For some years after the formation of the Assam Sebundy Corps there was peace on the frontiers of Lower Assam. But the South-East Frontier remained in a state of perennial alarm owing to the feuds of the Singphos, particularly between the two rival chiefs Beesa and Duffa. The family feud between them began as early as 1823, when Beesa's proposal to Duffa to attack the Barsenapati was not only refused but a timely warning was given to the Muttoo chief thus enabling him to repel the aggressors with considerable loss. Duffa had to pay dearly for this, for Beesa attacked him, killed his wife and several others and drove him beyond the Patkais to Hukwang. Subsequent efforts to reconcile them through a matrimonial alliance failed. The recognition by the Government of Beesa as the 'Paramount' chief over the others further wounded Duffa's sentiments and spoiled the chance of a peaceful settlement. Raids and counter-raids followed. Attempts at a reconciliation between them through the mediation of British officers met with failure if not with rebuff. Endeavours to induce the cooperation of an unwilling or unable Burmese

1. For further details see Barpujari, H.K.: Problem of the Hill Tribes, etc. Ch. VI.; also Robinson, W.: Descriptive Account of Assam, Pp. 373 ff.
Government towards a solution met with any success. Added to these inter-clannish feuds were these between the Singphos and the Eastern Nagas. The Nagas unable to cope with oppression of the powerful Singphos were almost reduced to the state of slaves. Thus Major White, Commandant of the A.L.I., who accompanied a British mission to the Patkai in 1837 on his return encountered a war party of Singphos fresh from the sack of Maga settlements dragging along gangs of captives. Repeated raids upon these dependent Nagas by the Singphos obliged the local authorities to take up the question of giving them protection. To meet their aggressions Major White sought to arm the Nagas; each Naga chief, particularly those in close proximity to Singphos, would send some young men to Sadiya to be instructed in musketry who on their return could organise village defence. Jenkins was decidedly against this plan. It would not be easy, he felt, to induce the Nagas to repair to Sadiya for instructions and it would be inadvisable to supply arms to tribes afflicted with longstanding feuds. His own scheme was to raise a body of forty to sixty Doanneans under native officers of the A.L.I. to be posted in one or two bodies amongst the Nagas. On 19 April 1837 Jenkins, after consulting Captain S.P. Hannay, who

2. P.P.C., 8 May 1837: No. 65, White to Jenkins, 23 March.
3. Ibid: 19 April.
had just returned from a tour of the frontier, submitted a concrete proposal to Government. This was the establishment of a military post in the vicinity of the Nagas on the river Buridihing between Jaipur and the confluence of that river with the river Brahmaputra. The post should be composed of one European officer commanding, a native commissioned officer and detachment of twenty sepoys from the A.L.I. with a proportion of non-commissioned officers; and two havildars, two naiks and twenty men each to be raised from among the Doanneahs and Khastis. The Government was at first reluctant to adopt this plan on the ground that the proposed post would be too isolated and far removed from support. When a further inroad of the Singphos upon the dependend Nagas was reported in the following month and the Agent once again pressed for the adoption of his plan the Government accorded its sanction.

A military post on the Buridihing afforded little protection to the Eastern Nagas for it was not sufficiently advanced for the purpose. Major White preferred to have the post centrally located in the hills which would not only deter the aggressors but also give confidence to the threatened. Jenkins' military post and his policy of raising local tribal levies should

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1. Ibid: 19 April.
2. F.P.C., 19 June: Mos. 57-58.
on the other hand, be examined against a wider aspect of the South-East Frontier. This tract of country since the preceding twelve years had been the scene, not of peace and prosperity, but of bloodshed, plunder and desolation. Duffa's raids since 1835 and the fact that most of the dependent Singphos, at one time or the other, went over to his side clearly indicated that no effective protection had hitherto been afforded to them. The Sadiya post proved too distant; the Political Agent had no way of knowing what occurred on the frontier and, therefore, was unable to prevent disturbances by a timely interference. This discreditable state of affairs on the most exposed part of the frontier had to be put an end. Jenkins' solution was to extend the line of defence and bring the tribes under military subjection. 'However vast now the extent of our Empire,' he wrote,

"it is impossible not to contemplate its further enlargement; if the government does not decline, our boundaries must be advanced over all the barbarious tribes around us, for no possible policy can prevent our constantly coming in collision with mere savages who have only the passions on the moment for their guidance with the plunder of a rich and exposed country in prospect and there can be no safety against their attacks but in the power of following and punishing them".

This punitive power, Jenkins added, the Government could not possess so long as it depended entirely upon foreign and up-

1. F.P.C., 29 August 1838; No. 90.
country sepoys who then formed the bulk of the Local Corps. Their caste prejudices, food habits and constitution made them totally unfit for sustained service at great distances from their homes. Again, the necessity of granting furlough to a large proportion of them proved inconvenient and expensive. But above all, the presence of foreigners in the midst of tribes who cherished their independence above everything else could not but lead to the most undesirable results. It was important, therefore, to seek to create new recruiting grounds in the vicinity of the remote frontiers most likely to be the scenes of military operations. In the Doanneahs Jenkins found a class of soldiers as good as the Jurwas of Lower Assam who, like the latter, could obviate the necessity of employing uncountry sepoys. 'Assamese by race, but Burmese and Shans or Singphos by education and habits', the Doanneahs were of the same class as the tribes against whom the Government was likely to come into conflict. The Agent hoped that the small Levy which the Government sanctioned would be the means of laying the foundations of a military spirit among the frontier tribes that in future could be of great value. Jenkins' policy was fully endorsed by the Court of Directors.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid: 'We are at the same time', Jenkins added, 'attaching to ourselves through them and their families a large portion of the population, and weakening the influence over these people of their chiefs, whose attachment to our government cannot for many years be expected to be sincere'.
In September 1837 Captain Hammy was on his way to the frontier to select a military post and raise the militia of 40 sepoys. The question of giving protection to the Eastern Nagas soon became interlinked with the defence of the frontier against the Burmese. With the accession of the 'uncertain and fickle' Tharrawaddy to the throne of Ava the relations between the two governments became extremely strained. The new Monarch seemed determined to undo the Treaty of Yandabo and the possibility of a rupture with the Burmese loomed large. The local officers on the Eastern Frontier were impressed upon the necessity of measures for protecting the Company's territories. On the Gauchar frontier the detachments of the S.L.I. were withdrawn from outposts and the battalion was kept in readiness to be pushed into Manipur; Regular Regiments of infantry were moved into Sylhet. In Assam, Jenkins took up the question of giving protection to Upper Assam and covering up the resources of the frontier areas lest any irregular bands of marauders were tempted to make inroads knowing they could easily get supplies. Jenkins

2. P.S.O. 4 September 1837: Nos. 6-7.
thought it expedient to remove the A.L.I. with its headquarters to Sadiya or Jaipur or some place on the side of the Buridihing. The headquarters of the A.L.I. at Bishnath was too far down the river to be considered a part of the defensive arrangements of the threatened quarters. To move troops to Jaipur from there, by upward navigation, took almost a month. The A.L.I. in an advanced situation together with the Doanneah Levies raised by Hannay was what Jenkins considered adequate for the defence of the frontier. The President-in-Council approved of the measures to remove the A.L.I. from Bishnath to the South-East Frontier.

To protect by military defences an extensive tract of forest-clad country ninety miles long by forty miles deep with mountain ranges varying from 500 to 5,500 feet high was by no means an easy task. If the troops were concentrated on this range in defence of one of its passes there was every danger of it being turned by the Burmese by another pass. Division of the force to block every pass would render each detachment too weak to withstand an enemy onslaught. It was therefore decided, as proposed by Major White, to occupy with two companies a temporary position on the confluence of the rivers Buridihing and Brahmaputra, with an advanced post at Jaipur. From here it would be possible to

1. F.S.C., 6 December 1837, No. 16.
strike at the enemy as they debouched through the passes upon the plains. At the same time the aid of the Barersenapati, who possessed 200 muskets, would be secured and the dependent Singphos would be adequately protected. It would also be possible to fall back quickly in order to protect Purandar Singh's territory. Meanwhile, Jenkins himself proceeded to Upper Assam to settle the question of the permanent headquarters of the A.L.I. and the military posts. His tour through Purandar Singh's territory revealed that it was in such a state of mismanagement that inter­ference was absolutely necessary. As arrangements in the kingdom were connected with the defence of the frontier, Jenkins had to postpone the question of the South-East frontier defence until a settlement was made in Purandar Singh's territory.

SEBUNDY CORPS INCREASED

The chance of a collision with the Burmese was much overrated by Jenkins and, for a time, even by the authorities at the Port William. Major White in his subsequent tour of the frontier found the chiefs completely unaware of the strained relations between the two Governments. The best informed and the most

1. F.P.C., 4 April 1838, No. 112.
intelligent of them merely spoke as if some difference of opinion only existed between the Burmese Monarch and the British Resident. No attempt had been made by the Burmese to incite the Singphos or other tribes to disturb the peace of the frontier. In fact the Burmese had not even sent its forces to Hukwang that year to collect tribute as was their practice. Nevertheless a serious view of the situation was entertained by Jenkins. When in May 1838 complications arose with the Bhutias over the question of the Blackmail, he was unwilling to spare any portion of the A.L.I. from Upper Assam. The Bhutias could not be prevailed upon either to agree to commute their personal collections of blackmail for payments in kind or money from the collector or his Agents, or to restrain their collections to the amount of the remissions made to the ryots. Forcible collections and attacks upon the frontier were apprehended. It was therefore found necessary to throw forward a chain of forts along the frontier as had already been successfully done against the Daflas. In case the Bhutias declined to accept the money reserved for them, Jenkins proposed to utilise the amount to construct fortifications for the guards and roads to connect these posts with each other and with the Sadar station. The duty of garrisoning these additional

1. F.P.C., 6 June 1838: No. 47; For further details see Barpujari, H.K.: *Problem of the Hill Tribes*, etc. P. 133 ff.
2. Ibid.
posts fell on the Assam Sebundy Corps, which was barely sufficient to meet the demands already placed upon it. Its strength had accordingly to be increased by an additional eighty men. To command the posts ten extra native officers were also sanctioned.

MILITARY LOCATIONS: PROPOSED CHANGES

Shortly afterwards Purandar Singh's territory was resumed and this resulted in additional defence burdens for the Company in the upper part of the valley. In addition to the vexed question of the Khantyi-Singpho tracts there was now an extensive and exposed frontier bordering the Daflas on the north and the Nagas on the south of the resumed territory. In particular, the depredations of the former during the reign of Purandar Singh resulted in the desertion of almost all the frontier villages. Measures had to be taken by Hamilton Vech, the officer placed in charge of Lakhipur, for their eventual coercion and for placing the frontier in a tolerable state of defence. The condition of the Naga frontier was equally discouraging. With reference to these changes the following redistribution of the A.L.I. was

1. Ibid: No. 49.
proposed by Jenkins 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadiya (HQ)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaipur under second-in-Command</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorhat</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>1</td>
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The importance of Sadiya lay in its proximity to the Eastern and South-Eastern Frontier which was the most exposed. Situated at the head of the river Brahmaputra the detachment so placed there could fall back without difficulty whenever required in the lower parts of Assam. Hitherto the interposition of Purandar Singh's territory between that post and Lower Assam had been the chief objection against placing large detachments there. The officer at Jaipur would keep a watch over the passes leading to Ava as well as affording protection to and surveillance of the eastern Nagas. His jurisdiction could also be extended to cover all the Naga territory not easily accessible from the Jorhat side. With such a distribution of troops between Sadiya and Jaipur the Agent hoped it would be possible to put down all disturbances in the Singpho districts as well as to guard against any attempts at

invasion on the part of the Burmese\textsuperscript{1}. From the three companies at Jorhat guards should be provided against the Naga, and on occasion would even send reinforcements to Jaipur. Jorhat's advantage over Bishnath, it was pointed out, was in the fact that reinforcements from there could be pushed up to Jaipur within six or seven days compared to nearly a month that was required from Bishnath.

ASSAM MILITIA REORGANISED

The President in Council concurred with the Agent on the proposed measures for the protection of the province\textsuperscript{2}. The removal of the headquarters and the greater portion of the local Corps to Upper Assam was agreed to in principle but he declined to comment upon its detailed distribution or to fix the number of men to be placed in each station. This was to be completed in consultation with Major White. The authorities in fact clearly saw that the additional burdens could not be met by the A.L.I. alone. Although Jenkins had shown its distribution in company strength it was obvious that these would be split up into smaller detachments within their respective districts. It is on this ground that Major White objected to the proposed changes. In view of the Burmese threat he thought it of great importance to concentrate

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{2} F.P.C., November 1838: No. 132.
\end{itemize}
the A.L.I. in masses. The President in Council therefore drew
the attention of the Agent towards the reorganisation of the Assam
Militia of Purandar Singh to meet the additional demands. Organ-
ised on the pyke system the militia consisted of 534 men, of
whom nearly a hundred in the junior commissioned and non-commission-
ioned ranks were Hindustanis. The militia was in a most disorganised
state, its arms and accoutrements were almost unserviceable and
internal discipline was wholly lacking. To remodel the militia
and carry out the other details of reorganisation, T. Brodie was
appointed its Commandant. The militia was divided into six com-
panies of 80 men each with its native officers, havildars and
naiks. The surplus jemadars and havildars were retained as extra
officers to be brought in as vacancies occurred. New arms were
supplied to it and Brodie was particularly instructed by the Agent
to take measures to put the militia in a state of efficiency.

ANGAMI NAGA RAID : EARLY MEASURES FAILED

Meanwhile in July 1838 reports reached of an Angami
Naga raid in North Cachar accompanied by the murder of four women,
the heads of three of whom were carried off. These Nagas, though

1. P.P.C., 2 January 1839: No. 84; Jenkins to Brodie, 15 December,
1838.
2. Ibid.
in contact with the British since 1832, had, from the middle of 1835, become a standing menace to the security of North Cachar. To protect the frontier various methods had been tried but with little success. In the early years Gambhir Singh was given a tacit consent to establish his authority over the Nagas in the hope of controlling them through him. Towards the latter part of 1835 an attempt was made to grapple with the problem by establishing frontier posts with the help of Tulsiram Senapati and the Manipuris. These proved equally futile. The incursions remained unavailing, until the plunder of eight villages in Haflong in August 1836, resulting in the loss of sixty-nine lives, the question of giving protection to the frontier was once again taken up in earnest. The policy of using the Manipuris to defend the frontier was definitely given up on the advice of Jenkins. On his recommendation it was decided, in April 1837, to depute an European officer to the Angami Frontier to ascertain the cause of the outrages and adopt the necessary measures of defence. The deterioration in the relations with the Burmese, when all available troops had to be kept in readiness for any eventuality, prevented the plan from being carried into effect. With the latest outrage in North Cachar the Government of India called upon its local

1. For further details see Mackenzie, A.: A. History of the relations of the Government with the Hill tribes, etc.; Elwin V The Nagas in the Nineteenth Century, P. 147 ff.

2. P.L.T.C., No. 13, 4 April 1838.
The unanimous opinion of the local officers was the immediate despatch of a military expedition under an European Officer against the Magas. Jenkins further impressed upon the Government that the expedition should be followed up by the occupation of certain posts on the frontier. A mere incursion into the hills would not answer for; on the expedition withdrawing the Magas would recommence their atrocities. These arguments convinced the Government of India and an expedition was decided upon. As access to the Angamis was easier from the Assam side, North Cachar was transferred to Assam and the management of the expedition was left in Jenkins' hands. As to the organisation of the expedition the authorities accepted the plan of Burns, the Superintendent of Cachar, to raise a small Levy of Kaonaris. He had pointed out that supplying a detachment of the Local Corps was troublesome and expensive. Besides, Lister, who was occupied in coercing the Marams in the Khasi hills, was unwilling to spare

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1. P.P.C., 21 November 1838: No. 104; Jenkins to Prinsep, 29 October.
any part of the S.L.I. The strength of the Levy was fixed at 200 on Jenkins' advice that it would not be safe to lead a smaller party against the powerful Angamis. However, it was not found easy to get the hill Kaoharis to volunteer for the Levy. Consequently a substantial portion had to be drawn from Manipuris, Hindustanis and the like pleases who had once served Gambhir Singh and Raja Govind Chandra. Towards the close of December 1839, the expedition under E.R. Orange, Sub-Assistant of Nowgong, comprising fifty each of the Sebundies and Shans set forth from Assam towards North Cachar to join the Kaohari Levy and thence to the Angami Hills. Divided responsibility dimmed the prospects of the expedition from the very beginning; its control was left in Jenkins' hands; the Levy was to be raised by Burns, and its arms to be supplied by the military authorities. The arms did not arrive in time and consequently only thirty six men from the Levy could be armed to join Orange. With such a weak force nothing could be achieved. It has been rightly remarked that the expedition degenerated into a hurried march through only a part of the Naga hills. The local authorities expressed some surprise that it ended without disaster one or two porters only having been speared by the Nagas.

2. For details see Butler, J.: Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam, Pp. 104-105.
On the termination of the expedition Jenkins retained the services of the Shans for the protection of Tularam's territory. These were located at Semkar, maintaining detached pickets towards the east. The Levy having failed to serve the purpose for which it was raised the Government was unwilling to see it being kept up at the monthly cost of Rs. 1080/-. When the thirty six men accompanied Orange the rest remained idle in Cachar. Orange himself was inclined towards discharging half the Levy; and only the fear of a check upon the expedition prevented Burme from doing so. It also transpired that the Levy could not with prudence be entrusted with the protection of North Cachar. The men were more or less involved in feuds with different factions in the hills. On this account Jenkins thought it inexpedient to employ men who with the arms provided by the Government, may very well prosecute their own private wars. The Governor-General in Council accordingly instructed Burns in April 1839 to convert the Kaohari Levy into a body of Pioneers. It was felt that under such a modification the Levy could be employed instead on the Manipur - Cachar road project and eventually for opening roads in the Khasi hills. However, the men showed great reluctance to serve as pioneers and

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
consequently Burns disbanded the whole levy.1

The expedition against the Angami Magas synchronised with a disturbed state of the entire North-East Frontier.2 The Daflas on the north had recommenced their atrocities on the duars. There was every possibility of a rupture with the Kampo doulas over the question of the Blackmail. From Jaipur Brodie reported that the Eastern Magas would, at any moment, break upon the frontier in retaliation of the severe measures adopted towards them in the proceeding year by Purandar Singh. The Garos and the Jingphos continued to be a source of considerable anxiety. Added to all these was the recurring threat of a fresh Burmese war or, at least, a Burmese inspired tribal unrest. The aggressions of the hill tribes were, no doubt, matched by an aggressive spirit on the part of the local authorities. In the Khasi hills Lister had only recently coerced the Marams by establishing a chain of military posts in their country and by blockading the duars to traffic. Against the Daflas Captain Vetch was preparing to lead an expedition. Jenkins' remark on the latter occasion that the

2. F.P.C., 16 January 1839: No. 52, Jenkins to 24 December 1839.
"Assamese (Government) formerly had frequent occasion to make invasion of the Dufflah Hills and not many years since they had the Dufflahs under complete control, and we shall never be able, I fear, to assure our ryots immunity from their devastations, until we follow the example of the preceding government."¹

clearly reflects the attitude of the local authorities at the time.

LARGER MILITARY FORCE DEMANDED

In this agitated state of the frontier Jenkins found enough reason to demand a larger military force. The existing establishment he complained was wholly inadequate either to give protection against the hill tribes or meet any Burmese inroad². The whole of the A.I.L. was required for probable contingencies against the Burmese. In such an event a number of men from the regiment was likely to be laid up on account of the unhealthiness of the scene of operations. The recruiting ground of the corps being outside Upper Assam it would be difficult to fill up the places of the sick. Jenkins therefore recommended that a temporary increase of about ten or twelve men per company should be forthwith sanctioned³.

1. F.P.O., 30 January 1839, No. 61.
2. F.P.O., 16 January 1839, No. 52, Jenkins to 24 December, 1838.
3. F.P.O., 16 January 1839, No. 52, Jenkins to 24 December, 1838.
THE DOANNEAH LEVY

The efficiency of the A.L.I. depended entirely upon the extent to which it could be made free from the numerous detached duties. It was to this end that the Assam Militia was reorganised during the preceding year. The result was far from encouraging; the Militia proved inefficient. At best it could be made numerically sufficient to occupy some posts; but beyond this it could not be depended upon for anything. Its arms and accoutrements were in the worst state, internal discipline was totally lacking, and no trust could be reposed on the men who, with few exceptions, were mostly labouring Assamese. Jenkins accordingly proposed to disband the Assam Militia and make an increase to the strength of the Doannsah Levy by two or three companies of hundred men each. It was far better, he explained, to allow husbandmen ill-qualified to make good soldiers to return to the plough and instead recruit the more energetic Doanneahs who were otherwise almost valueless as cultivators. The Doanneah Levy thus augmented and trained by a competent military officer would take all the outpost duties hitherto held by the Assam Militia. In times of active military operations it would be useful as an auxiliary force in bringing up convoys and securing

1. F.P.O., 16 January 1839: No. 52, Jenkins to 24 December, 1838.
the line of communications. Above all as an energetic frontier race, the Doanneha would be a valuable prop in the pay of the Government.

ASSAM SEBUNDY CORPS

For Lower Assam Jenkins proposed that the Sebundy Corps, which he had earlier recommended to be increased to ten companies, should again be increased to one hundred men per company, making a total of one thousand men in all. There was every prospect of more troops being required. The Daflas and the Akas had to be coerced and the Bhutias to be guarded against. Unlike the A.L.I., recruits were readily available for the corps; but as it would take months to train them, Jenkins thought an early arrangement should be made for the increase. Jenkins also drew the attention of the Government to the dearth of European officers attached to the corps. Since there was the militia of Shans always available for any emergency, Jenkins did not recommend any further increase of troops for Lower Assam.

1. F.P.O., 16 January 1839, No. 52, Jenkins to 24 December, 1838.
2. Ibid.
In view of the prevailing sense of insecurity the President in Council approved of the several measures proposed by Jenkins¹. No sooner was this done than news came that the Khamtis, some six hundred in number, attacked and stormed the Sadiya stockade. The garrison, taken completely by surprise, lost eighty lives including that of Colonel White. For a time the situation appeared desperate and it was the continued exertion of the officers on the spot that prevented the frontier from lapsing into anarchy. The rebels were soon hunted down and the operations concluded with the dispersion of the Khamtis.

The Sadiya incident provided two important lessons: first, the importance of having in reserve a body of troops ready for any emergency, second, the dangers of isolated posts too distant from timely support. Hannay attributed the attempt to the fact that the insurgents knew assistance from below was less likely to be afforded owing to the absence of a disposable force². Indeed, it was with the greatest difficulty that troops were concentrated in Upper Assam. Although Lieutenant Innis immediately moved up with a detachment of the A.L.I. from Siennath a propor-

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¹. Ibid.
². F.P.C., 27 February 1839, No. 160, Hannay to Jenkins, 30 January.
tion had to remain on the Daffla frontier to be relieved by the Sebundies. Neither could the Sebundy regiment relieve the Local Corps before it was itself relieved in Lower Assam by Shans and armed militia and before the detachment in Cachar was withdrawn. Had there been a sufficient disposable force to occupy Jaipur immediately and a company to move up towards the point where the Khantis concentrated at Pirok, no Singpho would have joined them and the effect on the others would have kept them neutral. Hannay, therefore, concluded that unless there was for sometime in Assam a disposable force of seven or eight hundred men, British power was less likely to be respected. To tide away the immediate crisis the services of a Regular Regiment, or at least five companies of it, were requisitioned. Pending final arrangements four companies from the A.L.I. were concentrated at Sibsagar. The remainder were distributed between Sadiya, four companies, and Jaipur and Lakhimpur, a company each. Meanwhile, measures were taken to complete the increases to the troops lately sanctioned.

The affair at Sadiya, which exposed the vulnerability of the North-East Frontier, led to a re-examination of the question.

1. F.P.C., 13 March 1939, Nos. 70-71.
of frontier defence. In April 1839 Jenkins submitted a scheme to push forward a cordon of military posts into the Singpho hills\textsuperscript{1}. The objectives of this policy, it is clear from the Agent's despatches, were apparently several: to block potential lines of Singphos or Kakoo inroads, to tighten military control over the frontier generally and undermine Burmese influence over the tribes. The posts had therefore to be in the direction of the most frequented passes and as far advanced as possible. There should be at least three stockaded posts in the Singpho districts\textsuperscript{2}. The central post, located in the vicinity of Beesa, should have four mounted caronades and a garrison of one hundred and fifty men; the two others on its flanks should consist of fifty men each. In advance of these posts one or two picked men would be posted in the Singpho settlements, not as guards out as informers to provide intelligence on what went on the Burmese side of the frontier. If the scheme was adopted, Jenkins added, the loyalty of Beesa and the other chiefs, who had hitherto wavered owing to the apparent lack of British protection, would be ensured: 'so long as our Singpho allies see our strength', Hannay had rightly remarked, 'they will be friendly towards us, but no further\textsuperscript{3}.

\textsuperscript{1} P.P.C., 5 June 1839; No. 44.
\textsuperscript{2} P.P.C., 5 June 1839; No. 44.
\textsuperscript{3} P.P.C., 24 April 1839, No. 129, Hannay to Jenkins, 10 February.
The second part of Jenkins' proposal consisted of raising an additional corps of irregulars or rangers to take the duties of the proposed advanced posts, to relieve the A.L.I. from all smaller outposts and enable the disbandment of the Assam militia. To garrison the proposed posts as well as those on the Abor frontier no less than four hundred and fifty men and several native officers were required. To provide reliefs for this number another two hundred were indispensable. This large amount could not be provided from the A.L.I. In the absence of a Regular Regiment the A.L.I. had to be kept as a corps of reserve for eventual emergencies. It could be divided into three or four large detachments at most and not frittered away by taking the small outposts along the frontier. Besides, the corps was then composed principally of Hindustanis and Gurkhas who could not stand the climate of the frontier and the jungles in which the advanced posts were to be situated. The proposed corps of irregulars would also take the duties then performed by the Assam Militia in the Jorhat division.

Jenkins proposed to organise the corps into eight companies of eighty men each, making a total of six hundred and forty men. It was to be composed in the following manner: 200 picked volunteers from the Assam Militia, 100 Rabhas from Goalpara.

1. F.P.G., 5 June 1839; No. 34.
and 140 Kaoharis and Chutiyas. Such men could endure privations and exposure to the climate and pursue the enemy to deal with without the assistance of military transport.

UPPER ASSAM SEBUNDY CORPS

With Jenkins' proposals the number of troops in Assam, excluding the Shan Militia and armed barkandases, amounted to 2,600 viz.,

- 60 Artillery detachment
- 900 Assam Light Infantry
- 1000 Assam Sebundy Corps
- 640 Proposed corps

This was beyond what a few years back would have been either recommended or sanctioned. It was the growing importance of tea industry at the head of the Assam valley and the consequent necessity for imposing a check upon the various frontier tribes which induced the Government to sanction the formation of the new corps. To defend the North-East Frontier by Regular Regiments of the army was out of the question. 'They require,' wrote the Honourable T.C. Robertson,

1. Ibid.

* On this ground alone both Honourable T.C. Robertson and the Honourable W.W. Bird advised the sanction of the Agents' proposals.
"So much in the way of Commissariat, spend so little in the country, excite so much envy among the locals who receive inferior pay and are so liable to sink both in health and spirit that it is seldom that either the government or the people can derive any great benefit from their presence in a province like Assam".

The Governor-General, Lord Auckland, having approved of the proposals in a Minute dated 5 July 1839, a resolution was taken in the Political Department on 31 July 1839 for the formation of the proposed corps to be denominated the Sebundy Corps of Upper Assam. The headquarters of the corps was fixed at Jaipur in the midst of the tea districts. Until the corps was complete a detachment of Regulars was stationed at Bishnath.

The Upper Assam Sebundy Corps was organised, not into eight companies of eighty men each as proposed by Jenkins, but into four companies of a hundred men each. Of these one company was formed exclusively of Doaneahs and other bordering tribes. Loosely organised and armed only with the musket and

1. F.P.C. 5 June 1839: No. 87, Minute by T.C. Robertson.
2. F.P.C. 31 July 1839: No. 75; The older Sebundy Corps to be called the Lower Assam Sebundy Corps.
3. Ibid.

* Who, Robertson wrote, were 'Tintured with the peculiarities of the Singpho Tribes have little or no caste and prefer wandering about trafficking and sporting, to any regular life ... They speak the frontier dialects, and are well-aquainted with the politics on both sides of the frontier'.
whatever side arms the men might choose to carry, they were scattered in advance of the cordon of posts to act as scouts and guides. The remaining companies were recruited, armed and equipped in the same manner as the Lower Assam Sebundy Corps. On them devolved the duties of the advanced line of posts. In order to further strengthen Upper Assam and relieve the Local Corps from all outpost duties the Government of India transferred to companies of the Lower Assam Sebundies were to the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar division. Jenkins objected to this on the ground that by the terms of its organisation, as settled in 1835, the corps was maintained exclusively for Lower Assam. His objections, though set aside by the Government, led to a revision of the organisation of the Sebundies. In view of its comparatively less difficult duties the Lower Assam Sebundies were reduced by two companies which were transferred to the new corps. The two corps, thus revised, were redesignated, respectively, the First and Second Assam Sebundy Corps instead of the Lower and Upper Assam Sebundy Corps.

1. F.P.O. 9 October 1839: No. 90; Jenkins to Robertson, D.O.
2. Ibid: Nos. 92-93; see Minute by Robertson, 9 October.
3. Ibid; also G.O. by the President in Council, No. 137, (23 October) 1839.
4. Ibid.
The question of the frontier posts was left entirely to the men on the spot. It was not before August 1840 when the defences were complete. In the meantime a change in the distribution of troops was made by the transfer of the headquarters of the Second Sebundy Corps to Hangagora following the annexation of Muttook. After a thorough examination of the sites and keeping in view the problem of supply and transport, the local authorities selected Saikhowa, Tazee, Kuju, Ningroo and Jaipur for military positions. Sadiya was abandoned for Saikhowa on the south bank because the interposition of the river Brahmaputra between the former post and the frontier defences could prove inconvenient. The moral effect of a delay could prove disastrous. Although the difference between the two posts was only 32 miles in distance, it took a day or a day and a half to receive and act upon intelligence in case of Singpho inroads; and this delay could prevent successful intervention or pursuit. By opening roads to Ningroo, Jaipur and Hangagora a body of troops could

* Brigadier Littler had some misgivings about the advanced line of posts. He wrote: 'I am not aware that he (Jenkins) will derive any benefit from advancing his posts ... the further he pushes his parties, he not only removes them from their resources and support but entangles himself with several tribes and becomes involved in numerous difficulties ....... defective and hostilities are sure to follow' - Letter to Prinsep, 11 May 1839; F.P.C., 5 June 1839, No. 86.
1. F.P.C., 31 July 1839: No. 70; Jenkins to Prinsep 15 June; Vetch to Jenkins, 3 June.
reach the first in two marches, the second in three and the
first one in one march; whereas considerable time would be taken
to get troops, guns and cattle over the Brahmaputra to the
opposite bank before they could move out to the more distant
outposts. While Saikhowa formed the left on the line of defence
Ningroo would form the right. Situated in the midst of the
Singpho districts and well calculated to restrain their excesses,
Ningroo was also important with regard to the eastern Nagas and
the pass to the Hukwang valley. The centre was commanded by
Kuju, between the Buridihing and Noadihing rivers. The post was
important with reference to the Singphos. Beesa, connected by a
path, could be reached in one day. To connect Kuju with Saikhowa
another post was established at Tasee. Apart from these posts
forming the advanced line of defence, there was a large post
at Jaipur as a support. All these posts were connected by
good lateral roads. In recommending this line of defence the
local authorities kept two important objects in view: that the
tea paig and those employed in the industry would be behind
this line and the disaffected Muttooks would be cut off from
carrying on intrigues with the Singphos. Brigadier Littler,
who inspected these defensive arrangements on the orders of the
Government of India reported on January 1840 that they were

1. Ibid.
3. F.P.C., 32 July 1839: No. 70.
fully adequate to meet any eventuality in Upper Assam short of a general war. 

Hitherto the frontier military posts were mere stockaded positions. An attempt was made to construct a masonry fort at Sadiya in compliance with orders of the Government of India of 1825 on fortified positions. For want of labour and materials as well as the post being subject to frequent inundations, the project was abandoned for a timber structure. Soon after, Jenkins and Pemberton in 1832 reported that since the hill tribes were without firearms it was needless to construct masonry forts when timber stockades would suffice. While this held true on the frontier generally, the late Sadiya incident proved that it had been otherwise on the South-East Frontier. Had there been a fortress remarked Veth, 'the affair at Sadiya would never have occurred'. Grass buildings and bamboo stockades not only invited attacks but also instilled a feeling of insecurity which disabled the guards. Besides, on political grounds too, the construction of masonry structure was desirable for such a measure could give an appearance of permanence to the frontier.

1. F.P.C., 22 January 1840: No. 64.
2. F.P.C. 15 October 1832: No. 114 I; Write to Jenkins and Pemberton, 15 April 1832.
3. Ibid. No. 114 ff.
4. F.P.C. 9 March 1840: No. 169; Veth to Jenkins.
5. F.P.C. 3 August 1840: No. 95; Jenkins to Prinsep, 15 February.
rule. It was for these reasons that Garstin, the Superintending Engineer of the Lower Provinces, who proceeded to Upper Assam to inspect the frontier defences, recommended that masonry structures should be erected. Garstin's plan envisaged the construction of a fort at Bangagora and blockhouses at Saikhowa, Tazea, Kuju, Ningroo and Jaipur. At Bangagora, the most central position in Upper Assam, Garstin suggested that a small fort should be erected with loop-holes and mounted cannon. This post should be the principal depot for military stores for Upper Assam. The blockhouse at Saikhowa should be sufficiently strong to enable the guards to hold out until relieved from Bangagora or Sibagar. Saikhowa was the point of departure for the frontier detachments. A smaller structure would suffice for the post at Tazea. A slightly bigger blockhouse was recommended for Kuju, capable of holding three months provision for 100 men which should be kept in reserve in case any detachment was suddenly ordered to advance. The guards at that post were considered as a vedette whose principal duty would be to send intelligence of any movements in the neighbourhood. Since Ningroo was the most important post with reference to the Eastern Magas, the Singphos and the Burmese,

1. F.P.C., 3 August 1840; No. 95; Garstin to Bude, 6 February.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
Garstin recommended a much larger blockhouse. Similarly, a large blockhouse was also recommended for Jaipur, situated equidistant from Sibsagar and Saikhowa and with direct roads to Ningroo and Beesa. The force kept concentrated here should form the support to the advanced line of defence. All the frontier posts should have rockets for night signals, and the larger ones a small gun for day signals.

Major Garstin also submitted a comprehensive scheme for opening up roads connecting the important civil and military stations and the frontier outposts. He recommended that a road should be made from the mouth of the river Dikhow to Sibsagar, the Headquarters of the A.L.I. Sibsagar would be connected to Dibrugarh. From there the road would be extended to Saikhowa via Rangagora. From Saikhowa roads would be made to Ningroo through Tazee and Kuju. Jaipur would also be connected with Sibsagar, Saikhowa and Ningroo. By this elaborate system of roads troops and supplies would be brought within easy reach of the advanced posts. These recommendations were accepted by the Government of India and Lieutenant Splits was appointed Executive Engineer of Upper Assam to carry out the constructions.

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
To strengthen the frontier defences it was decided to locate artillery in the outposts. But this could not be done without an alteration to the existing artillery arrangement of Upper Assam. The artillery consisted of two distinct bodies: a Golunda detachment of the 3rd Company, 7th Battalion Artillery and an artillery detail attached to the A.L.I., making up a total of 80 men. The arrangement had proved defective. There were several objections to having regular Golunda receiving higher pay intermixed with the men of the local Corps on lesser allowances. Nor had the latter worked satisfactorily. To superintend its discipline an artillery officer was attached to the corps; but the officer who was responsible for both guns and men did not have any control over the latter. The whole system was as expensive as it was inefficient. The monthly expense of maintaining the two details, the regular Golunda costing Rs. 114-5-9 and the locals Rs. 792-10-4, was Rs. 1934-2-4. Above all, for the new line of posts which were situated in somewhat unhealthy locations the regular Golunda could not be employed without injury to their health and discipline. The local artillery detail on the other hand was inadequate for the purpose. Taking all

* The distribution at the time was Sibsagar: 20 Golunda and 13 local. Sadiya: 26 Golunda and 15 local.
those into consideration H. Vetch drew up, on 26 December 1839, a plan to do away with the existing system by forming a separate company of artillery of the strength of 90 privates. By this, the artillery detail of A.L.I. would be absorbed into the new company and at the same time enable the withdrawal of the regular Bengal Artillery. The new company would cost no more than Rs. 1334-12-2 per month. Such a company, Vetch wrote, would be more efficient, less expensive and free from the objections of mixing regulars with locals. The men and the guns would be fairly distributed between the various posts. In recommending Vetch's plan Jenkins emphasised that the proposed scheme involved a saving of Rs. 600/- within an increase of 10 men. The Governor-General in Council approved the plan and the Agent was authorised to take immediate measures for the formation of a Local Company of Artillery.

The men of the Company were armed with fusils and gat, the latter being a handy weapon and an excellent instrument for cutting through jungles. The field ordnance consisted of six

1. F.P.O., 9 March 1840, No. 169; Vetch to Jenkins, 26 December.  
2. F.P.O., 9 March 1840, No. 169; Jenkins to Prinsep, 24 January 1840.  
3. Ibid.  
4. F.P.O., 21 June 1841; Nos. 66-69
Brass 6-pounder guns, two 4\(\frac{2}{3}\) inch mortars and several iron guns. In addition 8 carriage elephants were attached to it. The fieldpieces were distributed between; two 6 pounders at Sibsagar with the headquarters of the A.L.I., two at Saiikhowa and the remaining two at its headquarters in Dibrugarh\(^1\). The mortars were kept in reserve at the headquarters. The several frontier blockhouses were mounted with iron corromades. The strength of the Company, Brigadier Littler reported on 7 June 1841, was fully equal to the duties of the frontier\(^2\).

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1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.