Chapter - 4

Activities of E R Lyons (1839-49)

The fourth chapter deals with the achievements of E R Lyons (1839-49) in the socio-economic and political fields. Lieutenant E R Lyons was earlier the commandant of Sylhet Light Infantry, Lakhipur. He received temporary charge of Superintendency of Cachar from J G Burns on 15 June, 1839 which position he held till December, 1839. He acted as full fledged Superintendent upto 1849. During his leave period, charge was handed over to W M Mc. Cullock (February-August, 1842), E S Pearson (September-October, 1845) and G Verner (July, 1847- 3 January, 1849) who acted as Officiating Superintendents of plain Cachar.
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

E R Lyons, Superintendent of Cachar, provided social justice to all sections of people irrespective of ranks. Accordingly influx which was minimal under the earlier Superintendents as mentioned in Chapters 1-3, had taken place in enormous scale that led to the increase of population in Cachar. The Cachar people computed at 80,000 lived in peaceful situation for its general prosperity. During the Superintendency of Lyons, mendicancy was absent but slavery was common in Cachar. He provided relief measures for the famine victimised people. A large number of both European and local people died of cholera. 1226 died in 1839 and it increased to upwards 3200 in 1840. So, Lyons advocated for the appointment of Dr S M Shircore as second Assistant Surgeon in 1841 to perform medical duties of civil station of Cachar along with the charge of Troops quartered at Silchar. During Dusserah vacation, Darogah was granted leave providing temporary appointment to Mohammad Masoom in place of Darogah showed that Hinduism was patronised under the Superintendency of Lyons. The establishment of Narsing Akhra, an old temple, by Bhagawan Das Ramayati at Tulapatty (Silchar) perhaps in about 1846 also showed the inclination of Lyons to Hinduism. Lyons made an experiment in constructing a road between the plains of Cachar and Manipur in 1845. But the terminus of that road at Banskandy in Cachar
had never been connected with the station and hence, almost the entire benefit of it was lost. Lyons also patronised both English and Bengali language. It can be confirmed from the burning of official records (10 September 1843) compiled in English and Bengali. He was being busy in civil administration, nothing is known about education, construction etc. during his Superintendency. But his economic and political activities are not unknown.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

E R Lyons, the Superintendent of Cachar, took every attempt to develop the economic situation of Cachar. Under him, Rai Bahadur Golak Chandra made a regular and fresh settlement of cultivable and jungle lands in 1843-44 for 15 years to be expired its terms in 1857-58. This settlement was based on Lieutenant Thuiller’s survey who was deputed to survey the district in July, 1841 and completed the survey of 241 villages in 1842. Lieutenant Thuiller divided the lands of Cachar into two categories - cultivable and jungle lands. The lands of Goomrah, Kalain, Bikrampur parganahs were of first quality and of second qualities were Katigorah, Haritikar, Barkhola parganahs. All lands were assessed. The cleared cultivable, charra (seed), Baree (homesteads) lands were assessed at Rs. 3 per kulbahi, except in some few instances where the rates were Rs. 2 per kulbahi. While the jungle
grants with immigrants were assessed at first five years rent free, second five years to be at \( \frac{1}{2} \) rent or Rs. 1-8 per \textit{kulbah} and the third and last five years at full rent or Rs. 3 per \textit{kulbah}. In undertaking this settlement, old settlement holders were called to resettle if they wished and if declined, land was settled with any one else. \textit{Lakheraj} claims were to be decided by the Superintendent with an appeal to the commissioner and \textit{Lakheraj} granted before the district came under British rule was strictly respected. It resulted the increase of revenue and inclusion of more lands than could be cultivated. There were 6742 estates with an area of 20,325 \textit{kulbahs} settled, of which 14088 \textit{kulbahs} were under cultivation and 6,237 \textit{kulbahs} were \textit{jungle} lands. The \textit{Jummah} for the first five years was Rs. 43,146, next 5 years Rs. 50,831 and the last 5 years Rs. 58,518. Lyons granted about 7000 \textit{pattahs} to the \textit{ryots} both natives and immigrants to earn more revenue. People also satisfied though they sometimes begged for rebate of revenue on \textit{Baree} lands as rent free for first 5 years. It led to the increase of Government revenue though difficulties were faced by the \textit{Mirasdars}.

It was also stated that the cleared and \textit{jungle} lands settled up to the end of 1848-49 was 25,841 \textit{kulbahs}, of which 21,141 \textit{kulbahs} were settled in 1843-44 and 4,700 settled upto the end of 1848-49\(^{12}\) (See \textit{Appendix - F}).
The ryots had to expend Rs. 4 to Rs. 10 to clear one kulbah of jungle land for cultivation according to the nature of jungle. E R Lyons was the first Superintendent who introduced the custom of assessment of Lakheraj lands that was made by the Cachari Rajahs earlier.

In addition to this new settlement, Lyons also granted large number of pattahs to the ryots on payment of Rs. 6 per kulbah which was followed by Govindachandra earlier. It resulted the clearance of large tracts of jungle lands and revenue collection also became two fold.

E R Lyons instituted the office of Tahsildar in May, 1843 in place of Mukhtars for the collection of revenue more conveniently. Because, the system of revenue collection by 45 Native Agents (Mukhtars) had some inherent defects. So, he advocated another new plan known as Tahsildari system. Because (a) Mukhtari system was more expensive and cumbersome whereas the Tahsildari system initiated by Lyons was less expensive and fixed, (b) In case of regular collection and payment, Mukhtars entirely failed that led to heavy arrears to be collected. But Tahsildars were being Government servants, Superintendents had better control over them. So, Tahsildars naturally exert themselves to make full collections in the hope of being confirmed in the situation and no cause would be existed for fraud to enable them to pay for an establishment. (c) Account of collections for 45 agents made by
cheapest writer were to be kept separately. It overburdened the Superintendent as their accounts were not clear. But 4 persons were sufficient in Tahsildari establishment and Tahsildars accounts were very clear and uniform.16

So, E R Lyons instituted Tahsildari System in 1843. Tahsildari establishment and their salaries were increased. There were 3 Tahsils - Silchar, Gillakandi and Katigorah. The salary of Tahsildars and Peadahs were increased from Rs. 7 to Rs. 10 and from Rs. 2-8 to Rs. 3 respectively.17

As a result of this new plan, Tahsildars collected Rs. 26,367 out of Rs. 26,984, leaving a balance of Rs. 617 without selling or attaching property upto 17 June, 1844. The cost was Rs. 132 per month and the staff counted of 4 Tahsildars and 12 Peadahs. In 1848, the establishment was increased. It also resulted a savings of Rs. 1200 per annum while the only increase was two Touzi Muharirs at Rs. 8 a month.18

In order to reduce the fiscal disputes and to debar Rani Indumati as the owner of land, Lyons advocated for cash payment of Rs. 1000 instead of 292 kulbahs of Katnee (Buksha) lands assigned to her by Govindachandra at the rate of Rs. 4-12 per Kulbah.19

The Ghasawat system was a means to confiscate defaulter's estate for non-payment of arrears of revenue in Cachar. This system was continued in a modified form till 18 February, 1840 which was initiated
during the princely regime. It was followed in case of default of revenue payment for two years and Ghasawatdars were removed. But Lyons prevented the ousting of Ghasawatdars during the time period of 2 years.  

In addition to land, Lyons earned revenue from other seven sources like - Ganjah, Spirit, Opium, Transitghat at Sealtekh, Saltwells, Jalkar, house tax of hill tribes. So, Lyons managed the Abkari mahals in the hope of raising the economy of Cachar.  

The Sealtekhghat was leased to the highest bidder. E R Lyons earned revenue from it in the subsequent 5 years period were Rs. 4010 in 1841-42 and Rs. 5855 in 1846-47. Lyons also sold Sealtekhghat at public auction at Rs. 540 before these two subsequent periods.  

Lyons also earned a specific revenue from the Saltwells of plain Cachar. He leased these wells for 3 years in place of 2 years at an annual rent of Rs. 900 and it was confirmed by the Board of Revenue for 3 years from 1841-42 to 1843-44 respectively.  

Lyons conducted trade relation with Sylhet, Manipur, Assam which helped him economically. The principal merchants of Silchar conducted trade of timber, rice, tiger skin, animal etc. with Sylhet and Manipur. Lyons conducted both import and export trade. Cachar exported goods worth of Rs. 36,800 and imported of Rs. 19,850 in 1839-40. In 1845, the value of paddy purchased by Sylhet traders can not be
computed under 1 lakh and 10 thousand. Cachar authority also imported Buffaloes worth of Rs. 35/40 from Manipur and Assam. Timber was the chief export of Cachar. River Barak afforded every facility for water carriage in boats.25

The first attempt of Lyons to stop poppy cultivation in Cachar failed as the people of Cachar could not exist without it.26 During the Superintendency of Lyons, people of Cachar maintained their daily business in Lakhipur Bazar along with the existing Fatak Bazar, Janiganj Bazar, Udharbond Bazar of Cachar.27

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

E R Lyons, Superintendent of Cachar, acted as Civil Judge, Magistrate in Cachar.28 He managed the political situation of Cachar recruiting subordinate staff in various administrative segments. He reorganised various Courts and Cutchery, Jail, Thanahs, Police establishments as an absolute authority in the Magisterial jurisdiction of Cachar. Lyons as Magistrate and Civil Judge in judicial matters kept intact the existing Native and Superintendent's Courts. There were also Civil, Faujdari, Dewani, Panchayat, Munsiff Courts having subordinate officers to help him in judicial matters.29 But for the smallness of court establishments in Cachar, Lyons enlarged the Native Court through inclusion of additional one Muharir. The salary of judicial officers was raised from
Rs. 40/- and Rs. 20/- to Rs. 50/- and Rs. 30/- respectively. Lyons allowed a monthly allowance of Rs. 25 to cover all expenses of office establishment and stationary as per demands raised by officers of Rs. 30 for this purpose.

Vakils were being responsible for unfounded cases in Magistrate’s court, their duties in criminal appeals were confined to debar them from corruption. This check on vakil’s powers made by Lyons saved the people from the payment of vakils fee. Cachar was not a permanently settled district. So, as an experiment, Lyons allowed each member of the Native Court to deal the arrears of business separately. But for the imperfect knowledge of Native Judges, Lyons favoured to deal cases by 3 Judges sitting together if they had separate jurisdictions for better administration of justice. This arrangement greatly satisfied the inhabitants of Cachar.

Lyons proposed for the appointment of one Munsiff in Panchayat Court in each Thana and to appoint a few Muharirs. He also advocated for the introduction of stamp paper in the courts of Cachar to meet additional expenses of new appointments and to reduce frivolous petitions instituted by the clients instigated by vakils. It reduced the number of petitions to one fourth for speedy justice. Accordingly, E R Lyons could utilise more time and energy in other important business of the district.
Lyons advocated for second *Panchayat* Court for the disposal of arrears in the Native Judges Court and to prevent accumulation in future. So, to induce competent persons as Native Judges in Cachar, the rates of salary establishment was increased to Rs. 150 and Rs. 110 respectively.\(^{36}\)

The first appointment of *Munsiff* in *Panchayat* Court (1 April, 1841) was made to discharge the *Dewani* cases more effectively during the Superintendency of E R Lyons. They performed their duties with great regularity by disposing all the 250 pending cases in the *Panchayat* Court. Lyons being satisfied with the services rendered by first *Munsiff*, the *Panchayat* Court was replaced by second *Munsiff* Court and in 1848, Kassenath Dutta was appointed as second *Munsiff*.\(^{37}\)

E R Lyons, favoured for the abolition of *Panchayat* Court. Accordingly Barjoo Ram Barman and Krishnaram Deb, two members of *Panchayat* Court being too old to perform their duties were thrown out of employment by the establishment of second *Munsiff* Court. They were terminated not for their fault. W M Mc. Cullock, officiating Superintendent of Cachar, favoured for a pension of 1/3 of their salary. Because, it would save Rs. 50 per month and the work of second *Munsiff* Court be more satisfactorily be conducted.\(^{38}\) But Lyons was not in favour of sanctioning the pension to the judge of *Panchayat* Court. Because, they were appointed only for 10 years. They had been
receiving salary of Rs. 44 and Rs. 28 along with rent free holdings of Rs. 30 and Rs. 9 respectively per annum at the present rate of assessment.\textsuperscript{39}

The alarming increase of cases pertaining timber trade instituted in the \textit{Panchayat} Court in 1842 were disposed of in a summery manner than in the \textit{Munsiff} Court. But the cases tried by \textit{Munsiff} Court had been almost exclusively land disputes and disposed of in strict accordance with the Regulations and required more time and attention than the cases in \textit{Panchayat} Court.\textsuperscript{40}

Lyons also dealt the perjury and forgery cases.\textsuperscript{41} He had powers in appointments and on resignation of Pancharan Ghose in 1840 for his advanced age and impaired vision, appointed Hari Narayan Bose as \textit{Munshi} in the Criminal Department.\textsuperscript{42}

He also reorganised the police department of Cachar to run the administration effectively. There were 3 \textit{Thanahs} - Silchar (Sadar), Hailakandi and Katigorah with an establishment of one \textit{Darogah}, one \textit{Jamadar}, 7 Barkandazes at the Sadar station, the same at the others with the exception of there having but 6 Barkandazes. These establishments performed the police business of this district. The pay of \textit{Darogah} was Rs. 15, \textit{Jamadar} Rs. 5, and a Barkandaz Rs. 2-8-0 per month that was too small. So, he proposed the increase of salary of \textit{Thanah} establishment to Rs. 4 each.\textsuperscript{43} This enhancement was basically for \textit{Thanah Barkandazes}
from Rs. 2-8-0 to Rs. 4 only. Thus, Superintendent Lyons recruited disciplined persons in police department on payment of enhanced salary. W M Mc Cullock, Officiating Superintendent of Cachar, also favoured for the increase of salary of Barkandazes. There were also village and river police consisting of one Mandal to every 60 houses for the stoppage of robberies in Cachar. The Military Detachment, SL1 was also stationed at Silchar during the Superintendency of Lyons. It was also found that there were 6 Native Officers and 18 foot constables in Cachar police in 1840. The Darogahs were under the direct control of E R Lyons. Of course, Superintendent of Police at Sylhet exercised his jurisdiction over the police affairs of Cachar.

Lyons had the power to dismiss Darogahs in case of inefficiency in duty. So, for better justice, Sadar Thana Darogah was dismissed by Lyons and it provided considerable benefit to the people of Cachar. Madan Ram Deb, the Darogah of Katigorah Thana, was removed for his general inefficiency and B C Dhar was appointed by Lyons as the Darogah of Katigorah Thana.

The Cachar jail was made up of cutcha materials, the walls of which was of 8 feet high. Its site was ill chosen as it was surrounded by a village, one market and a town, Silchar. Lyons managed the jail convicts liberally and provided weekly money allowances on every
Sunday to buy their needful. *Hazat* prisoners received at the rate of 6 *pie* per diem and working convicts 7½ *pie*.54

Lyons stopped the practice of establishing houses of prisoners family by the side of jail where prisoners used to take meal since J G Burns. In absence of Lyons, they again constructed houses and those were pulled down by Officiating Superintendent W M Mc Cullock.55

Lyons was very judicious to his subordinate staff56 and no execution had taken place except imprisonment and fine. He provided additional imprisonment along with extra iron, imprisonment up to maximum 14 years.57 The fine was to be paid within 10 days and in default of payment of the fine within prescribed period, prisoners to be subjected to labour without fetters.58 E R Lyons imprisoned one person known as Barral Naga for 7 years with labour in irons for his attempt to murder Mukee Mia in November, 1839.59

W M Mc Cullock (February-August, 1842) and E S Pearson (September – October, 1845), the Officiating Superintendents of Cachar exercised more or less the same powers like E R Lyons. Cullock tried to develop the civil administration of Cachar. So, the letters sent to the Session Judge, Sylhet regarding the corruption of civil administration under the influence of native judge, Gora Chakravarty and second *Munsiff* as obnoxious writer was refuted by W M Mc Cullock.60 He temporarily appointed Gour Kishore Bose to act as *Munshee* in the
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Dewani Adalat in Cachar. Cullock favoured for his permanent appointment to this situation for good services rendered by him. W M Mc. Cullock also appointed Muhammed Masoom, Nazir of Faujdari Court of Cachar to the charge of Thanah in absence of Darogah on leave during Dusserah vacation.

Judicial matters affecting Hindus were referred to a Raj Pandit residing in Cachar and Muslims to a Qazi named Mohammad Rasul to provide Fatwa was appointed by W M Mc. Cullock in Cachar.

Cullock was also in favour of granting pensions to the judge of Panchayat Court which was refuted by Superintendent, E R Lyons.

E S Pearson (September - October, 1845), Officiating Superintendent of Cachar, also communicated with the Session Judge of Sylhet to manage criminal business of this district.

Thus, E R Lyons played a vital role in the socio-economic and political fields with the assistance of subordinate staff in various segments of Cachar administration. He rather stabilised the existing system coming from the time of Thomas Fisher. His successor, G Verner was to add something more in the process of stabilisation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. CR No. 246 of 1838.

2. Ibid., Nos 240 of 1839, 179 of 1849.
1839, BGP, File No. 393, Letter No. 170 of 1839.

3. CR, Nos. 349 of 1842, 101 of 1845, 179 of 1849.

4. Ibid., Nos. 341 of 1842, 111 of 1844, 35 of 1846.

"The Ryots are well clothed and have an abundance of food. Emigrants generally become Ryots at first. Mendacity is most uncommon; there is scarcely a Fuqueer in the district for I give them but little encouragement and thee is no class in a state of destitution, the extra-ordinarily small amount of burglary and larceny affords the strongest evidence of this fact. Slavery is common, but slaves can obtain their freedom in accordance with Regulations in force but petitions for emancipations are rarely presented owing to slaves being unusually well treated here." (CR, No. 106 of 1844.)

5. Ibid., Nos. 13, 17, 30 of 1840.


"Lyon, in order to eradicate malaria from the jheel and swamps, started cutting drainage canals for the benefit of the people of Cachar." (W J Allen, op. cit., p. 30.)

7. CR, No. 573 of 1842.


10. CR, No. 27 of 1843.

11. Ibid., Nos. 23, 32 of 1843.

1850-51, DCF (Cachar Papers), File No. 17, Letter No. 54 of 1850.
ASP, File No. 636 CO of 1872, p. 6.

"The last settlement, which was made for fifteen years, from the beginning of the year 1843-44, expired on the 30th of April 1858. Under that settlement all cleared and cultivated lands were assessed at the uniform rate of 3 Rupees per kulbah. In a few exceptional places, where the lands are manifestly of inferior quality, or where the crops are much exposed to damage or deterioration from wild animals, scarcity of water and other causes, a rate of 2 Rupees per kulbah was imposed on all cleared lands. At the first settlement jungle lands were leased for fifteen years on the terms - 1st period of five years, rent free, 2nd period of five years, 1 Rs 8 Annas per Kulbah, 3rd period of five years, 3 Rupees per kulbah. After the rent free period had elapsed, and the second period had commenced, many of these petty grantees found themselves unable to pay their revenue and the proprietors of 382 of these jungle tenures relinquished their lands; those who wished to retain the cleared and cultivated portions of their grants, were permitted to do so on payment of the full uniform rate of assessment, viz., 3 Rupees per kulbah."

(W J Allen, op. cit., p. 13).

12. 1850-51, DCF, (Cachar Papers), File No. 17, Letter no. 54 of 1850.
13. Ibid.
15. CR, No. 106 of 1844.
16. Ibid., Nos. 17, 23 of 1840, 35 of 1846.
   ASP, File No. 636 CO of 1872, p. 16.
17. Ibid., No. 15 of 1843.
18. Ibid., No. 35 of 1846.
   ASP, File No. 636 CO of 1872, p. 16.
19. Ibid., Nos. 44 of 1841, 13 of 1843.


*ASP, File No. 636 CO of 1872, p. 23.*

24. *CR, Nos. 5 of 1835, 4 of 1843, 106 of 1844.*


E R Lyons wrote to the Under Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, "I have the honour to submit the information therein called for as follows. No contractor will agree to supply them..., but the average cost during the present year for the articles enumerated in your letter has been:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Rs.</th>
<th>As.</th>
<th>P.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mustard oil</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masalaha</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuomeris</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chillies</td>
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<td>Preferred tobacco</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(CR, No. 80 of 1846).*


27. *Ibid., No. 85 of 1840.*

*ASP, File No. 636 CO of 1872, p. 2.*

28. *Ibid., No. 35 of 1846.*

29. *Ibid., Nos. 3 of 1839, 336, 419, 472, 512 of 1842, 35 of 1846.*

30. *Ibid., Nos. 4, 51 of 1839.*

31. *Ibid., No. 4 of 1839.*
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32. Ibid., No. 31 of 1845.

33. Ibid., No. 30 of 1840.

34. Ibid., No. 7 of 1840.

35. Ibid., Nos. 3, 4 of 1839, 108 of 1840.

36. Ibid., No. 69 of 1840.

37. Ibid., No. 336 of 1842.

38. Ibid., Nos. 472, 512 of 1842.

39. Ibid., No. 512 of 1842.

40. Ibid., No. 13 of 1843.

41. Ibid., No. 104 of 1840.

42. Ibid., No. 22 of 1840.

43. The amount of property reported stolen during the 1st six months of 1840 and the same period of 1841 was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thanah</th>
<th>From 1st January to 30th June</th>
<th>Amount of property recovered stolen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadar Thanah</td>
<td>Rs. 914-4-3</td>
<td>23-1-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>Rs. 1250-10-0</td>
<td>178-10-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>Rs. 2164-14-3</td>
<td>201-12-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katigorah Thanah</td>
<td>Rs. 549-9-2</td>
<td>0-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>Rs. 114-12-6</td>
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<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>Rs. 664-5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hailakandi Thanah</td>
<td>Rs. 138-13-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>do</td>
<td>Rs. 64-13-6</td>
<td>11-6-0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(CR No. 341 of 1842).

44. Ibid., No. 31 of 1845.

45. Ibid., No. 470 of 1842.

46. Ibid., No. 341 of 1842.

47. Ibid., Nos. 470 of 1842, 32 of 1844.


49. Jayanta Bhusan Bhattacharjee, Cachar Under British Rule in North East India, New Delhi, 1977, p. 94.

50. CR, Nos. 112 of 1840, 181 of 1841.

51. Ibid., No. 335 of 1842.

52. E R Lyons stated, "I have the honour to forward herewith a rough plan of the jail at this station, the whole of the building of which are made of cutcha materials, merely grass and bamboos of which latter material also the stockade is made, there being no brick wall as an enclosure. The height of it is 8 feet. (Ibid., No. 135 of 1845).

53. Ibid., No. 254 of 1841.

54. Ibid., No. 79 of 1840.

55. Ibid., No. 21 of 1843.

56. Ibid., No. 25 of 1846.

57. Ibid., Nos. 529 of 1842, 58 of 1844.

58. Ibid., No. 12 of 1839.

59. Ibid., No. 98 of 1840.
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60. Ibid., No. 456 of 1842.

61. Ibid., No. 419 of 1842.


63. Ibid., No. 418 of 1842.

64. Ibid., No. 472 of 1842.

65. Ibid., No. 101, 111 of 1845.