CHAPTER SEVEN

BRITISH RELATIONS WITH THE HILL-TRIBES TO 1873

The British conquest of Assam (1824-26) filled the vacuum created by the misgovernment of the Ahoms and the Burmese invaders. The British thus stepped into the shoes of the Ahoms and the Burmese, and, as a consequence, inherited from both a legacy of hostile relationship with the hill-tribes on Assam borders extending from River Tista in the west to Lohit in the east. In the beginning the Company adopted conciliatory attitude towards these tribes i.e., the Bhotias, the Akas, the Abors, the Daflas, and the Mishmis, and followed the policy of nonintervention. But open clashes could not be staved of for long, and this policy had to be replaced by a forward policy. The appointment of Lord Auckland as Governor General (1836-42), an imperialist in attitude, was also to some extent, responsible for such a forward north-east frontier policy. Besides, as on the north-western frontier the Company's policy was influenced by the Russian advance in Afghanistan and Central Asia, on the north-easter frontier the fear of Burmese and French penetration persisted in the minds of the Government for many years after the
conquest of Assam. But primarily the Company's policy in Assam affairs was motivated by trade interests, for which, political stability was essential. The Company's Government had therefore to put in lot of efforts to check the tribal encroachments on the frontiers of Assam and to maintain peace and order in the area. Hence to have a clearer picture of the relations between these tribes and the British in Assam and the impact of such relationship on trade, a brief description of each tribe in its geographical juxtaposition will be pertinent.

The Bhutias

The Bhutias (2) inhabit a fertile tract of land lying along the southern frontier of Bhutan, extending from the Tista river in the west to the

(1) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 24 July 1839, No. 93.

(2) The Bhutanese or the Bhutias as they are called in Assam and Bengal are racially of the Tibeto-Burman stock: L.W. Shakespeare, op.cit., p. 91. For Anglo-Bhutan relationship during the 19th century see the latest publication of Panchsheel Parkashan: Shantiswarup Gupta, British Relations with Bhutan (Jaipur, 1974).
Dhansiri river in Assam in the east. This tract is linked up with the hills on the border by eighteen hill-passes called the Duars by the local people. Out of these eighteen passes, eleven are situated on the Bengal borders and are called the Bengal Duars, and the remaining seven are on the northern frontier of Assam. Out of these two are towards the Darrang district of Assam and called the Darrang Duars and the rest are towards the Kamrup district of Assam and called the Assam Duars, or Kamrup Duars.

These Duars were always a bone of contention between the rulers of Bhutan, Assam and Bengal due to two reasons. Firstly, the Bhotia highlanders held their

---

(3) The Bhotias are sometimes intermixed with the Monpas. But the Monpas are the people who inhabited the Darrang Duars only, now known as Tawang tract.


sway on the whole belt of the border territory through these Duars. Secondly, by means of these Duars the Bhutias, the Monpas and the Lhasan merchants traded with the people of Assam and Bengal. They used to bring the Tibetan and Chinese goods and exchanged them with the products of the plains. (7) Hence these Duars were coveted by all the three parties.

When East India Company's Government assumed the sovereignty of Assam in 1826, the seven 'Duars' of Kamrup and Darrang district of Assam were controlled by the Bhutias. They used to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 4,785/- in the shape of Yak-tails, ponies, musk, gold-dust, blankets, knives and some cash to the rulers of Assam. (8) It was agreed that so long as this sum was paid the Kamrup Duars were to remain permanently with the Bhutias, while the Darring Duars were to be managed jointly by the Ahoms of Assam and the Monpas, the former holding them from July to November and the latter for the remaining

(7) See infra, pp. 175-182.

(8) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 24 July 1839, No. 93.
seven months of the year. (9) Thus this arrangement worked satisfactorily till the advent of the British in Assam.

After the British occupation of Assam these Duars gave much trouble to Company's Government. The tribute due by the Bhotias and the Morpas gradually fell into arrears. (10) Moreover, frequent outrages and dacoities were committed by the Bhotias in British territory during the period from 1828-40. On 7 Aug. 1837 R.B. Pemberton was formally appointed to proceed to Bhutan as an envoy of the Company's Government to settle the issue with the Government of Bhutan. Pemberton was also accompanied by William Griffith, Assistant Surgeon in the Company's service. (12) The party was instructed that apart from settling the previous disputes, they were to negotiate with the

(9) Ibid.

(10) In all the Assam Duars nearly fifty per cent tribute was in arrears amounting to more than Rs 20,000: Ibid.

(11) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 27 June, 1836, No. 71; also see Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 7 Aug. 1837, Nos. 1.

(12) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 31 July 1837, No. 88.
Bhutan Government for better commercial intercourse. (13)
Pemberton went to Bhutan via Assam and also concluded a commercial treaty with the Deb Raja of Bhutan. (14)
But the mission came to nothing due to the evasive attitude of the Bhutan Government, and the Bhotias continued their attacks on the Assam plains. (15) It was, therefore, decided by the Company in 1841 to seize the Darrang Duars and the adjoining territory of Assam. The Court of Directors accordingly gave their sanction (16) and the Duars were annexed to the British territory 'justified by the strong consideration of expediency which recommended it'. (17) The Bhutan Government was assured to get Rs. 10,000 annually as compensation for Assam Duars. (18) Also, the Sat Rajas of the Jompas, whose hills formed part of the province of Tawang, called the Darrang Duars, were to get Rs. 5,000 annually in exchange for

(13) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 7 Aug. 1837, No. 2.
(14) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 25 July 1838, No. 80.
(15) For Pemberton's report of this journey see: Report on Bootan (Calcutta, 1839).
(16) Foreign Department, Political Consultations, 20 Sept. 1841, No. 73-74.
(17) Political letters from the Court, No. 9, 1843.
(18) Gait, op. cit., p. 364.
the formal renunciation of their claim to the Buriguma and Kuriapara Duars in 1844. These sums were promised to be handed over to them at the time of Udalguri fair every year. (19) Thus by the annexation of the Assam and the Darrang Duars and payment of compensation to the local authorities, the Bhutias and the Monpas of this area were for a time pacified.

But the Bhutias of the Bengal Duars could not be pacified and they continued to resort to violent activities at the instigation of some officials of the Bhutan Government. Many British subjects were taken by the Bhutias as 'captives. Besides the British were annoyed with the Bhutan Government for its sympathetic attitude towards the general uprising in India against British rule in 1857. However, in 1863 the British sent Ashley Eden, then Secretary to the Government of Bengal, to Bhutan as their emissary to persuade Bhutan ruler to enter into relationship 'more acceptable from the British point of view'. (20) But Eden's mission was a failure as the 'Bhutan Government had no intention to

(19) Ibid.

co-operate with him'. (21)

It was only after the Anglo-Bhutan war of 1865, that all the Bengal Duars were annexed by the Treaty of Sinchula. (22) By this treaty the Bhutan Government surrendered its rights in these Duars and was promised by the British to get Rs, 25,000 annually as compensation. From 1865 onwards comparative peace prevailed on these Duars which gave impetus to the active commercial intercourse between the Bhatias and the British.

The Akas

The Akas, (23) also known as Hrusso (24) are next in importance to the Bhatias. They inhabited between river Dhansiri in the west and Bharam in the east, and are of two clans viz. the Hazari-Khowa or the 'eaters of a thousand hearths', and the Kapachors or the 'thieves who lurk amid the cotton plants'. (25)

(22) For the terms of the treaty see: Ram Rahul, op. cit., pp. 149-154.
(23) For a copious account of this tribe see: C.R. Macgregor, 'Notes on the Akas and Akaland', Proceedings of Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. XI (1884), pp. 198-212.
The Akas are the most energetic and savage tribe, and are named as the 'pests of Charduar'.

They were extremely troublesome during the Ahom rule in Assam. To prevent their oppressive activities the weak Ahom Government assigned to the Hazari Khowa clan a number of Assamese families from whom the Khowas could levy the stipulated quantity of articles as 'Posa'.

The members of these families were called the Bahatias (serfs). These families were exempted by the Ahom Government from the payment of taxes. Moreover, in order to restrict the visits of the Akas to a fixed locality, the Bahatias were settled in the villages in the vicinity of the Aka Duars.

After the British conquest of Assam and subsequent annexation of the Duars, the Government found it difficult and inconvenient to permit such savage hordes


(27) This 'Posa' consisted of a portion of female dress, one bundle of cotton thread, and one napkin from each such family: S.K. Bhuyan (Ed.) Tungkhungia Barapli (Gauhati, 1933), p. 85; Citation, S.K. Bhuyan, op. cit. (1949), p. 37.

to descend annually to the plains to collect 'posa' from the allotted households. Every effort was therefore made to induce them to commute their claims for a yearly fixed money payment instead of collecting the 'Posa' from individuals. In many cases, no difficulty was experienced in introducing this reform but in some cases, the proposal was looked upon with suspicion. Hence it was not until 1844 that the Hazari-Khowas were finally brought to terms.

The Kapachors though consisted of only eight families, yet for long time were terror in Darrang district. Their leader known as Taghi Raja, murdered the Assamese Governor of Charduar just before the British occupation of Assam in 1826. Subsequently he became the leader of both the clans and continued his depredations in Charduar for many years till his surrender to the British in 1842. (31) Again in 1857


(31) In 1829, the Taghi Raja was captured and imprisoned in the Gauhati jail. He was released in 1832, and immediately he resumed his hostile activities. He was responsible for frequent raids during the period from 1839 to 1841. In 1842, the Akas surrendered and agreed upon a fixed compensation of Rs. 360/- annually and a small allowance of Rs. 20/- for their Raja.
the Akas refused to receive their stipends which had gradually been increased to a total of Rs. 668/-.

Probably the object of this refusal was a further increase in the allowance.

However, knowing well the weakness of the Akas, the British Government immediately stopped their allowances, closed the Duars to trade and kept a careful watch on their reaction. These measures had the desired effect. Several of the chiefs detached themselves from the Tagi Raja's influence and early in 1859 sued for pardon. In 1860 the Raja himself surrendered. In 1872-73 the frontier line was laid down along the base of the Akas and other neighbouring tribes living west of them. To the east, river Bharoli became the boundary between the Akas and the Daflas and to the west, river Dhansiri became the boundary between the Akas and the Bhutias. The Akas did not oppose the demarcation of boundary on the contrary they came in large numbers to trade and

---

(32) C.H. Hesselmeyer (op.cit., p. 107) gives this figure as Rs. 860/-.

(33) Vereier Elwin, op.cit., p. 431.

(34) Ibid., p. 432; and Mackenzie, op.cit., pp. 21, 367.

graze cattle in the plains. They attached great importance to this privilege and were happy. (36)

The Akas traded with Bhutan to the north-west and with the plains of Assam to the south. Rubber was the chief source of wealth of the Akas. They obtained clothing, warm blankets, daos, swords and silver ornaments from Bhutan; and iron, salt, cotton and silk clothese from Assam. (37) The Aka women could neither spin or weave nor did they breed silk-warms known to the Assamese. For their cotton clothes also they totally depended upon the plains. (38) For utensils too the Akas used the brass pots and plates which they obtained from the Tezpur bazars. (39)

The Daflas

(40) The Daflas live in the hills situated between Sir Campbell, the then Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, was of the opinion that 'if granted as a privilege and not allowed as a right, it afforded a valuable means of securing good behaviour of these hillmen': Mackenzie, op.cit., pp. 24-25.

(36) Sir Campbell, the then Deputy Commissioner of Darrang, was of the opinion that 'if granted as a privilege and not allowed as a right, it afforded a valuable means of securing good behaviour of these hillmen': Mackenzie, op.cit., pp. 24-25.


(38) C.H. Hesselmeyer, op.cit., p. 200.

(39) Ibid., p. 198.

Bharali river in the West and the upper courses of the Subansiri in the east. The intervening tract, inhabited by the Daflas, is known as 'Naoduar' (Nine passes) in the Darrang district and Charduar (Four passes) in the Lakhimpur district. The Daflas of Naoduar are known as the Paschima (Western) Daflas and that of Charduar are the Tangi Daflas. (41)

During the Ahom period these Daflas earned a bad name of 'disobedients' (42) and their predatory habits made them dangerous neighbours. That is why an expedition against them was always considered to be hazardous enterprise. (43) The Assam Government kept

(41) Ibid.

(42) Shyabu'ldin Talish declares in his Fathiyyati-i-ibriyya that while 'Assam is a wild country abounding in danger, most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills accept the Raja's sovereignty, and obey his commands. The Dafla tribe alone does not place its feet in the skirt of obedience but occasionally encroaches in his kingdom': J. Sarkar, 'Assam and the Ahom in 1660 A.D.', J.A.O.K., Vol. I (1915), p. 184.

(43) When in 1672, the Ahom ruler Udayadita (1670-72) wanted to send a force to punish the Daflas for their encroachments, his Minister Atan Buragohain said... the Dafla miscreants can be captured only if an elephant can enter into a rat-hole. Their suppression can be affected only by tact and diplomacy': Ms. Assam Buranji No. 5 Citation, S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and His Times (Gauhati, 1957), p. 80.
them in check by granting them 'Posa' from the Dafla-Bahatias, (44) and were also allowed to use their services. Every ten houses of Dafla-Bahatias were expected to make over to the Daflas one double cloth, one single cloth, one napkin, one dao, ten heads of cattle, and four seers of salt annually. (45) This arrangement served well to conciliate the repacious Daflas by putting at their disposal a number of people upon whom they could concentrate their ferocity and greed. (46)

When the British arrived in Assam in 1826 the Daflas gave much trouble to the local officers. Many futile efforts were made to induce them to relinquish the right of collecting 'Posa' directly from the Dafla-Bahatias. Because, the exactions of the Daflas fell so heavily on the Dafla-bahatias that it led to their desertion of almost all the villages on the frontier. (47)

44. Ibid., p. 81;

The Dafla-Bahatias or the serfs of the Daflas were generally the culprits convicted of various offences. And, the land occupied by them gradually became a penal-colony peopled by convicts and their descendants: S.K. Bhuyan, op.cit. (1949), p.37.

(45) Ibid.

(46) The innovation of Dafla-Bahatias assignment was first made by the Ahom monarch Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696).

The Daflas of Naoduar in Darrang district were the first to come to settlement in 1835. In early 1835, the Daflas of Naoduar raided the plains, probably at the instigation of Taghi Raja. As a consequent, they were forbidden to enter the plains to get their dues. Again in the same year they attacked Balipara and captured some British subjects. Hence an expedition under Captain Matthie, an officer of Darrang, was sent into the hills to rescue the captives. Resultantly, eight out of the thirteen Dafla clans submitted to Captain Matthie. They consented to receive the articles of 'Posa' from the 'malguzar' (revenue officer) according to a revised tariff instead of exacting direct from the ryots. They undertook not to aid the enemies of the Government and to help to arrest the offenders. Their 'Posa' was fixed at one coarse cloth, one long handkerchief, two seers of salt, one dao and one goat for every ten houses. Other clans of Naoduar Daflas also made the similar arrangements afterwards. (48)

The Daflas of charduar in north-Lakhimpur took much longer in coming to terms with the British. In 1837

they consented to receive their dues through the 'malguzars', but in 1833-39 they again became actively troublesome. Hence the payment of 'Posa' was entirely stopped for a time. Somewhat unexpectedly this measure had the effect of bringing the clans to order.

It was in 1852 that the 'Posa' was finally commuted for a money payment of Rs, 4,000 annually.(49) The chief of the Daflas agreed not to aid the enemies of the 'British Raj' and to arrange for one of their chiefs to live near the British official's abode to be the medium of communication with them.(50) Also, a line of military outposts was set up along the base of the frontier hills inhabited by the Daflas.

In 1870 again the Daflas raided twice some of the villages of Naoduar in the district of Darrang, inhabited by men of their own tribe.(51) But these raids were due to some local feuds and the quarrel was settled privately.(52) In 1872, the Daflas

(50) Ibid., p. 107.
again raided the villages of lower hills and took some captives. However, the trouble started in a curious way. The hill-Daflas believed that some Daflas, living in the plains had caused sickness among them and hence they demanded compensation from the Daflas of the lower hills and the plains. (53)

Consequently, the Government set up an economic blockade against the offending villages. (54) But this measure proved ineffective and a military expedition had to be sent in 1874-75. The offenders were punished and the captives brought back. Afterwards a large number of Daflas settled down in the plains of Darrang and Lakhimpur districts and took to agriculture. (55)

The Abors

The Abors (56) who inhabited between Dihang and

(53) A severe epidemic of whooping cough occurred amongst the Daflas living in the lower hills and spread to the upper hills. Hence the hill-Daflas demanded compensation from the men on the low-hill and the plains, amongst whom the malady started: Ibid.

(54) Administration Report, 1872-73.


(56) The Abor considered themselves independent people as is apparent from their name, i.e. the Abors which in Assamese means the independent in contrast to the word Bors which means subjects. E. Gait, op.cit., pp. 373-74.
Dibong rivers had four clans (57) viz. Minyongs, Shimongs, Pangis and Padams. (58) The Abors considered the Kiris living to their south, as their slaves and employed them as their intermediaries in the Assam trade. (59) The Ahom Government accepted their claim and relieved the Kiris of their obligations to pay taxes so that those might be paid to the Abors. Hence the Kiris for many years acknowledged the Abors as their masters and were always willing to their position of 'go-betweens' (60) between the rude hill-men like the Abors and the Assamese traders.

The Abors also claimed ownership of all the fish and gold found in the rivers flowing in their territories. They demanded that the Beegha-gold washers employed by

(57) Roughly the Abors are divided into two divisions. Those living between the Dihang and the Dibong rivers and those living between the Dibong and the Subansiri rivers: Klwin, op. cit., p. 281.

(58) L.W. Shakespear, op. cit., p. 111.

(59) The Kiris living between the Daflas and the Abors were a submissive and docile tribe.

(60) Because of their acting as a channel of communication between the Abors and the Assamese they were known in Assam as the Kiris, which in Assamese means a 'go-between': Gait, op. cit., p. 373.
the Ahom Government, should deliver to them regularly presents in the way of conciliatory offerings. (61)

The Ahom Government accepted their claim and the Abors seemed to have remained friendly with the Assam authorities till 1824 (62). The Abor country was visited by Captain Bedford and Captain Wilcox during 1824-28. It was during the Burmese invasion and also after the British occupation of Assam that most of the Miris found it to their advantage to move away from the vicinity of their Abor Lords and to come under the protection of the British Government. This movement of the Miri gold-washers greatly affected the Abor trade and the gold-offerings of the Miris to the Abors decreased. In 1830 the Abors demanded that these gold-washers should be sent back by the British.

Since the British wanted to use the Abors as a counterpoise to the fierce tribes like the Khampatis, the Singphos and the Mishmis, they immediately acceded to


(62) For their accounts see: Captain Wilcox, ‘Memoirs of a survey in Assam and the Neighbouring countries executed in 1825-6-7-8’, Asiatic Research, Vol. XVII (1832), pp. 314-469;

Abor's demands. Hence for some time the Abors were quite friendly towards Captain Vetch, the British Political Agent at Sadiya. In 1840 when the Mishmis and the Khampatis attacked British post at Sadiya, the Abors took side with the British. (63)

The Miri gold-washers under the British rule were asserting more and more independence and moving lower down the valley to the detriment of Abor trade and their gold-offerings. In 1848 the Abors finding gold-offerings decreasing day by day, raided into the plains and carried off a number of these gold-washers. Captain Vetch had to lead a large force to rescue these gold-washers. (64) He pushed back the Abors and burnt a village as a punishment for a night attack on his camp. (65) But the Abors continued their raids into the Assam plains. In the following year, with a view to maintain peace, the British granted a fixed annual 'Posa' or allowance to the Abors. (66)

(63) Elwin, op. cit., p. 208.
(64) Foreign Department, Political Proceedings, 24 March 1848, Nos. 199-201.
(65) Ibid.
(66) A. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 31.
For the next ten years (1848-58) the Abor's relations with the political officer at Sadiya were cordial. They treated his wishes with respect, and maintained peace at the border. In 1858, a serious outrage occurred. The Abors attacked and massacred the inhabitants of Sengajan village, only six miles from Dibrugarh. Consequently, a punitive expedition was sent against the Abors. But this small party failed to break their resistance and had to retreat.

Thus emboldened by the British retreat the Abors again attacked the plains in the following year. In 1859 an other Abor expedition was organised on a bigger scale. This expedition succeeded in defeating a section of the Abors. But the other section was still on the war-path and continued to remain hostile.

Towards the end of the year 1861 the Abors again attacked a Beeha village, 15 miles from Dibrugarh.

(67) Ibid.

(68) In 1855 Dalton, Principal Assistant to the Governor-Genera1's Agent at Assam, visited Membo village of the Abors with success. In 1855-56 Mr Higgs, a Clergy of Dibrugarh, obtained a considerable influence over the Abors: Judicial Proceedings, Feb.1856, No.123.

These raids necessitated the construction of a road along the frontier and establishment of a line of outposts. (70) As it was, the offenders alarmed by these preparations made overtures for a general reconciliation. Hence in 1862, after a conference between the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur district and the representatives of the Meyongs at Laleemukh, an agreement was concluded. (71)

According to this agreement the money stipends of the Abor Chiefs were replaced by payment in articles which could be distributed among their people as a whole. Thus the Abors were given an allowance of iron hoes, salt, rum, opium and tobacco so long as they maintained good behaviour. In 1877, however, these dues in kind were commuted to money payments aggregating Rs. 3,312 a year. (72)

The Mishmis

The Mishmis who reside in the hills on the north-east extremity of the valley of Assam, consist of four clans viz. the Chulikattas or crop-haired, the Bebejiyas,

(72) Ibid.
the Digarus and the Kezos. All these four clans inhabit a very strategic position on the north-east frontier of Assam with Tibet in the north, China in the east and Burma in the south-east.

When the British assumed the protection of Assam, the Mishmis were subordinate to the Khampatis of Sadiya and also to the Singphos. They paid tribute to Sadiya Khowa Gohains at Sadiya. (73) But the authority of the Khampatis over the Mishmis was not altogether unquestioned and there was constant strife between them. Moreover, there was incessant inter-tribal fighting between the four clans of the Mishmis. (74)

The first mention of these Mishmis in Bengal records dates from 1825 when Lieutenant Burlton reported that:

Mishmeh hills were occupied by the tribes, (75) who were averse to receive the strangers.

(73) When Upper Assam was handed over to a native Prince in 1832, this Sadiya tract inhabited by Khampatis was kept apart under the management of Sadiya Khowa Gohain.

(74) A. Hamilton, op.cit., p. 192.

(75) Quoted in Elwin, op.cit., p. 297; and also in L.W. Shakespear, op.cit., p. 142.
Two years later Lieutenant Wilcox succeeded in entering the Mezo country. The party succeeded in penetrating the country to a point where the Brahmaputra after flowing nearly due south from Tibet suddenly changes its course and flows in westerly direction. (76)

But due to the hostile attitude of the Principal Mezo chief Jingsha, the party could only escape from a treacherous attack by a hasty retreat overnight. (77)

In the next five years so much inter-tribal fighting occurred among the Mishmis that their land remained unvisited by the Europeans. (78)

In October 1836 Dr. Griffith went a little further and penetrated the village of Ghalum on the Lohit river. (79)

But he was prevented by the Digaru Mishmis to proceed beyond that point, towards the Mezo-Mishmis. (80) Dr. Griffith


(77) Ibid., p. 320.


(80) The reason was that the Mezos, being defeated by the Digarus, allied themselves with the Tibetans. Just before Dr. Griffith's visit, the Mezos aided by a force of seventy Lamas had invaded the Digarus and had done much damage. As the Mizos were much obliged to the Tibetans, they regarded themselves as the watch-dogs of Tibet and by preventing the foreign travellers to enter the Mezo country and thence to Tibet, the Mezos were very enthusiastic to win the favour of their new allies. Thus the Digarus and the Singhphos did not want to provoke the Mezo wrath again by letting foreigners enter their country: Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50; Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 194.
found that these Mishmis were keen traders and greatly appreciated the access to the markets in the plains. They were most anxious to come to Sadiya to trade, but their inter-tribal feuds were a great hindrance to the free flow of trade. Khowa Gohain of Sadiya was therefore, suspended and the management of Sadiya was handed over to Colonel Adam White, Political Agent at Sadiya.

Consequently in Jan. 1839 the Khowa Gohain attacked the British Garrison at Sadiya and killed Colonel Adam White and eighty others. A punitive expedition was at once sent which frightened the Mishmis and the Khampatis under Khowa Gohain and calmed them down for a time. In 1841 W. Robinson who penetrated the area informed that the position of trade was eased after the expedition. And that:

The Mishmi tribes, occupying the hills to the north of Sudiya, are in a habit of frequenting the markets at that place. They bring with them a few Lama swords,

(81) W. Griffith, op. cit., pp. 239-42.

(82) The Khowa Gohain of Sadiya started intriguing against the Government because the Government had deprived him of his jurisdiction over the local Assamese and had set free his slaves. In addition, a dispute had arisen between the Khowa Gohain and the Bor Senapati.

(83) Foreign Department, Political Proceedings, 26 Dec. 1839, No. 67.
spears, Mishmi tita and a considerable quantity of vegetable poison, used in poisoning arrows.... They also bring little musk, a few musk-deer skins and some ivory which they obtain from the Lama country.... (84)

However, it was not till Dec. 1843 that the last of the Khampati rebels was subdued. They were settled above Sadiya to form a screen between the Assamese and the Mishmis. (85)

In the winter of 1844-45 Lieutenant Rowlatt penetrated the country of Digarus up to the Du river. He went up the river to its northerly direction as far as the village of Tuppang, about sixty miles within Tibetan frontier. (86) But he had to retrace his steps as he was informed by the Digarus that beyond that the country was destitute of all supplies. (87) Upto 1850 the Mishmis and the Khampatis were trading at Sadiya without giving any trouble to the British Government.

(84) W. Robison, A Descriptive Account of Assam to which is added a Short Account of Neighbouring Tribes (London, 1841), 243-46.

(85) Elwin, op. cit., p. 360.


The Mezo Mishmis again became troublesome after 1850. It was in 1854 that French missionary, M. Krick accompanied by Bourri attempted to visit Rima, a small Tibetan settlement across the border, for the second time. After passing safely through the country of the Digarus the two missionaries were pursued by a Mezo chief, Kaisha. At Same, a village only six miles from Rima, Kaisha murdered both the missionaries and carried off their property and servants in utter disregard of the Tibetan authorities of Rima.

Hence Dalhousie (1848-56) decided to punish the Mezos severely for this inhuman act. The neighbouring Mishmis and Khampatis who appreciated the trade fairs and dreaded their closure immediately undertook to assist the passage of any avenging force. In Feb, 1855, a small party of twenty light infantry with forty Khampati and Mishmi volunteers and a few hill-porters marched from Sadiya under the command of Lieutenant Eden. After eight days of hard marching Kaisha was captured from his village, brought back to Dibrugarh and hanged.

(88) Previously in 1851, M. Krick had visited Rima and returned in safety to Sadiya: Hamilton, op. cit., p. 195.
(89) Elwin, op. cit., p. 296; Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 48.
(90) Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 49.
Obviously such an exploit did not fail to astonish and awe the tribes. But afterwards the Chulikatta Mishmis started giving troubles and raided the Digaru Mishmis. The Digaru Mishmis were themselves keen traders and they appreciated so highly the trade fairs that they never gave any trouble to Lakhimpur authorities. But they suffered most from the ferocity of their neighbours i.e. the Mezos upto 1855 and then from the Chulikattas. These Chulikattas inhabited the tract of twenty or thirty miles which lie between Sadiya and the hills. Through the dense forest of this tract ran the paths used by the hillmen frequenting the markets of the plains. The Chulikattas were wont to take advantage of these routes to surprise frontier villages of Digarus and travellers and carry off their captives.\(^{(91)}\)

In 1855, the Chulikattas took away three servants of Lieutenant Eden. In 1856 and 1857 they again carried out some successful raids on the Khampati villages near Sadiya.\(^{(92)}\) The frequency of these raids threatened

\(^{(91)}\) Ibid., p. 50.

\(^{(92)}\) Actually these Chulikattas and the Mezos wanted to avenge themselves on the Khampatis for their share in the Kaisha expedition: Hamilton, ibid., p. 196.
the prosperity of the settlements round Sadiya. The British authorities in India therefore seriously considered whether an extension of Khampati colonies around Sadiya would not form a screen around that important frontier post.\(^{63}\)

In 1861, the expedient was tried by creating militia around Sadiya by supplying arms to the local Khampatis and by giving a monthly payment of Rs. 1/- to all members of this tribe who would settle along this section of the frontier. Thus this extension of Khampati colonies along the border of Sadiya proved a bulwark against the Chulikatta Mishmis and discouraged further raids.\(^{64}\)

In 1872 according to T.T. Cooper:

> the Chulikatta Mishmis visited Sadiya in large numbers bringing with them India rubber, wax and hides for sale. They behaved well during their stay at Sadiya.\(^{65}\)

A more effective step was taken by the Government

---

(63) Foreign Department, Political Proceedings, Feb. 1866, Nos. 11-13.
(64) Ibid., Nos. 13-15.
to restrict the free intercourse between the people of the hills and those of the plains by an administrative measure i.e. the Eastern Frontier of Bengal Regulation line I of 1873. This administrative, now confused as the International Boundary Line, was named as Inner Line. (96)

This line marked the boundary between the northern tribal belt beyond the jurisdiction of the Company's Government and the plains under the effective control of the Government. It was to regulate the intercourse between the people of the hills and those of the plains for the purpose of trade and for the collection of forest produce, and anybody willing to visit either side was supposed to have a license from the Company's Government.


For more copious account of this Inner Line see latest study by Parshotam Mehta, *The McMahon Line and After* (Madras, 1974), pp. 5-6, 82-90.