stationed at Gunjeng, in the centre of the tract. In 1896, a great change took place in the material condition of the Subdivision by the construction of the Railway through the Hills. The work presented engineering difficulties of an exceptional character. It took many years for its completion. The headquarters of the Railway was fixed at Haflong on the summit of a hill. The headquarters of the subdivision was also transferred from Gunjeng to this place in 1896.¹⁴

The Lushai Hills:— The Lushai Hills district was a new addition to the Chief Commissionership of Assam.

The Lushais were not heard of until about 1840, when they made their appearance on the Chattachura range. The first attacks upon the British territory made by the Lushais after their advance northwards were in 1849. Since then a series of campaigns and expeditions in the hills resulted in their subjugation by the British. In the operation against the Lushais, the British often met with stiff resistance from some of the Lushai tribes and a good number of officers and porters

¹⁴Ibid. P. 42.
lost their lives in their hands. As the Lushai Hills had been subjugated, its control had been divided among three Administrations of Assam, Bengal and Burma.\footnote{Ibid. Pp. 42-44.}

The North Lushai Hills, although hitherto administered as a part of the Province of Assam, it had not been formally placed under any defined administration. On September 6, 1890 the South Lushai Hills were formally annexed to the British India and included within the territory under the administration of the Lt. Governor of Bengal. Under the same proclamation, North Lushai Hills came under the jurisdiction of the Chief Commissioner of Assam.\footnote{C. G.'s F. P. July 1896, No. 8. P. 7.} The area so transferred and the population involved, was 3,800 square miles and 43,634 souls respectively.\footnote{Census Report of 1891.}

In the course of the operations against the Eastern Lushais in 1892, the inconvenience resulting from the division of control over the Lushai country was found to be considerable.\footnote{C. G.'s F. P. September 1894. No. 37. Pp. 29-30.}

The formation, in 1874, of Assam as a separate province under a Chief Commissioner did neither relieve
the Government of Bengal nor benefit Assam to the extent desired. The Province of Bengal still comprised, besides Bengal proper, Bihar, Orissa and Chota Nagpur. In British India, Bengal was still the most populous province. It had an area of 1,90,000 square miles and a gross revenue of more than eleven crores. 19

The old question of either giving Bengal a full government of the type of Madras and Bombay or reducing its size was raised from time to time. The Government of India was, however, opposed to the proposal of upgrading the status of the Government of Bengal by providing an Executive Council. It did not like the Bengal Government to become subject to pressure groups. 20

It was therefore decided to relieve the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal by further reducing the size of his territorial charge. The first concrete proposal of this kind dates back to 1892, when a conference met at Calcutta to examine certain questions relating to the country of the Lushai and Chin Tribes. 21

The conference was unanimous in recommending that North and South Lushai with a portion of the Arakan Hill Tracts

20 Ibid. P. 638.
should be placed under Assam at once.

The Conference also expressed the opinion that the transfer to Assam of the Southern Lushais suggested the further transfer to the same administration of the Chittagong Division.22

After considering the recommendations of the Chin Lushai Conference the Governor General in council arrived at the following conclusions :-

1) The whole of Lushai country should be under the Chief Commissioner of Assam and the transfer of the Southern Lushais from Bengal to Assam should be made as early as possible.

2) The Chittagong district should also be transferred from Bengal to Assam, soon after the completion of the settlement operations then in progress. If the settlement could not be finished within the current year, or if there were difficulties in the way of an immediate transfer of the entire district, the sub-division of the Hill Tracts should be transferred in advance of the rest.

3) The Government of Bengal and the Chief Commissioner of Assam should be consulted as to the expediency of transferring to Assam the whole Chittagong

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22Ibid.
Division, including the political charge of Tipperah.

4) The Northern Arakan Hill Tracts should be transferred from Burma to Assam. The Governor General desired that the Chief Commissioners of Burma and Assam should settle the boundary between their respective administrations.

5) With regard to the Chin Hills, no declaration of policy should be made for the present.\textsuperscript{23}

The Government of India informed the Chief Commissioner of Assam that the Settlement operations then being carried out in the Chittagong district would not be concluded before the middle of 1894 at the earliest. The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal was requested to consider further transfers of territory from Bengal to Assam.\textsuperscript{24}

With reference to the above suggestion, the Government of Bengal observed that the matter should not be entirely postponed until the settlement operations in the Chittagong district were completed. They proposed that the Administration of Assam might easily take over the districts of the Chittagong

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid. P.30.

Division piecemeal instead of all at once. The Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal enquired of the Chief Commissioner of Assam whether he would like to take over the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the Noakhali and Tippera districts with the charge of Tippera Hill state, leaving the Chittagong district to remain under the Government of Bengal till the settlement was concluded.  

Sir William Ward, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, was not prepared to take over any further territory then lying within the Province of Bengal. In regard to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, he pointed out the inconvenience of taking over a portion of a district only, while in regard to other districts, he raised the objection on the ground of finance.

The proposed transfer of territory from Bengal to Assam gave rise to a discussion which followed two sharply opposed trends - the supporters of the transfer gradually augmenting their demands for further and further territory and the others vehemently opposing it.

On the 27th February, 1896, at the meeting of the council of the Governor General, Babu Mohini Mohon Roy

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26C.C's Foreign Proceedings September, 1894 (No.169), P.11.
wanted to know the grounds of the proposed transfer of the Chittagong district and Chittagong Division to Assam. He also drew the attention of the Government to a news item published in the Amrita Bazar Patrika of the 14th February, 1896, wherein a report appeared that along with Chittagong Division transfer of the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh to Assam was also under contemplation of the Government. 27

It appears from the reply given by Woodburn that the main consideration behind the proposed transfer of the Chittagong Division to Assam was to relieve the overburdened Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. The interests of Assam, the smallest Province in British India which will be materially benefitted by its being brought into direct communication with the sea was also in the mind of the Government.

In regard to the reported transfer of Dacca and Mymensingh to Assam, Woodburn informed that the Government of India had no such proposal under their consideration. 28

In response to a communication from the Bengal Government, the Registrar of the High court of


Judicature at Fort William in Bengal stated that the proposed transfer of the Chittagong Division seemed to the Judges "to be a step in the wrong direction." The Judges had learnt from the District Judges of the districts comprising the Chittagong Division that the proposal had aroused considerable apprehension in the minds of the people.

Discussing at length the question in its judicial aspect, the judges came to the conclusion that the transfer of the Chittagong district, or of the Chittagong Division to the Government of Assam, as then constituted, "could not fail to be a retrograde and mischievous step.........."29. In regard to the legislative needs of the district or districts concerned, and from a judicial point of view they thought that 'any such transfer is to be deprecated.' The Judges had, however, no objection to the transfer of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and similar wild tracts of the country, but they opined that the old permanently settled districts of Chittagong, Noakhali and Tippera should not be separated from the Lower Provinces of Bengal.30

Sir William Ward, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, however, had no objection to the transfer of the entire Chittagong Division to Assam. He pointed out that the

29Ibid. No.49. P.71.
enlargement of the Province would help the creation of separate services for it in substitution for the present very unsatisfactory system of borrowing officers temporarily from Bengal. But in view of the fact that the settlement operation was in progress in the Chittagong district, Ward suggested the postponement of the transfer till the completion of the settlement.

Proceeding further, Ward tried to widen the scope of transfer by including Dacca and Mymensingh districts in the proposed transfer. He suggested the possible name of the enlarged province "the North Eastern Provinces" or "Eastern Frontier Provinces" obliterating thereby the name of 'Assam.'

In favour of additional transfer of Dacca and Mymensingh, Ward argued that:

1) The new province would be compact geographically with a good natural boundary on the west and further south;

2) The province would comprise almost all the Eastern Bengal districts, which resembled each other in many respects;

3) Substantial relief might thereby be given to the Government of Bengal;

4) It would be possible to provide for two new commissionerships in Assam;

5) The new province would be large enough for the creation of separate services in all the more important
branches of administration;

6) As the districts in the revised scheme of transfer would form the more important portion of the new province, the people might not object their transfer to Assam. 31

This proposal, however, elicited a strong protest from the people concerned. It was supported by the public opinion of Bengal, which was becoming a great force. The Government did not dare to ignore it altogether.

The Government of India sought the opinion of H.J.S. Cotton, who had succeeded Sir Ward as the Chief Commissioner of Assam on the proposals of his predecessor about the transfer of Chittagong Division to Assam. 32

Cotton totally rejected the "somewhat ambitious scheme of Sir William Ward". He expressed himself very firmly against the proposal of transfer saying that "I am opposed to the transfer, and trust, it will not be carried out." 33

Dealing with the question of the creation of separate services for Assam to which Sir Ward attached the highest importance, Cotton pointed out that "even

31 Ibid. No. 50. Pp. 73-84,
32 Ibid. No. 52. P. 86,
33 Ibid. No. 54. Pp. 87-90 (Cotton's Note dated 26th January, 1837).
with the Chittagong Division thrown in, Assam would be too small a province to support a self-contained service. It would be too small even if the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh were added, he observed. He opined that it would not be desirable to establish a self-contained service for Assam even if it were possible to do so. He continued to say that the unhealthy surroundings and remote areas where the Indian civilians belonging to the cadre of the province would be destined to pass their service career would generate a feeling of discontentment in their minds as their chances of obtaining higher prizes would be very limited in a province like Assam where there would be only a few higher posts.

Cotton submitted that the present arrangement by which the members of the service were recruited from Bengal had worked for many years with remarkable success. Assam civilians did not mind to work hard in unfavourable circumstances as they knew that after successful completion of their term of deputation they had the prospect of rising to the highest offices in Bengal.

Proceeding further to deal with the question of the transfer of the Chittagong Division to Assam, Cotton thought it an idle contention to affirm that the

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34Ibid., P.87.
administration of Assam was conducted on advanced lines as the Government of Bengal except in regard to the departments where the tea interest was dominant. The rate of progress in Assam in respect of population, cultivation, wealth and education had been very slow. The constitutional privilege enjoyed by the people in Bengal were to a great extent unknown in Assam. The members of the Bengal Board of Revenue were the most experienced civilians in Bengal and they were trained to deal with revenue problems. They were moreover assisted by learned counsels. The Chief Commissioner of Assam, whose headquarters were at Chillichun, an inaccessible place where there were no lawyers and no bar was deprived of many such advantages. He asserted that the local self government in Assam was not on the same footing as it was in Bengal. The Municipal administration in Assam proceeded on the same lines as it did in Bengal a generation ago.

Again, by the proposed transfer, the people of Chittagong would be deprived of the privilege of being represented in the Bengal Legislative Council which "is a very serious and just cause for complaint on the part of the Chittagong public."35

Dwelling upon the question in its judicial aspect, Cotton entirely agreed with the opinion of

Hon'ble Judges that in the event of transfer the civil judicial agency in Chittagong would tend to deteriorate. The deprivation of the right of appeal to, and of the benefit of supervision which was ably exercised by both the Board of Revenue and the High court of Judicature over Chittagong division would involve a complete departure from the system of administration prevailing in the Division so far as the appellate and controlling authorities were concerned, which would only be described, Cotton thought, in the language used by the High court as "retrograde and mischievous." 36

Discussing the question systematically and logically, in its various aspects, Cotton came to the conclusion that the Division of Chittagong would not gain in any respect by being transferred to Assam. It was impossible for him "to conceive that any civilised portion of Bengal would gain by being detached from the advanced province to which it belongs and attached to a comparatively backward province." 37 He failed to understand how the objections of the people of Chittagong could be characterised as a mere sentimental grievance. Cotton found sufficient justification in the objection raised by the educated classes of Chittagong

36 Ibid. P. 89.

against the proposed transfer as he thought, their sentiment was based upon a solid and reasonable basis which should not be ignored. 36

The Chittagong itself was a district which had been under the Government of Bengal since 1765, and Tipperah and Noakhali were merely offshoots from the parent district. The history of Chittagong was inseparably wrapt up with that of the Bengal Government. The separation of Chittagong from Bengal would not materially lighten the burden of the Lieutenant Governor. The administrative machinery of Bengal was far more efficient than that of Assam. The Chief Commissioner of Assam did not enjoy the advantage of having the judges of the High court, the Members of the Board of Revenue, the Members of the Legislative Councils, the legal advisers of the Crown, and experienced commissioners, secretaries and Heads of Departments always available to offer him assistance and advice.

As Collector of Chittagong, Cotton was well acquainted with various burning questions of settlement. He could clearly foresee that "both they (my successor) and the people of Chittagong will rue the day if the Division is transferred (as I hope may never be the case) from Bengal to Assam". From all points of view, he considered that

36 Ibid. No. 54 p. 29.
Bengal districts should remain with Bengal.

Cotton rejected with disdain the recommendations of including Dacca and Mymensingh in the proposed transfer.

After considering the recommendations of the Conference which was recently convened at Lungleh to report on the transfer of South Lushai Hills to Assam and other questions connected with the administration of Lushai Hills, Cotton intimated his willingness to accept the transfer of the south Lushai Hills to Assam which could be arranged without the transfer of any other territory. 39

In consideration of the views expressed by Bengal and Assam Governments, the Governor General in council abandoned the idea of transferring Chittagong Division to Assam but decided that Lushai Hills should be transferred. The Government of India sought the opinion of the Chief Commissioner of Assam as to the expediency of transferring Chittagong Hill Tracts along with the Lushai Hills which the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal had proposed. 40

Cotton was opposed to the transfer of the Chittagong Hill Tracts along with South Lushai Hills to Assam on the ground that since the establishment of the said Hill Tracts as a separate charge in 1860, they had always been under the control of the Commissioner of Chittagong Division.

39 Ibid., P.90.
40 C's Home Proceedings, 1897, No.92, P.69.
people of the Chittagong district had at all time the closest contact with their neighbours from the Hill Tracts. On the other hand, the affinity between the Hill tracts and the Lushai Hills was of the slightest possible character.

Dwelling on the question of administrative difficulties that might arise out of distances and lack of communication, Cotton pointed out that in case of transfer of the Hill Tracts along with Lushai Hills to Assam, the former would have to be administered as a subdivision of the latter. But the headquarters of the Lushai Hills would be at Aijal, which was about 200 miles distant from Rangamati, the headquarters of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the journey from one place to another could be accomplished in no less than 16 days. Moreover, the area of the amalgamated Lushai Hills as proposed was 6,200 square miles. This area having regard to the absence of communication, was as large as any officer could properly administer. To add to these hills a large tract of the country comprising 5,400 square miles which was administered on very different principles, would make the task of the political officer too unwieldy.

In fine, Cotton expressed his desire that the Chittagong Hill Tracts might be allowed to remain a part of the Chittagong Division, and continue to be
administered by the Commissioner under the Government of Bengal. 41

The Government of India placed the territories known as the South Lushai Hills and the tracts known as Rattan Puiya's Villages including Demagiri - which tracts were so long within the lower provinces of Bengal, under the administration of the Chief Commissioner of Assam with effect from 1 April, 1896.

It may be mentioned here that while both the Rattan Puiya's Villages and Demagiri were always included in the hill tracts of Chittagong, the tract known as the South Lushai Hills were included within the Lower Provinces of Bengal by the Proclamation No. 1897-E dated, the 6th September, 1895, issued under the Government of India Act, 1861. 42

Thus the protracted controversy over the question of transferring territories from Bengal to Assam came to an end when the somewhat 'ambitious' scheme of Sir William Ward advocating the transfer of the Dacca and Mymensingh districts in addition to the Chittagong Division was rejected by the Government of India and only the South Lushai Hills, as suggested by Cotten, was transferred to Assam.

The area and population of the newly formed Lushai Hills district which became the twelfth district...
of Assam were 7,227 square miles and 82,434 souls respectively. 43

Since, however, this question was intricately linked up with the bigger and vexed question of ameliorating the Bengal Government and providing relief to it, it surfaced itself from time to time. "It lingered in the subterranean depths of the official consciousness " said Surendranath Banerjœ, "to emerge into view in more propitious circumstances." 44.

The North East Frontier Tract:— The original British districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur did not extend to the areas which in later time came to be known as the North East Frontier Tract and then the North East Frontier Agency, now Arunachal Pradesh, although there existed unrestricted intercourse between the plains people of Assam and the tribes living across the frontier. Such intercourses specially in connection with traffic in rubber brought down by the hillmen and the opening out of tea gardens beyond the border lines led not only to serious complications but threatened disturbances with the hill tribes beyond. In order to prevent the recurrence of such difficulties, the Inner Line Regulation V (Regulation for the Peace and Government of certain districts on the

43 Census Report, 1901.
44 Banerjœ S.N., A Nation in Making, 1925. P.171.
Eastern Frontier of Bengal) was promulgated in Assam under the authority conferred by the Statute 33, Vict., Chapter 3, which gave to the Executive Government of India the power of summary legislation for backward tracts. Under the said Inner Line Regulation, the Lieutenant Governor (of Bengal) was authorised to prescribe a line to be called "the Inner line", in each or any of the districts affected, beyond which no British subject of certain classes or foreign residents could pass without a license issued by the Deputy Commissioner containing such conditions as might seem necessary. As, however, the British possessions in these areas were not clearly demarcated, these lines merely indicated the limits of the administered area.

Notification actually prescribing the Inner line in respect of the district of Lakhimpur was issued by the Governor General in Council on 30th September, 1875 covering the hill tracts both on the left and right bank of the Brahmaputra. Similarly on the 8th March, 1876, Notification prescribing the 'Innerline' in respect of the district of Darrang which followed in an easterly direction, the southern boundaries of Bhutan (including

45Hackensia, Alexander, History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North East Frontier of Bengal, Pp. 55-56.

46Notification No. 2427 P. dated 30th September, 1875.
the countries of the Kariapara and Charduar Bratia, and of the Aka and Daphla hills etc., extending to the north westerly extremity of the 'Innerline' of the Lakhipur district.\(^{47}\)

W. Williamson who succeeded J.F. Needham in 1908 as Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, toured extensively in the foothill areas of the Abor Hills visiting the Past villages, the foothill villages of the Mynongs and some of the Gallong villages. He was murdered along with his followers when he visited Homing on an invitation in March, 1911. Dr. Gregorson who accompanied Williamson was also murdered at Pangi about the same time.

A military expedition which was sent to punish the offending tribes and to establish the military superiority of the British in the strategically important frontier was successful in its mission.\(^{48}\)

It was as a result of this expedition and on the recommendations made by the officer in command of the expeditionary force that a separate district was formed in 1912 with headquarters at Sadiya and with the old Sadiya Subdivision of the Lakhipur district as the nucleus, under the name "Central and Eastern Sections, North East Frontier," which was later changed to the Sadiya Frontier Tract. This

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\(^{47}\) Notification No. 631 P. dated 8th March, 1911.

was the North East Frontier District of India, bordering on Tibet on the north and east and on Burma on the south and south east. The area of the tract involved was some 10,000 square miles, of which 3,800 square miles were under regular administration. The latter area represented the plains and foothills. 49

In 1914, the North East Frontier district was established as an administrative unit separate from the regulation district of Lakhimpur. The numerous hill tribes who bordered the plains of Assam from Bhutan in the west along the ranges of the Himalaya to the Mishmi country of the Lohit valley, together with those south of the Lohit who inhabited the plains and western slope of the Patkoi, and had been previously controlled by the Deputy Commissioners of Darrang and Lakhimpur, were placed under Political Officers working directly under the orders of the Government of Assam. 50

In 1914, the Governor General in Council, in exercise of the powers conferred by Section I of the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation, 1880, defined the extent of three divisions into which the North East Frontier was divided and as a result the following administrative units emerged. 51

50 Ibid, Chapter II, P.14.
(1) The Central and Eastern Sections, North East Frontier Tract.

(ii) The Lakhimpur Frontier Tract.

(iii) The Western Section, North East Frontier Tract.

These three divisions laid the foundation of the present Arunachal Pradesh. The outer boundary of this tract was determined by the Mac Mohon Line which demarcated the areas under the actual control of Tibet and Assam as it existed in 1914. This line ran along the peaks and the ranges of the Himalayas that act as watershed between Tibet and Assam. 52

The first and the third units were each placed under the charge of a political officer and the second unit under the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur district, in addition to his own charge.

In 1919, the Central and Eastern Section was renamed as the Sadiya Frontier Tract and the Western Section as the Balipara Frontier Tract. The Lakhimpur Frontier Tract, however, continued to be known as such. This position obtained till 1937 during which period certain areas were either excluded from or included in the so called North East Frontier Tract. 53

In 1921 Census of India, the identity of the Sadiya Frontier Tract, the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract and the Balipara Frontier Tract was maintained and duly reported in the

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52 Ibid.

Volumes pertaining to the Province of Assam. These tracts were treated as separate 'districts' of Assam while compiling the district Gazetteers of Assam. In the earlier censuses, the separate identity of the frontier tracts was not maintained as they formed integral parts of the Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of the Province of Assam inspite of the 'Inner Line'.

It would appear from the above that the Chief Commissionership of Assam during the period from 1874 to 1921 included in it, besides Assam proper comprising the districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Hwong, Kamrup and Darrang; the three Bengal districts of Sylhet, Cashar and Goalpara and the Hill districts of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills, the Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills and the North East Frontier Tract.

The name 'Assam' was thus given a wider signification when it was used as designation of the whole territory of the Chief Commissionership of Assam comprising the Brahmaputra Valley, the Surma Valley, the Hill Districts and the North East Frontier Tract.

The peoples inhabiting these areas were, however, linguistically, ethnically and otherwise different and "essentially distinct each from all the others," as Grey pointed out in his Minute of the 13th March, 1868.

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55 The administrative area of the Chief Commissionership of Assam as it stood in 1920-21 has been indicated in Map No.4.
56 The area and the population returned in the Censuses of 1871-72, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921, the districts into which the province was divided, their administrative headquarters, area and population etc. as far as they are available are shown in Appendix I.