CHAPTER - VIII

RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ZAMINDARS AND THE HILLS TRIBES
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1. With the Garos:

Although the zamindars on the south of the Brahmaputra were described by Francis Hamilton Buchanan to be of Garo origin, their relationship hitherto maintained with the Garos was never satisfactory. The Garos were in a state of intermittent conflict with the zamindars of the estates lying on the foot of the Garo Hills. The nature of the relation between the zamindars and the Garos can be traced in the manner in which these zamindaries were created. It has been referred to in the Chapter I that the zamindars of Karaibari, Kalumalupara, and Mechpara in that part of Rangpur later called Goalpara were tributary border chiefs during the Moghul administration. It was their principal duty to expell the incursions of the Garos, who became a terror to the plains. Because, they like most of the hills tribes of the North-East lived in an unanimated situation of constant strife in their hills, and it was a

necessary ceremony at the funeral of a great chief (Garo) to bury with him as many human heads as could be procured for the purpose, and, if possible, to put death on the occasion living captives. Thus, the Garos rendered the border wholly insecure by constant raids for the purpose of obtaining heads or prisoners.²

It should be mentioned that the tribute payable to the Moghul Government by the zamindars was assessed not on land, but on certain transit and market dues, bulk of which was realised on the trade carried on with the Garos at the hats established by the zamindars at the frontier, viz., Damra, Jira, Nibari, Lakshimpur, Bengal Khata, Tikrihilla, Rajabala, Singimari, Mankachar, and Putimari. In these frontier markets the Garos barter for Cotton, Chillies, Wax, Lac, India rubber, timber etc. with the merchants engaged by the zamindars in the Garo trade, in return for which they received cows, pigs, goats, fowls, salt, earthenware pots, swords, spearheads and cloths etc.³

The zamindars extorted dues either in cash or in kind from these merchants, and it formed one of the main sources of their income. So long the Choudhuries paid their

². Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam (Reprint from the Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the year 1892-93, and published by the authority), Shillong, 1896, p. 82.
tribute to the Moghul Faujdar posted at Rangamati, they were left independent in their internal administration. The Faujdar on his turn paid stipulated consignment of cotton with occasional gift of elephants or sandal wood to the authority at Dacca, his dealings with the zamindars in matters of revenue was not ordinarily taken notice of. It became his personal concern. He made financial advances to the Choudhuries for the purchases of cotton which were the chief product of the Hills. And from motive of personal benefit, the Faujdar encouraged the zamindars to extend their territorial acquisitions in the Garo Hills.

It is traditionally believed that formerly the Garo Hills were peopled by the Koches, who were driven back from the hills by the Garos, and that it was a fact that to the later days the Koches claimed land in the Garo Hills. It has already been referred to that the zamindars succeeded in occupying the Garo villages in the plains, and in compelling the Garos in the lower hills to pay them tribute. But the mountaineers of the uplands remained independent during the Koch and Moghul administration, whose cavalry were totally incapable of making

any encroachment on the hills and woods of the Garos. Thus, the "Choudhries had not attempted to secure footing in the hills, save perhaps on those outlying, and lower spurs which intersected their own estate." However, they conciliated the friendship of the independent Garos by a free commercial intercourse.

But no sooner the zamindars could call to their aid the British fire arms than the zamindars seemed to have made oppressive demands at the frontier hats. They also pursued a policy of slow but steady encroachment into the interior of the hills. Francis Hamilton Buchanan gives an account of it:

"The most exorbitant exactions have been made on every Garo who comes to company's territory to exchange his commodities, and the chiefs who possessed lands that were accessible, have been either driven entirely from them as from the large space between the mountains on one side and Kalumalupara and Mechpara on the other; or they have been rendered not only tributary but mere ciphers, as in Habraghat".

The chiefs who were reduced to such position by the Raja of Bijni were Chiefs of Raumari, Ramjongga or Mjongga, and Damra.

7. Appendix V; Extract of a memorandum on the North East Frontier of Bengal, pp.30-37, by Sir Alexander, A., 1869, in Major Hurst, F.C. and Mr. Smart, A.B., A History of the Surveys of the Goalpara District, Shillong, 1917, p.XXII.
The manner in which the trade with the Garos was managed in the hata of Habraghat pargana will bring home the idea of the hard terms to which the Garos were subjected:

"At each market place a person who paid a rent to the Vijni Raja, kept a ware-house for salt. This he sold out to petty traders at eight rupees a man (84\frac{10}{16} S.W. a Ser). The petty traders, adding clay and water, increased its weight 1/8 part, and then exchanged it with the Garos at one man of salt for three mams of cotton. The Garo, therefore, for eight rupees worth salt, which were their no monopoly or duties except the company's, would cost about 5\frac{1}{4} rupees, gives 3 man 15 sers of cotton in the seed, which at Goalpara is usually worth five rupees the man. He besides pays a share of cotton to the Raja for permission to trade in his market".

Thus, the exactions of the zamindars at the frontier hats furnished suitable occasions to the Garos for quarrel. The belief that "the spirits of their headman required the souls of others to attend them in the next world" acted as a further incitement to the despatch of raiding parties.

In 1775-76, the Choudhuries of Mechpara and Karai-
bari, to avenge some Garo raids of more than usual severity, 
invaded the Garo Hills bordering on their respective estates, 
and entered on a career of conquest. Within a period of 
two to three years, the Garos of a large tract were brought 
under their control. The zamindar of Karai bari, Mahendra 
Narayan Choudhury, was especially successful in establishing 
his sway over the South-Western portion of the hills. 
animated by a spirit of revenge combined with a natural anxiety to 
throw off the yoke of subjectation the Garos carried on retaliatory raids in the heart of the estates of the zamindars. 
In September 1807, Campbell, the Magistrate of Rangpur, 
mentioned in his report that as many as four outrages 
occurred in Karai bari during an interval of few days. In 
the first of these, fifteen persons were killed and the 
cutchaary was plundered and burnt and two people were 
killed and two wounded; in the third several huts were 
plundered and burnt and seven people killed and one wounded; 
and in the last, several huts were plundered and burnt and 
three persons were massacred.

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11. Bengal Judicial Proceedings, April, 25, No. 1815, No.17, 
in Barpujari, H.K., The Problems of the Hill Tribes, 
North-East Frontier, 1822-42, Vol.I, Gauhati, 
1970, p.22.
Notwithstanding the acts of violence perpetrated by the Garos, the trade with them continued for long. Question arises, why did the trade relations survive? Obviously, the trade was advantageous to the zamindars. Secondly, the Garos had no other means of disposing of their cotton, the staple produce of the hills, than to carry on to the frontier hats established by the zamindars. To quote Francis Hamilton Buchanan:

"the necessity which the Garos labour under of procuring salt and iron, the luxury of eating beef, fish and other animal foods, that their mountains produce but scanty, and the desire of receiving brass and other finery in exchange for the cotton ..."¹².

But the presence of an armed establishment was indispensable to keep the peace while the traffic was going on.

"It was formerly the custom to keep a large body of matchlockmen with matches ready lighted, who paraded round the market during the sale, and discharged a matchlock at short intervals to remind the savages that they were on the alert. Without this coersion, the Garos, on the least dispute between their party and a merchant, would rise in arms and massacre all within their reach."¹³.

Inspite of such precautions, the Garos continued to perpetrate such atrocities, that in 1815, all commercial intercourse with them was interdicted. Parties of police peons were encamped at the different markets in the vicinity of the Garo mountains to enforce the prohibition. Meanwhile, the raids of the Garos on the plains were continued, and in 1816, Mr. David Scott, the Judge-Magistrate of Ranpur, was deputated to report on the best means of preserving the peace in the frontier. Mr. David Scott gave the following account of the position of the zamindars and Garos at the time of his visit.

1. Karibari: The Choudhury of this estate having been the most vigorous and least under control had reduced nearly all the Garos on his estate to the condition of ordinary ryots, but a few of the frontier chiefs remained tributary, subject to the provision of cotton on terms highly favourable to the zamindars, and paying sums of money on the occasions of Hindu festivals. Of these chiefs was the Rengta, who had been prevented, as referred to earlier, from emancipating himself from Choudhury's supremacy.

2. Kalunalupara: This estate had been in feeble hands. The Garos on its borders were virtually independent, though some of them paid a nominal cotton tribute to the zamindar.

3. Mechpara: The Mechpara Choudhury had, in 1776-77, made large conquest, but he was succeeded soon after by a minor, and only a few of the outlying Garo villages in the plains remained in the condition of ordinary ryots' villages, and subjected to regulation of the government. In the hills tract the Garo Chiefs were merely tributary, paying cotton on favourable terms to the zamindar, occasionally admitting the zamindars as their common judge.

4. Habraghat: Here the Garos on the first ranges of hills had been reduced to unconditional submission, but had been liberally treated, and their sardars transformed into Jagirdars, entrusted with the responsibility of defending the passes against the interior tribes.

Mr. David Scott found that the four zamindars of the frontier had for the most part succeeded in incorporating the border Garo villages in their respective zamindaries and had so far reduced the interior villages to the status of tributary villages. And as to their territorial acquisitions in the Garo Hills, he was of the opinion that:
“whatever may have been the motive of the Chaudries (Choudhuries) for concealing the real nature of their interest in this tract of the country from Government, it appears to me that their conquests if made at the time they had held their estates for the defence of their frontier, must be considered as legal acquisition conferring a right on the British Government as the superior of the conquerors, to sovereignty of the country subdued”.

David Scott thus held the view that the British Government had the right to intervene since the zamindars failed to protect the border. And since the trouble arose mainly from the tributary and independent Garos he proposed to separate all the tributary and independent Garo villages from the control of the zamindars and to take them under Government management, compensating the zamindars for any losses sustained; to make the chiefs of the villages thus brought under British jurisdiction responsible for the peace and for the collection of revenue; and to bring the submountain hats under Government control, all duties being abolished there, except upon independent Garos frequenting them. These proposals were approved by the Company’s Government, and in 1817, the Garo Sardars of the Tikri Duars executed an agreement in accordance with them.

But existing Bengal Regulations were considered to be inapplicable to the Garos, they being in the state of semi barbarous life. Secondly, some of the Garo villages were in the Permanently Settled estates of the zamindars. Thus David Scott laid before the Government of Bengal a special plan, which was afterwards embodied in Regulation X of 1822 (passed on 19th Sept. 1922) exempting the Garo mountaineers and other rude tribes on the last frontier of Rangpur from the operation of the existing Regulations and for establishing a special system of administration for the tract of the country occupied by them. Its preamble declared that—

"with a view to promote the desirable object of reclaiming these races to the habits of civilised life, it seems necessary that a special plan for administration of justice of a kind adopted to their peculiar customs and prejudices, should be arranged and concerted with headmen; and that measures should at the same time be taken for freeing them from dependence of the zamindars of the British provinces compensation being, of course made to the latter for any just pecuniary claims they have over them"17.

17. Chief Commissioner's Report, Rev. 7, June, 1905, No. 144-175, Assam Secretariat Record Room, Dispur.
Accordingly Section II of the Regulation separated the tract of the country that comprised the thanas of Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari from jurisdiction of the district of Rangpur, and declared the existing Regulation to be suspended in cases of subjects other than the Garos and other hill tribes. Section VIII provided that—

"in revenue matters the Commissioner should observe the rules and principles of the general Regulations with such restrictions and limitations as may be laid down by the Governor General in council to direct the separation, temporarily or permanently, of any tract of the country occupied by Garo mountaineers or other rude tribes from the estate of any neighbouring zamindars, to which the same may now be claimed to be attached, also to discontinue the collection by zamindars or other of any cesses, tributes or exactions. On whatever pretence the same may be levied from such people and to make arrangements either for the remission of the same or for their collection direct by the Officers of Government, making such compensation as to zamindars or others justly entitled thereto for the relinquishment of the same as may to him seem most equitable and proper."

Under the above mentioned sections many Garo villages were removed from the control and interference of the Mechpara

18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
and Karalbari zamindars. All collections were made by an officer, called the subarkar, appointed by the Government. Of the collections, 25 per cent were deducted as collection charge, and the remainder 75 per cent were paid over to the zamindars of the respective estates.

David Scott, who was appointed special Commissioner to extend British authority over the other Garo communities proceeded to conclude engagements with the independent Chiefs, and no fewer than 121 of those living west of the Someswari were said to have entered into terms with him. But he was shortly afterwards shifted from Garo Hills to assume the administration of Assam. His place was taken by the Principal Assistant of Goalpara. It seemed that for some years the British Govt. maintained a policy of non-interference with the interior of the hills. The tributary Garos paid with great irregularity the tribute which they had agreed upon. Raids were frequent and were followed either by expeditions or by blockade of the frontier posts. But these were of no avail.

Meanwhile, in 1831, an attempt was made by Mr. David Scott to compose the continual dispute between the Garos and the Raja of Bijni over certain lands from which, the Garos alleged that the Raja was trying to oust them. In order to maintain peace Mr. David Scott framed

20. Ibid.
21. Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam, Cp cit., p. 84.
a deed called bibhagana patra under which the Bijni Raja made over 21 plots of land in the border to the Maharaj (Garo Mitra Chates) through Laskars who, in turn, executed recognisance bonds in which they undertook to defend the passes against any Garo raids. But, his arrangements failed to prevent recurrence of disputes.  

In 1852 seven Garo outrages took place, in which 42 persons were killed. Although a blockade was established along the frontier, the hills men did not cease their raids on the plains. Between May 1857 and October, 1859, altogether nine incursions had been made in Goalpara in which 20 were killed. The Garos likewise committed two violent atrocities on Mymensingh. Thus, the Government decided to bring the Garos of the tract under its direct control. In 1869, Act XII of 1869 was passed, which enabled the Lt. Governor to make special provision for the administration of the district Garo Hills and to prevent the collection by zamindars the tribute, cesses or other exactions in the hills.  

22. Aitchison, C.U., op cit., p.75  
Section III of the said Act repealed the Regulation X of 1822, saving "any settlement of land revenue or other matters made thereunder with the zamindars". The last Section X was as follows:

"Whenever a question arises whether any place falls within the boundary of the territory (Garo Hills) described in Section IV or within the boundary of any of the territories to which provisions of this Act may be extended under Section IX, such officers as the Lieutenant Governor shall from time to time appoint may consider and determine on which side of the boundary of such place may lie, and the orders made thereon by such officers shall be final."

Under the above Section the Bengal Government appointed Mr. Backett in 1872 to lay down a good practical boundary between the Garo Hills and Goalpara. In session 1872-73 he laid down a boundary in difference to the boundary demarcated by one Kelso in the survey of the Permanently Settled Pargana in 1849-50. Mr. Backett laid down the boundary to the north of that of Kelso. The legality of the new boundary was challenged in the Civil Court by several of the Goalpara zamindars, who lost area by it. As the Government felt unable to dispute the legality of

their contention, negotiations were undertaken in order to gain the consent of the zamindars to the new boundary line by the offer of compensation in money. Of course in case of Bijni estate, the Government admitted that the nazrana lands to the north of Kelso’s line formed a portion of the Permanently Settled estate of Pargana Habraghat. The zamindar allowed the Government to collect the rents and profits of the land, paying him 75 per cent of those proceeds. After the arrangements of this compromise similar compromises with other zamindars were made, and Backett’s line was finally regularised by Regulation I of 187826.

But in 1902 the Garos invaded Habraghat Pargana under Bijni Raj. 700 Garos marched from the hills across Pargana Habraghat to Dolgama ghat on the Brahmaputra, where they constructed an encampment of grass huts. They proclaimed “Garo Raj”, and posted some notices ordering tenants not to pay rents to the zamindars. The ring leader of this agitation was Sona Ram Sangma, who collected subscriptions from all parts of the Garo Hills. He was convicted along with 5 others involved in the riot27.

27. Ibid.
Their grievances related to certain lands in the Pargana that had been allotted to some of the Garo headmen by David Scott, in 1831, in course of settling the disputes between the Garos and the zaminder of Bijnī Raj estate. Of the original 21 plots, 18 were in possession of the successors in the interest of the original grantees. Three had been abandoned and were lying waste. Thus, the Garos had no legitimate ground for complaint in respect of the lands in question.

Similarly, nazrana lands mentioned above became a source of dispute between the Garos and the Bijnī Raj. Certain claims had been advanced by some Garos alleging that they had certain rights in the nazrana lands which lay in the portion of the Permanently Settled Pargana Habraghat, which fell into the Garo Hills district between the boundaries laid down by Kelso and Backett in 1853 and 1878 as the boundaries of Garo Hills and Goalpara.

In pursuance of the Garo claims of the nazrana lands, the Deputy Commissioners of Goalpara and Garo Hills instituted an enquiry. Though the claims of the Garos were dishonoured, an agreement was made by the Government to conciliate them. Accordingly, the Zaminder of Bijnī Raj estate was asked to relinquish 25 per cent.

28. Ibid.
of the collection of the nazrana mahal as the malikana of the Nokmas (Garo Chiefs) within those traditional village limits it was included. The Garos signed a formal agreement in the presence of the Chief Commissioner of Assam on 2nd November, 1903, accepting 25 per cent of the ordinary land revenue of the said land in satisfaction of all claims they might have in respect to such lands and to avoid all future disputes and litigation. Unfortunately, the agreement was repudiated by the Nokmas. In 1904, Sona Ram Sangna and 33 others submitted a memorial to the Governor General of India praying that the Bibhagana and nazrana lands within Goalpara and Garo Hills district might be set free from the dependence of the Bijni Raj.

2. With the Bhutias: The level strip at the foot of the Bhutan hills was known as the Bhutan Duars. It has been referred to that the tract to the north of the district of Goalpara formed a part of the Bhutan Duars, and it was in possession of the Koches. The Bhutias succeeded in bringing this tract under their control on the break up of the Koch Kingdom in the seventeenth century. Two Koch Chieftains, the Raja of Sidli and the Raja of Bijni were found to have reduced to the status of tribute paying chiefs to the Government of Bhutan.

29. Ibid.
30. Memorial submitted by Sona Ram Sangna and 33 others on 13th December, 1904.
The earliest authority in the subject of Sidli and Bijnī was Dr Francis Buchanan Hamilton who had given an account of the disputes about tribute between the Sidli Raj and Bhutias. There were eighteen passes (Duars) from the low country to the Bhutan mountain. Of them several important passes were placed at the command of the officers called Subahs. In the cold season the Subah descended to the territory of the neighbouring states with armies, consisting not more than 1000 men armed with swords, battle-axes, and poisoned arrows, and defended by leathern jerkins, boots, and caps. They marched rapidly to the surprise of the refractory ryots, and murdered every human being male and female young and old, that fell into their hands; they then suddenly withdrew. By the terror of such sudden attack they tried to make their opponents agree to what they proposed to collect from them. Sidli and Bijnī were under the Subah of Cherung. Having dispute with the people of the plains, the Bhutias occasionally made terrible incursions, and in one such incursion of the Cherung Subah, Lakshmi Narayan, the reigning Chief of Sidli and his brother were put to death. Uday Narayan seldom paid tribute to the Cherung Subah, which occasioned several incursions; but he always made his escape into the territory of the British East India.

Company. His son Surjya Narayan consented to pay tribute. Both Uday Narayan and his son Surjya Narayan had a house in Parbotjoar within the British territory, to which, in case of alarm, the family had retired.32

Sidli Raja Surjya Narayan’s descendants had received sanads from the Government of Bhutan. These sanads speak of the relations of the zamindars of Sidli with the Government of Bhutan. The following were the sanads granted by the Bhutan Govt. to the descendants of Surjya Narayan, the originals of which were collected by the Government authority.

Sanad No. I

Dated 27th Agrahan, 324 Bootan Era, Poonakh; and bearing the seal of the Zimpe Saheb of Alipore.

By order of the Dev Maharaja

This Sanad is given to Indra Narayan Raja, resident of Bidyagram, in Sidli, in the jurisdiction of Bootan, 1240.

On the death of younger brother Raja Surjya Narayan, his Ranee, by name Sudresswaree, governed the territory for a short term. But owing to the inability to manage the affairs of the Raja, she represented her case and proposed

32. Ibid., p.72.
that you should be appointed in her stead, according to which (purposes) you were appointed Raja of the said dominion. In the meantime a scoundrel named Dhurnarain Koomar had made himself Raja. His case was tried by a committee of Zinkaffs at Bishnu Sing thanah, and it, being proved that he was not the Raja's son, you were appointed in his place, he being dismissed from the post which he had forcibly taken.

Under your jurisdiction there are seven talooks, from the income of which you should annually pay the undermentioned articles through the Cherung Subah, as well as a Booteah term or Salamee to the Subah himself.

1. Upper Sidli
1. Maddupur
1. Juck Arra
1. Buckura Phata
1. Raymullah
2. And others.

You will obtain from the Subah in return one (deleted) and a pony (annually).

From this time no person will be allowed to come into your jurisdiction as you will decide all criminal cases as usual and enjoy self comfortably.

Dated 27th Agrahahan
324 Bootan Era

Alipore Zimpe
Saheb's Seal
Annual rent

Payable in cash 600/-
Two pieces of new cloth
One pair of Ivory Tusks
One Ghuru-Khurruck
A pair of Buffalo horns
A tiger skin
A tiger skull
A Brass plate
A Brass Ghuree or Water pot
A Brass Cup
A Brass Khurah or Plate
A pot for cooking rice
A looking glass
A Tan
A Pony
Eighty packages of dry fish.

Sanad No.2

By order of Sri, Sri, Dev Maha Issur Raja. This Sanad is granted to Surjya Narayan, Raja of Sidyagram.

Whereas your father was a Raja of Seven Talooks, and whereas on his death you have represented the matter to the Zimpe of Alipore, we are informed your case and do hereby order that you be as Raja of said seven talooks in the place of your deceased father.

You will get the undermentioned signs of respect viz.,

1 Horse.

You will pay the revenue as usual and take care of your Ryots. You are under the orders of the Deb-i-nizam, Zimpe, and Subah only; you should not obey any orders except from the above.

He, who shall injure you, shall be punished by a fine of Rupees 20,000/-. Be careful on this subject.
Sanad No. 3

Granted by the order of the Zimpe Saheb of Alipore.

This Sanad is granted to Gaure Narain, Raja of Bidyagram, in the year, 1244.

Whereas your father Raja Indra Narayan, having died, you have presented a petition for the Raja-ship, and as you are the son of the said deceased Raja, I therefore appoint you to be the Raja of the (7) seven talookas as with all due respects. You will enjoy yourself by keeping the former boundary. You will personally bring the annual rents to the Cherung Soubah as follows, viz., in cash Rupees 500/-, a piece of Cloth, and Rupees 100/- on account of Salamee.

In return for the sookte (or dry fish) I will send you a horse value one hundred Rupees. The fish you will send annually. You will also give me new rice and new cloth and you will supply me with the necessary articles whenever they shall be required.

You are also ordered to decide all criminal cases. The undersigned articles are sent as a mark of respect.

1. Burlet
1. Horse
1. Golden Japee
1 Maund of Salt
1 Nagrah
1 Burkass
In return you will send the following articles:

2 Pairs of Ivory Tusks | 1 Tiger skin
1 Pairs of Ghuru Khuruk | 1 piece of cloth
2 Brass plates | Some Areah Kapur
1 Brass Pin box | 1 Green jurase
2 Pairs of Buffalo horns | 1 Punkah
| 1 piece of cloth

Dated 1144 B.S. Assi.n.

Sanad No. 4

Granted by order of Sri, Sri, Dev Issur Maharaja.

This Sanad is granted to Gaurinarain Raja in the year 1243.

Your father having died, you are ordered to govern
the seven talooks of Sidli as usual and live comfortably
there. You will care for the Ryots. No body shall interfere
with you in your jurisdiction without my knowledge. He,
who shall disobey my orders and injure you, will be punished
by a fine of Rupees 500/-.

Dated the 5th Pous, 327 B. Era

** The Sanads referred to were incorporated in the memorandum by Mr. Metculf on the newly acquired territory,
North of Goalpara District, Goalpara Papers File No. 7,
18866-70, Assam Secretariat Record Room, Dispur.
More information about the tribute payable to the Bhutan Government by the Rajas of Sidli is found in the political Journal of the late General Jenkins; while travelling in Sidli—

"The information given to me by the jamadar that the Sidlee Raja pays 500 Narayanee Rupees yearly to the Dev Zimpe, or whom he holds sidlee, but this was a small portion of the money he had to pay and principally to the Cherung Sooba in charge of the Doobar, who extracts money daily under some pretence or another, and mostly by sending presents of Junguns, or pieces of silk, and demanding four times the value for them. Every Zeenkalf, or other men in authority, who comes down always gets money in the same manner." 33.

The Sanads referred to tell us that the tribute payable by the Raja of Sidli to the Bhutias was not fixed; it varied from time to time. According to Agnew, the tribute in respect of Sidli Raj was about 700 Narayanee Rupees 34.

It is really difficult to ascertain the manner in which the Dev Raja of Bhutan took possession of the northern part of Bijni Raj, later called the Bijni Doobar. Old records of the Rangpur district furnish us with

33. Letter from the Commissioner of Coach Bhatar to the Secy. to the Board of Revenue, Lower Provinces, No. 2631, 8 Sept., 1868, Ibid.
information that Bijni formed a part of the Rangamati district under the Moghul Government, and the estate paid tribute to the Emperor of the Moghuls and the Raja of Bhutan as well. Perhaps the Bhutias accepted the tribute from the Sidli Raja in connivance of the Moghuls.

The tribute payable to the Dev Raja of Bhutan was to the tune of about 1,300 Narayanee Rupees. But towards the later part of the eighteenth century, the connection between the Dev Raja and Raja of Bijni "constituted a sort of exchange of the productions of the two countries, which the Bhutan functionaries were pleased to describe as the payment of tribute, the advantage being considerably in their favour". The following list of the exchange of commodities gives us an idea of it.

The Dev Raja presented annually to Bijni Raja eight Tonyan horses valued at Rs. 820; Bhutan salt valued at Rs. 40; total Rs. 860. The Bijni Raja presented annually to the Dev Raja of Bhutan the articles, i.e., Mankee cloth to the value of Rs. 480; Chick, ditto, 100; Cotton 30 mounds 100; thread, 180; dried fish 520; Oil 200; Cash 60; a Silver ewer, 50; a silver betel box, 50; and a silver plate, 50; total 1890 rupees.

36. Agnew to Mills, Ibid.
The Bhutias had trade relations with Bijni and Sidli. They came in annual trade caravan bringing skins, blankets, chintz, musk, walnuts, gold dust, and 400 to 500 hill ponies to the value of Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 40,000, and they carried back in return indigo, broad cloth, leather, copper, spices, lead and hogs. The trade had one time amounted to upwards of a lakh of rupees\(^38\). They carried their trade by barter. In rainy seasons, they sailed down in the rivers. Boat loads of dried fish and earthen pots were brought up to the rivers and were exchanged for unhusked paddy\(^39\).

In has been referred to above that Sidli and Bijni were amenable to Cherung subah. But the subah constantly interfered with the affairs of the estates. The Raja of Sidli (Bidyagong and Sidli were synonymous) gave the Bhutias yearly about Rs. 400 worth of cotton, cloth and dried fish "merely to conciliate the good will of tribe which from its position was always able to harass his estate"\(^40\). Oppressions and exactions were so vigorous

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\(^38\) Glazier, F.G., Op cit., pp. 50-51.

\(^39\) Allen, B.C., Op cit., p. 103.

\(^40\) Extract from the Revenue Survey Report for 1867-68, by J.H.O'Donel, Revenue Surveyor, 5th Division, Lower Provinces, in Major Hurst, F.C. & Mr. Smart, A.B., Op cit., Appendix IV, pp. XIV-XV;

that the ryots were constantly moving from Eastern Duars into British territory". Walter Hamilton made a reference to the situation as "The more northerly parts for want of the same asylum, are a complete waste.

The Bhutian incursions on the plains were let loose not to the outlying portion of Goalpara district alone, the entire frontier of Bengal and Assam was exposed to it. The ryots of British territories were molested by them. In 1772, Koch Bihar, the British dependency of the East India Company, was overrun by the Bhutias; Dharendra Narayan, the Raja of Koch Bihar, prayed for the British protection. Accordingly, British arms were deployed; the Bhutias were driven back from Koch Bihar. The British followed them to Bhutan, and forced them to sign a peace treaty on 25th April, 1774, which granted the Bhutias the privilege of trade in company's territory free of duty, and permission to their caravan to go to Rangpur annually.

It is worth noting that the expansion of British trade was one of the essential planks of Warren Hastings which led to explore routes to Tibet by sending various missions. Thus out of considerations of trade and commerce,

the British followed a policy of appeasement towards the 
Bhutias at this time. And that is why, to placate the 
Bhutian intransience no enquiry was made as to the state 
of affairs in Bijni Duars. The peculiar circumstances of 
Bijni was brought to the notice of the East India Company 
in 1791, when the Bhutan Government interfered in the 
political affairs of Bijni estate. Bijni Raja Harideb 
Narayan was murdered at the orders of the Dev Raja of 
Bhutan and Nazir Coor, alias Mahendra Narayan, the brother 
of the assassinated Raja, was allowed to ascend the 
gaddi as successor to Harideb Narayan. The Dev Raja of 
Bhutan granted a sanad to that effect. The political 
affairs of Bijni estate worried the district authority 
of the East India Company. The Commissioner of Rangpur 
sent a military consignment to take charge of the estate. 
But it was not materialised, for, the Dev Raja of Bhutan 
sent him a letter requesting him to confirm the appoint-
ment of Raja Mahendra Narayan. Some portion of the letter 
is worth mentioning—

"The Company and the Deb Rajah are one, the Deb 
Rajah does not object to the Company's proceedings, 
and he appointed Raja Mahendra Narayan Coor, the 
Company will confirm him. This is a matter of course. 
The disputes are created by low persons at the 
sudder and in the Mofussil. It is a small matter 
and may be settled soon."44.

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44. Letters from the Bhutan Subah regarding the Succession 
to Bijni, in Glazier, F.G., Op cit., Appendix A, 
pp. 93-95.
The matter was not pressed further although Bijni was dependent both on Bhutan and the East India Company. But peace could neither be purchased nor was maintained, as the Bhutias continued their incursions in the British territory. To maintain friendly relations with them, the British Government sent several missions to Bhutan. The first mission sent under George Bogle, accompanied by Mr. Hamilton, being failed on account of the death of Bogle at Peking (1780); another mission under Turner was despatched. This mission extended some commercial facilities to Bhutan, but disputes regarding boundary remained unsolved. In 1815, David Scott, Judge-Magistrate of Rangpur, sent Babu Kishen Kanto Bose to Bhutan to find out means for resolving some boundary disputes. After the Burmese war, fresh boundary disputes arose as to the occupation of the Duars in the Kamrup and Darrang districts. Another mission under Capt. Pemberton was sent to Bhutan. This mission also was not successful.

In 1863, one Jaolia Mech, alias Jaulia Bhutia, one of the Bhutan zamindars, burnt and plundered Bijni. The Raj family left the Rajbari to escape molestation at the hands of the Bhutias. The depredations were so great

that the event was known as the Jaullar Dhuna in the local account\(^{46}\). Ashly Eden who was sent on a mission to Bhutan in 1863, was insulted and was compelled to sign a document purporting to assign over to the Government of Bhutan the Assam Duars. On his return, efforts were, however, made to resolve the disputes peacefully, but failed\(^{47}\). This led to the Bhutan war (1864-66), on the conclusion of which all the Duars, inclusive of the Eastern Duars, were annexed to the British territory.


\(^{47}\) Malick, S.P., Op cit., pp. 97-602; Allen, B.C., Op cit., p. 27.