Chapter III

Producing держан Tipperahô

In the meantime, however, Cairo and Mecca were beginning to be visualized in a strange new ways, no longer simply as sites in a sacred Muslim geography, but also as dots on paper sheets which included dots for Paris, Moscow, Manila and Caracas; and the plain relationship between these indifferently profane and sacred dots was determined nothing beyond the mathematically calculated flight of the crow. The Mercatorian map, brought in by the European colonizers, was beginning, via print, to shape the imagination of the Southeast Asians.¹

One of the primary technologies of colonial control is the map. A mapped space supposes exclusion, inclusion, possession, control, and legitimates exploitation. The desire for power is deeply implicated in the desire to make territory exclusive and map it² Maps also aims to produce rigid, fixed, arbitrary places suited to techniques of modernity in place of premodern ambivalent, ambiguous spaces. Maps fix communities to fixed, bounded, closed spaces. This chapter analyses the spatial history of держан Tripuraô during the colonial period. Instead of giving prehistoric mythical identity to the place держан Tripuraô I shift the focus on coloniality and cartography: mapping as one of the instruments in the construction of modern держан Tripuraô Colonial cartography and colonial superior power constitute two inseparable modern identity determinants inherently implicated in the displacement of premodern indigenous spaces in the Northeast India. Colonial practice of inscription of place-names as discard Khasi Hillsô discard Jaintia Hillsô  discard Garo Hillsô  discard Cachar Hillsô  discard Tipperah Hillsôetcé were complicit in the colonial project of constructing fixed identities and places as rigid differentiated blocks on the colonial map. This chapter explores the colonial technique of spatial construction of colonised places surrounding держан Hill Tipperahô Thereby disrupting old indigenous spaces and producing a new notion of Tipperah.

¹ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, pp.170-171.
² Thongchai Winichakul, Siam Mapped, op cit. p.126.
The discourse on modern ethnic identities in the northeast is premised on their ‘givenness’ and the corresponding rigid discontinuous geographical blocks as coterminous with the ethnic boundaries. There are those who consider these boundaries and borders as arbitrary legacy of British-India colonial period which needs erasure or rectification if the ethnic problems of the region are to be resolved. Such simplistic views of colonial geography merely construe boundary disputes as problems of border relation between states and communities. Borders and border relations are after to the concept of border and boundary, contingent upon spatial ideology and spatial practice of distinct communities. Instead of viewing boundary disputes as problems of border relation between states and communities, this study views it as conflict of spatial ideologies, spatial practice and spatial organisation. It examines the nature of space and problems related with the changing nature of space. In this chapter, I propose to argue that the British-India colonial organisation of space and the construction of ethnic identities were inseparable.

In this chapter, I try to show how present day Tripura as ‘Hill Tipperah’ have been discursively constructed in the late eighteen and twentieth century as a result of British-India colonial spatial practices. By this, I do not conclude that history began with the coming of colonial power, prior to which it was a ‘blank space’ waiting for the colonial to come and fill up with history. The task is to show how British-India colonial spatial practices, implicated in the imperial design and ideology, displaced

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3 The margins of all disparate geographical boundaries in the Northeast India are contested sites between different states. For example, the border region between Tripura and Mizoram is inhabited by Reangs and Mizos (considerably large population of Mizos still live in Bangladesh and Myanmar) along with other Kuki groups. The isomorphism claimed by ethno-nationalists of the region disappears when the margins are subjected to scrutiny.
indigenous conception and practice of space and imposed certain notion of space which became a contested homeland in the mid twentieth century.

**Map and Place**

Tripura today is a part of northeast region of India; a mapped place in the global map. A place with a distinct place-name, with identifiable group of people and well demarcated borders and boundaries that at least it appears so on the map. In a global map of nations and national boundaries, it is difficult, almost impossible, to locate Tripura outside a national and regional map. However, looking at this reality each place within fixed, discontinuous, rigid national geography having sovereign and exclusive control over it from the margin of the place shatters this comfortable conception of space, place, national geography and maps. Lines of demarcation on the map do not demarcate place and lived spaces of communities.

For example, the boundary between Tripura (India) and Bangladesh appears as well defined on the map, but viewed from the position of lived spaces of people on these margins multiple social and political realities surfaces. As argued by Yhome, that 'national effect' and 'state control' were always fragile in the margins. The 'disjunction' was never absent in the margins, and the 'isomorphism' was never present that can be disjuncted in the face of globalization. In the margins, then, questions of 'nationhood', 'identity', 'citizenship', 'legitimacy' and 'loyalty' were always contested and blurred.

Therefore, there is a need to recognise that boundaries, borders and geography of

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4 As David Ludden points out that other perspectives of places and regions, different from the one inscribed by maps, do exist. See Ludden, *Where is Assam?* op cit.

place are never given, but are contingent upon the dominant spatial arrangement imposed by dominant power.

In order to understand place and identity one must start by asking: how has this place become what it has become? What are the historical, political and geographical factors which produced this particular place? Instead of taking present geography of Tripura in an unquestioned conventional way, I subject the geography of this place to cartographic deconstruction. To do this, it is important to consider all modern maps as political in nature. David Ludden opines that, territorial boundaries as well as social efforts to define, enforce and reshape them represent political projects rather than simple facts. The makers and enforcers of boundaries use maps to define human reality inside national territory. As a result, everything in the world has acquired a national identity. We see boundaries of national states so often that they almost appear to be natural feature of the globe.  

Maps also allow or facilitate possession. As such maps are not what cartographers say it is a scientific or objective form of knowledge but they are product of certain spatial practice and ideologies deeply implicated in the process of control, exclusion and exploitation. British-India colonial cartographic construction of the region and regions elsewhere conferred on it the power to own and rule. Maps did not represent reality but produced reality as conceived by the dominant forms of power. Once maps becomes published texts, lines on it acquire authority gaining authoritarian image and even reinforce and legitimate status quo or may even become agents of change. But it

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6 David Ludden, Political Maps and Cultural Boundaries, op cit.
Maps are partisan assertion about the nature of space, deployed to
subject space to particular political and commercial interests, and as Bateson puts it,
the map is not a territory but their place in it.
Maps are contingent on the cultural,
 social and political desires of its producers. Deconstructing the maps allow us to
accept the indeterminacy and contingency of boundaries, borders, regionality, and
territoriality. In this chapter, I take map, as the text to be problematised and
decomstructed in my project of challenging the primordial and givenness of Tripura
and study how the colonial cartography constructed present day Tripura.

The technology of map and map making has been fundamental to colonialism,
 expansion and imperialism of the west. Map was the instrument through which
European explorers and settlers translated the landscapes into objects to be
comprehended, colonised and consumed. Maps are not mere representation of space.
As Thongchai puts it,

  In terms of most communication theories and common sense, a map is a scientific
abstraction of reality. A map merely represents something which already exists
objectively there. In the history I have described, this relationship was reversed. A
map anticipated spatial reality, not vice versa. In other words, a map was model for,
rather than a model of, what it purported to represent.

Maps produce place and locations, borders and boundaries of people inhabiting it.
Mapping a place with marked borders facilitates ownership, inclusion, exclusion and
control. Colonial power conceptualised space differently from the indigenous people
they colonised in the present day northeast India, and in the process displaced
indigenous spaces. The construction of Tripuri as a political identity was contingent

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7 See J B Harley, *Deconstructing the Map*, op cit.
8 Quoted in Robert Paine’s, *Aboriginality, Authenticity and the Settler’s World*, p.104.
on colonial cartographic construction of place Hill Tipperah. Before this cartographic exercise, Tipperah as a homeland of any particular community do not constitute a meaningful reference.

Inventing Hill Tipperah

Tipperah, as articulated in the previous chapter, has to be seen as occupying three spaces: mobile hill space, state-core, and contested extractive space. The hilly terrains adjacent to the state-space constituted the mobile hill space; state-core was the fortified capital on the foothill from where religious and political elites controlled the extractive space; and extractive space was the vast alluvial plain which produced surplus grain to be appropriated by political and religious elites at the state-core. This Manikyan indigenous spatial arrangement was subjected to disjunction in 1761 when the combined power of East India Company and Nawab of Bengal defeated Tipperah and established full control over the entire alluvia plain. The hills were of no economic importance to colonial imagination. The British officer dispatched to subdue Tipperah ruler and end his territorial ambitions sent this report.

The paying part of Tipperah lay on the plains, and appeared in the Mahomedan revenue roll as pergunnah Roshanabad. For this of course a settlement was made. We found it a Zamindari, as such we treated it. But of the barren hills that fenced it on the east we took no cognizance. Covered with jungles and inhabited by tribes of whom nothing was known, save that they were uncouth in speech and not particular as to clothing, the hills were looked upon as something apart. The Rajah claimed to exercise authority within them, but did not, as it seemed, derived much profit from them.\[10\]

\[10\] Mackenzie (1884) quoting the report of the officer of East India company dispatched to help the Mughal forces subdue Tipperah Rajah in 1761. Alexander Mackenzie.1884.\textit{The Northeast Frontier of India}, p.272.
Three important implications of this disjunction may be pointed out. First, the extractive region acquired new identities and ambitions. The alluvial plain of Bengal, as a strategic extractive region, has been politically connected and culturally important to the Tipperah state-core but its cultural connection to the hill populations was insignificant. Tipperah state was constructed around a cultural core within which Hill-ness and Plain-ness merged and precariously sustained the Tipperah state. The disjunction changed the meaning of Tipperah’s connection to it. The alluvial plain as a region within the colony, Tipperah’s control over it was mediated by colonial rationality. Second, this new identity and ambitions introduced a complex political arrangement. While the Tipperah ruler paid zamindary tax to the East India Company for its rule over the alluvial plain, he was considered independent and sovereign within the hills.

Third, the disjunction inflicted a permanent surgery on the Manikyan spatial arrangement, the indigenous interconnected spaces. Colonial imagination of hills as non-productive, and disconnected to the valley below worked in queer ways to fashioned its inhabitants as wild, uncouth and uncivilised. In the colonial imagination, the mountainous terrains, within which Tipperah was believed to be sovereign was the geography of the unknown (Figure 3.1). The hills, jungles and unknown tribes in the colonial imagination, created geographical lines between what is known and unknown. As long the hills were seen as financially sterile these places were perceived as realms of the unknown.
This take-over of the alluvial plain by the East India Company constituted a major disruption of the older spaces of interconnection between state-core, hills and extractive plains. The linkages between hills and valleys snapped as the English imposed new laws to regulate the linkages. The alluvial plains acquired strange and ambiguous territorial identity and ambitions. However the 1826 war with Burma and the ‘unintentional’ annexation of Assam forced a new imagination of the hills.

Figure 3.1 Tipperah and other places of present day northeast region were visualised in the colonial map as ‘blank’ in the early colonial map of the region. [Part of a map titled ‘East India Company’s Map of India’ by Aaron Arrowsmith, 1804 (source Susan Gole. 1984. A Series of Early Printed Maps of India in Facsimile, Jayaprints: New Delhi, No. 52b)]

The discovery of ‘tea’ in Assam had brought about a changed in the colonial imagination of Assam: from profitless jungle to land of smiling cultivation. The extension of tea cultivation into the hills brought the English in confrontation with
their little known ‘wild’ inhabiting the still ‘blank spaces’ on their map. Similar confrontations were already besieging the colonial administrators on its other Bengal frontier, the Chittagong region.\textsuperscript{11} The second half of nineteenth century was a history of raids by hill inhabitants on British subjects and violent English expeditions into the hills to subdue and colonise the ‘wild’ tribes. These relationships became the framework for defining, rather construction of ‘Hill Tipperah’ In this chapter I will articulate this argument on two fronts: one, the production of the notion of distinct ‘wild’ tribes on the marches; second, the production of the notion of home or place as rigid bounded geography.

After the take-over of alluvial plains from the Nawab of Bengal and confining Tipperah ruler to the hills, the objective was to convert the region into commercially profitable. It faced two problems. First, no matter how much tax was imposed, profit from the region remained negligible. Second, the alluvial plains faced chronic flood. In order to overcome these problems a combined enterprise of British superior power and Bengalee landlords forcibly annexed/occupied low lands and pushed the Khasis, Jaintias, Cacharis and Tipperas further into the hills which the colonial power named after each tribe.\textsuperscript{12}

The Cachari ruler and Tipperah ruler were easily subdued.\textsuperscript{13} The Jaintias and Khasis resisted in the hills, banned from trading in British held territories and enclosed within colonial designated territories of ‘Khasi Hills’ and ‘Jaintia Hills’ However, the real

\textsuperscript{11} According to Mackenzie, of the hill Tipperah almost nothing was known about the geography and its inhabitants. Records of the region were blank, except of the revenue payments by some motley collection of local chiefs. During the earlier raids by the Shindu tribes various plans to send expeditions were abandoned as ‘impracticable’ and the geography ‘hostile’ and ‘unknown’ \textit{The Northeast Frontier of India}, pp.329 -365.

\textsuperscript{12} David Ludden, \textit{Political territories and cultural territories}, op cit.

\textsuperscript{13} Similarly the Ahom (Assam) and the Manipur kingdoms were subdued without any resistance.
danger to colonial rule came from tribes inhabiting the hills between Tipperah, Cachar and Manipur, and Chittagong Hill Tracts. From these impenetrable hills, ‘wild’ and ‘savage’ tribes carried out raids into British held territories (discussed in the next section).

Marking hills and colonising the ‘wild’

Historically, British-India’s colonisation project in the northeast frontier centred on erasure of non-state spaces, rather than a long-drawn out battle with few mimetic states. These states were annexed to the British-India Empire without any resistances by the ruling elites. Resistance to colonial rule came from the ‘wild’ mobile tribes inhabiting the spaces between these mimetic states. In order to colonise these ‘wild’ tribes, the in-between spaces had to be rendered geographically legible. This objective was made possible by imagining the wild tribes as distinct communities and subsequently fixing them inside colonial produced geographies.

My subject is the ‘wild’ marches, between Cachar, Manipur and Tipperah and the borderlands between newly produced territories of ‘Hill Tipperah’ and ‘British Tipperah’. As argued above, a new boundary was produced when East India Company’s officials differentiated and imposed new definition of ‘Hill Tipperah’ and ‘Plain Tipperah’ in 1761. Plain Tipperah was recognised as Company’s territory by virtue of its succession from the Nawab of Bengal, and the Hill Tipperah was assumed to be ‘independent’ territory of the Tipperah raja within which his ‘sovereignty’ was recognised. The ruling elites of Tipperah were severed from direct control over its historically surplus producing region. The old geographical arrangement was altered with the introduction of this new spatial imagination.
This new geographical arrangement, i.e. the creation of new boundary between hills and plains, engendered new problems for both British and Tipperah. The notion of the Hill Tipperah was new, ambiguous and constituted problematic spatial inference. The higher altitude hills between Cachar, Manipur and Tipperah were non-state spaces, whose inhabitants have never acknowledged overlordship of any of these states. An identifiable territorial entity to be designated as Hill Tipperah was absent. Secondly, the hill ranges between Tipperah, Bengal and Burma were inhabited by numerous groups of people, including Tipperas who acknowledged overlordship of the Tipperah king. In this complex spatial arrangement Tipperah ruler was required to exercise sovereignty in the manner conceptualised by the colonial power. Sovereignty can become workable only when identifiable territory emerges and citizenship or notion of subject has been fixed or territorialized.

Hill Tipperah as a place becomes a site of struggle between British and Tipperah. Both employed different spatial strategies to imposed and counter the other spatial ideologies. While Tipperah ruler relied on anachronistic logic of rulers since time immemorial lacking in administrative wherewithal and military power; the coloniser relied on extensive use of documents and maps which when absent was backed by superior military fire power. However, before the colonial power could produce a new spatial order, the marches have to be made geographically legible. Without legibility,

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14 In fact the territory which is now called Mizoram was initially considered to belong to Tipperah. However after colonial military expedition in 1872 (to punish the Kookies for attacking tea plantations in Cachar Hills) into these mountainous terrain, the English realised that Tipperah never claimed jurisdiction over these hills. The discussion on the reports sent by the expedition party concluded that, since the territory did not belonged to the local Rajas (Cachar, Manipur and Tipperah), this Lushai country lying between eastern boundary of Hill Tipperah and Burmese frontier belonged to England. Major MacDonald, Caption Tanner and Caption Badley, “The Lushai Expedition” Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of London, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1872-1873), p.54 (accessed June 02, 2008).
the possibility for a contending power to alter the lines on the physical geography always exists. Therefore, the first task was to conduct survey and map the region and inscribe its power over it by putting concrete, visible marks on hills, valleys, riverbanks and uplands.

The history of map-making in the region offers quite a queer story. While the established centres of power objected to cartographic surgery by merely complaining to the colonizers; the ‘wild, unruly, savages’ resisted colonisation, leading to brutal warfare throughout nineteenth century. Instead of relying on visible markers on the landscapes to be enough indicators of its power, British-India marched its troops into the heart of the Lushai villages and ravaged the villages of enemy Lushai chiefs. British-India officially created a new named Lushai Hill and marched its troops into it to subdue the newly designated Lushai tribes.

The frontier of Sylhet and Cachar towards the Lushai Hills is so extended that no number of outposts would render raids impossible. Marching from the village of sailenpui west of the Daleswari river to the borders of hill Tipperah, a journey of ten days, not a single Lushai village would be seen; and when we consider the facility with which the Lushai move through the jungle independent of paths, it is surprising that the frontier tea gardens have so long enjoyed immunity from raids. The history of Sibsagar frontier clearly demonstrated that the only successful method of preventing Naga incursions was to obtain thorough control over this tribe by establishing posts in the heart of the country, and creating a fringe of semi-civilised tribes along the border, which acted as buffer to the more remote and turbulent ones.

15 After defeating a Lushai chief in 1892 McCabe, who was stationed at Aijal, called other Lushai chiefs and pointed out to the ‘blackened site of the defeated chiefs village and theUnion Jack floating over it’ as a warn of similar fate in case any one contemplated on resisting the might of British-India. Rupak Debnath (ed).2008. McCabe’s Report on Eastern Lushai Rising, 1892, Kreativemind: Kolkata, p.23.
The creation of Lushai Hills delimited the territorial reach/claim of Tipperah, Manipur and Cachar. Once this place have been produced it became easier to locate, fix and identify people and place in order to control and subject them to colonial objectives. In similar fashion, geographically illegible marches between existing states and new territorial entities were made legible by naming and mapping places and people. The frontier region of shifting borders between premodern states in the region were erased and colonised by marking hills with pillars, hoisting union jack at burnt down villages, and inscribing Christian markers in order to differentiate them from the mimetic Hindu states.

Cartographic Construction of Hill Tipperah

Knowledge of cartography and the technology of mapping have been inevitably associated with imperialism and colonialism of the west. In the imperial scheme of things the world was full of blank spaces on the imperial maps, to be discovered and filled in. Unexplored places to be discovered and inscribed on imperial map and plot the entire globe on its map. The desire for geographical knowledge and map making was integral part of colonial acquisition and expansion.\(^\text{17}\)

The desire for a marked boundary between Hill Tipperah and British-India arose from two conditions. One, British-India coveted flood-free uplands and to settled lowlanders read Bengalee peasants, there.\(^\text{18}\) On its part, Tipperah ruler, severed from its surplus producing plains, coveted these uplands adjacent to its capital so as to recreate/increase its source of revenue. Two, as indicated above, British-India

\(^\text{18}\) Mackenzie, The Northeast Frontier, p.278.
upward push for land brought down hordes of angry tribes on its frontier towns and markets. Tipperah ruler neither possessed the fire power nor the willingness to rein in these raiding tribes. Therefore, British-India took upon itself the task of making them governable. To do this, the colonialist had to imagine a new hill named Lushai Hill and separate it from Hill Tipperah. However, since Mughal and former rulers of Tipperah have never defined each other's sphere of influence and it was not known where territorial sovereignty (a term unknown to these states) of Cachar, Tipperah and Manipur ended (which were in fact overlapping), a proposed boundary could be anywhere.\(^{19}\) A boundary, in actual sense, was where British-India said it is.

The need for marked boundary became utmost importance to the British by the beginning of nineteenth century. Mackenzie wrote,

> In 1809, on the Sylhet frontier, a bitter enmity subsisted between the land owners of the plains and the Rajah's people. Every outlaying hills was claimed as belonging to the Rajah. Small properties were bought by him at auction or by private contract, and occupied by bands of armed Tipperahs, who bullied their Bengali neighbours and produced a state of terrorism now-a-days unknown. The government had to interpose in the most determined manner, and one or two resolute magistrates soon restored order. In 1819 things had again come to a crisis. The chronic irritation subsisting between the hill Tipperahs and the outer kookies led to frequent depredations, in which British villages were sacked and plundered, and orders were at last given for laying down a definite and easily recognisable boundary which would enable government to fix upon the Rajah the responsibility of keeping order in his own markets, and preventing the passage of marauders to the defenceless plains.\(^{20}\)

\(^{19}\) As Thongchai writes, \(\text{In a situation where the sphere of influence of both sides have never been defined and in fact were overlapping, a modern boundary could be any where in those marginals I in every sense of the word I areas. A proposed boundary therefore was a speculation which, depending on one point of view, was equally truer and falser than another proposal. In actual practice, the survey of an area by one side done alongside the military advance. The military decided the extent of territorial sovereignty and provided the authority under which mapping could be executed, not vice versa. Force defined the space. Mapping vindicated it.}\) Siam Mapped, p.126.

\(^{20}\) Mackenzie, The Northeast Frontier of India, p.278.
Although it is unclear as to why ‘kookies’ confrontation with Tipperah would culminate in their raiding of British territories and subjects, these raids unsettled the claims of authority on the hills by Tipperah. British-India sent in surveyors, cartographers and missionaries into the hills to determine ‘natural’ boundary between British-India and Tipperah. This cartographic surgeries forced final disjunction in the indigenous spatial arrangement. It produced new boundaries on the hill, and new enclosed hill populations. Within this newly enclosed geography British-India invested its military, ideological and religious might to flatten the hitherto ungoverned geography and people.

Lt. Fisher was the first surveyor to be assigned the task of mapping the region between ‘Independent Tipperah’ and British District of Sylhet in 1819. Fisher’s task was to lay down the northern boundary of the (Tipperah) state and make it coextensive with the southern boundary line of Sylhet. He carried the boundary line up to Dalleshwar River which became the eastern boundary between Sylhet and Tipperah.\(^{21}\) The ‘want of well defined boundary’ as Fisher puts it, was that in the un-assessed region ‘the soil was rich and fertile producing abundance of grains chiefly rice, culic, linseed, til, and sursoya, fruits and vegetables’\(^{22}\) Fisher noted that the various act of ‘exacting tribute or custom’ by Tipperah Raja, from inhabitant of the plain who visit the hills for the purpose of cutting woods, grass, and bamboo etc., for


\(^{22}\) Lt. Thomas Fisher, Ibid.
house building or of trafficking with hill subjects were serious evils. In another instance, Fisher argued that the claim of Tipperah raja over low lands adjacent to the hills was inconsistency with idea of independent hill Tripura. In his opinion extensive jungalvailsies lying between different chains of hills which probably stretch many miles to southward of the cultivated country are considered by the raja as part of Independent hill territory but it is submitted that the Independent state of raja of Tipperah has always been understood to include the hills only (sic) Fisher's Line cut off large tracts of cultivable jungles and rivers and plains from the control of Raja of Tipperah. Tipperah refused to accept Fisher's line.

Fisher's Line legitimatised British control over large tracts of upland (which was found to be suitable for tea and cotton cultivation) previously imagined as constituting Hill Tipperah. However in the new colonial spatial rationality, the claim of the Rajah of Tipperah over these uplands protruding from Hill Tipperah was inconsistent with the notion of Hill Tipperah. Superior military might determined where boundary line was to be fixed, and then mapped. The fixing of this particular boundary was followed by series of raids by Lushai tribes into British territories. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of Lushai raids into British territories and British punitive expeditions into what came to be known in colonial discourse as Lushai country.

In 1849 a new Arbitration was arranged to resolve boundary disputes between British-India and Tipperah, including the unresolved Fisher's line. British government appointed G U Yule as their arbitrator and Campbell was named arbitrator for

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23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
Tipperah. An English Planter from Mymensingh, Mr. Coull was designated as the Referee in the Arbitration. The controversy over the control of a strategic river, Feni or Fenny, lying between the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Independent Tipperah is illustrative of the power of modern geographical discourse. The then Raja of Tipperah claimed full control of the river on the ground that former rulers of his state controlled the region prior to the Mughals. However, Isan Chandra Manikya (then Raja of Tipperah) was asked to provide proofs of his dominion over the river, which in the words of then Secretary to the Government of Bengal, consisted in evidence of a map. Map as a technology of control constituted ultimate evidentiary picture. The burden of proof was on the Tipperah king, not the British.

On the part of British-India, their right over Feni river was a natural succession to the Mughals from whom they acquired the region. In the words of the then Secretary (Government of Bengal), Òit is not impossible that the ancient Tipperah Rajas might have possessed both sides of the Fenny, but it does not appear to be known. It is known, however, that when the District of Chittagong was taken possession by the Moghul dynasty, in the year 1666, it was under the dominion of the Arrakanees, and there is not the slightest reason to suppose that the Arrakanees whom we represent, had left exclusive dominion of the boundary river to their rivals, the Tipperah Hindoos.Ó

Marking boundaries on the undefined ambiguous margins required extensive justification, recorded in official correspondence, maps and other texts. Most importantly, force or the capacity to inflict superior force at ones disposal was the

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26 Letter to the Commissioner of Chittagong Division from the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, May 25, 1850, Tripura Historical Documents, pp.38-40.
actual arbiter of boundary. As Thongchai puts it, "a proposed boundary therefore was a speculation which, depending on one's own view, was equally truer and falser than another proposal. Force decided the extent of territorial sovereignty and provided the authority under which mapping could be executed, not vice versa. Force defined the space. Mapping vindicated it." Without military force, its application or threat of application, mapping alone was inadequate to claim a legitimate space. But the legitimation of the boundary was always substantiated by a map.

Mapping and superior force became a single set of mutually reinforcing technology to exercise power over space in order to define 'Hill Tipperah', 'Lushai Hill' and 'British Tipperah'. Hill Tipperah could only remain 'independent' when its boundaries are defined on the map. But this boundary and the map of it cannot be decided and marked on the map by Independent Tipperah. It required legitimation by superior force. Superior power decided which claims of the inferior power were justified and which proofs are accepted. The burden of providing proofs or evidences over the claimed territories was on Tipperah. British-India was not required to provide proofs that the territories did not belong to the British. It could possess for itself, and dispossess others of territories by drawing a line on the map.

Tipperah had showed two documents in support of claim of the disputed territories to the British arbitrator and the Referee. The documents were dated 1672 and 1750. The first one was a proceeding of agreement between the Moghul officers and Tipperah Raja defining the line of boundary, and the other document was an agreement on the boundary signed by a representative of Tipperah. Yule sidelined these documents as

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27 The relationship between military power and mapping received considerable importance in Winichakul's *Siam Mapped: A history of the Geo-body of a Nation*, p.125-127
insufficient and the authenticity of which were doubtful. In his opinion, both the documents were forged and thereby unimportant. Another proof given by the representative of Tipperah was the existence of ruined palaces, and custom posts of the former rulers of the Manikya dynasty. Yule conceded that, these ruins of palaces of the former Manikya rulers did exist in the disputed land. However, in his opinion, these ruins were of three century old and were destroyed by the Moghuls who ousted the Tipperah Rajas from the disputed territory. Moreover, merely the existence of custom posts or houses did not entitle Tipperah to the disputed territory as it was a habit of the Rajas to set up petty custom houses inside others territories.²⁸ Yule retained Fisher’s Line and re-marked the boundary where the lines were blur and unidentifiable. The accusation was that, representatives of the Raja had misled Fisher and did not provide correct names of some of the rivers and hills and valleys. The new boundary retained Fisher’s Line and added to British dominion these places and rivers: Thal, Murai, Dingai and Manu; Chata-Chura, Patharia, Saragraj hills; and Pharwa Dharmangar valley. British-India established posts along this line and inscribed its power onto the landscapes its conception of Hill Tipperah.

Establishment of British posts, despite Tipperah’s objection and disagreement, reflected British attitude towards the Rajah of Tipperah and its independent status of Tipperah. Its independence was secured only as long as British were allowed to resolve dispute without force. The Arbitration Referee, Mr. James Coull’s letter is a clear indication of the attitude with which British-India desired the boundary to be settled.

²⁸ Northern Boundary Report of Messrs Yule and Campbell, 1851, Tripura Historical Documents pp.42-64.
Having most carefully considered the awards submitted to me by the arbitrators appointed by the Government of India and the Rajah of Tipperah, respectively, to settle the disputed boundary between Sylhet and Independent Tipperah. I am of opinion—

1. That the Rajah has failed to establish his right to the line claimed by him in the kamalpur Manik Bander case (No. 70-314. of the Civil Court), and accordingly award that the line laid down by Lieutenant Fisher in that portion of the disputed territory shall continue to be the boundary between the two states.

2. That in the Kailsahar case (No. 2832 of the Civil Court), the Rajah has proved his claim to the land lying on the left bank of the Manu as well as that on the right bank already given to him by the arbitrators, and award accordingly the line claimed by the Rajah throughout the whole of this portion of the disputed territory be allowed and established as the boundary between the states, lieutenants Fisher’s line being set aside.

3. That in the Pharwa Dharmanagar case (No. 304 of the Civil Court), the Rajah has failed to establish his claim, and I therefore award that line laid down by Fisher be upheld continue to be boundary between the two states.

4. That in the Chandakani case (No. 378 of the Civil Court), the Rajah has also failed to establish claim set by him and I award accordingly that Fisher’s line shall be upheld and remain as the boundary between Sylhet and Independent Tipperah.

Boundaries were marked based on colonial rationality and legitimated based on possession of superior power. Yule in his report concludes, “the portion of the country now finally decided to belong to the British Government consist of hills and plains, for the most parts covered with jungles and swamps. In the hills cotton is now grown, and its cultivation might be very much increased; the plains afford very fine crop rice, not liable to injury from inundations occasionally so ruinous to other parts of Sylhet, mustard, sugarcane, poppy and other fibrous plants.”

29 *Tripura Historical Documents*, p.81.
30 Ibid, p.54.
The new boundary did not resolve the dispute. Tipperah refused to cooperate with the British in securing the border and cut off correspondence with British officials. British-India decided to send another survey team in 1860 under the supervision of H J Reynolds. Reynolds reached Tipperah in May to redraw the boundary between British-India and Tipperah. Tipperah Rajah refused to cooperate and sent neither representative nor arbitrator. However Reynolds decided to survey the territory on his own.

Like his predecessors, he intended to search for a ‘natural boundary’ between the two states, on the disputed land. When Reynolds started the survey in and around Simna and Tapta rivers in April 1861, about 200 kookies led by the Rajah’s officers stopped the survey team and ordered them to turn back. According to Reynolds’ account, Kookies had cut down trees, barricading survey path, and block the road ‘brandishing their weapons and shouting dohai’. He demanded to know if the Rajah had sent them. He was answered in negative, but was told to stop work till the Rajah agreed to their progress. Most of his helpers, Coolies, had abandoned the survey party for fear of Kooki soldiers and Reynold had to stop survey midway and leave. The Rajah of Tipperah denied any knowledge of the Survey party being obstructed by his officers and Kooki soldiers. When he resumed the survey, Kookies were reluctant to help him guide through dense jungles and hills and denying knowledge of any stream or river or names of places mentioned by Fisher.

Reynolds report makes for an interesting reading of the peculiarities of map-making. According to him, when confronted with unhelpful, hostile inhabitants, he ‘prevailed upon a Kookee to act as guide to the Doopani Murra and I subsequently adopted as
the boundary the rout by which he led us there. (t)he Cherra, or stream, which rises out of the eastern side of Doopani hills forms the boundary for some distance and then to avoid thick jungle and the winding of the cherra the line leaves the bed of the cherra and runs along a path skirting the cherra on the northern bank, in the same way as the boundary line adopted on the west bank of Doopani Murra, in this way a 'natural boundary' was obtained for about two miles meeting the line which I had cut through the jungle from the south point of the Dholna and thus completing the connection of the boundary across the hills.  

Apparently, a 'natural boundary' was contingent upon the arbitrary definition of surveyors and circumstances prevailing in the geography to be surveyed. A 'natural boundary' of Tipperah was what the British-India surveyors believed to be 'natural'.

Reynolds' effort to search for 'natural boundary' was also abandoned midway. Tipperah was unwilling to cooperate and the tribes inhabiting the region were hostile and refused to provide him names of rivers, streams and hills. While Reynolds was searching for 'natural boundary' boundaries on the hills inhabited by the Kukis, about five hundred Kukis made a sudden attacked on the plains controlled by British-India and parts of Tipperah. The raid was concentrated at Chagulneyah, where about fifteen villages were burnt, 185 British subjects were murdered and more than hundred taken captives. The raid was so swift and unexpected that the British could react only after a year. By January 1861, British-India sent its army into the Lushai hill and attacked 'Ruton Polya' (the chief suspected of spearheading the raid) village. The Kukis,

31 Report of H J Reynold's, 1861 to the Secretary, Board of Revenue, Dacca, in Tripura Historical Documents, pp.87-98.
with the help of Reangs, retaliated by raiding Udaipur, the former capital of Tripura, killing one fifty people and took as many as two hundred captives.

In 1864 another attempt was made to resolve the dispute mutually. This time both Tipperah and British-India sent their arbitrators, Campbell (Tipperah) and T Jones (British). Campbell and Jones were assigned to mark the boundary from Khowai to Dharmanagar. Apparently both the arbitrators failed to garner help from the local inhabitants who showed ‘sullen hostility’ towards the surveyors and their coolies. Wooden posts and mud mounds constructed by the surveyors were destroyed as soon as they were out of sight. The surveys for defining boundary of Independent Tipperah ended with this survey. Masonry pillars were erected along the borders and lines drawn on the map.

Kuki raids into British territory and later Tipperah Raja’s territory, and British-India military expeditions against them, in many ways brought to the fore the problems of colonial modern spatial organisation. British-India blamed Tipperah king, Ishan Manikya, for his failure to prevent raids by his wild subjects on the British subjects and at the same time demanded that the king protect his borders between Lushai Hills and Tipperah Hills. Steer, the Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts, even went to the extent of threatening the Raja with invasion and loss of independent status. Tipperah king was compelled to pay a share of the compensation given to the victims of the raids. In order to reign in the raiding ‘savage’ British-India decided to fix a river (Langai) between Jampui and Haichak range as the Tipperah’s border and
Fig. 3.2. Geography of Hill Tipperah after colonial surveys and mapping (Source: Tripura Tribal Research Institute)
demanded Tipperah king to do something very strange. He was asked to secure his border along the Jampui and Haichak ranges and prevent his ‘unrestrained, ill-disposed’ subjects, the Kukis, from entering into his territory from where they could raid the British territory and attacked British subjects. The Raja was required to guard his border to prevent the entry of his subjects inside his territory.

The Fisher’s line, the fixing of rivers Feni and later Langai as boundaries between British-India and Tipperah shaped modern Tripura’s geography. It acquired a territorial identity, on the imperial map, where western geographical ideologies became applicable. It also acquired a geographical identity that can be used as site for modern identity construction. However, the category Tippera still inhabited a stigmatised space as indicated in the previous chapter. Before it could claim this new geographical entity as its homeland, it must disrupt the last remaining Manikyan spatial ideology — the identity of the state-core. This will be discussed in chapter four.

The British had put lines on abstract maps and made the region geographically legible and readable to colonial enterprise, but old indigenous spaces still lingered on. The indigenous spaces of mobility where chiefs and tribes and Rajas recognise no marked boundaries still refused to be suppressed and erased. Lines on the map was not the reality, it sought to impose a reality, conceived by the coloniser. Lines on the map, that partitions hills, rivers and regions have yet to become lines of demarcated political identity; geographical lines have not yet become marker of social and cultural differentiation.

33 The fixing of Langai river as Tipperah’s boundary during the expeditions against the Kookies became the bone of contention for the subsequent Tipperah Raja’s till 1930. Tipperah Rajas were made to consider the boundary or inner line as provisional line which will be lifted after raiding kookies have been subdued.
By the beginning of twentieth century British have succeeded in completely reproducing the region on the map. Khasis, Jaintias, Lushais (Mizos), and Tripuris have been put, fixed inside territorially defined spaces of colonial inscribed places, Khasi hill, Jaintia hill, Lushai hill and Tipperah hills. Tipperah came to be hemmed by British on three sides and the Lushais or Kukis on the one side, who were barred form entering into Tipperah and British territory.

Colonial Mapped Place as My Land

The map is a product of colonial imagination of space. More specifically, colonial power on the geography of the region produced mapped places as imagined and conceptualised by the imperial power. The map produced a discontinuous place which the Tipperah ruler can call my land and the possibility of exercising sovereignty over it. The mapped place or the newly produced discontinuous and rigid geographical block was yet to become basis for production and circulation of a political identity, sculpted onto it. The link between newly produced identifiable territory and modern identity still deluded the new bounded subjects. The production of this link will be the subject of succeeding chapters.

The importance of geographical survey and map making, in order to exercise power over space or produce the conditions for sovereignty, assumed importance in the Manikya dynasty by the beginning of Twentieth century. Severed from its former extractive space, the dynasty faced twin tasks of converting the uplands into new
extractive space and to produce a map of its own dominion. These two objectives preoccupied the Tipperah till its dissolution.

The first objective was sought to be achieved from two perspectives: one, by wrestling from the British as much control over valleys, river and uplands (low hills). In this project Tipperah rulers came into conflict with British over the control of uplands on the Sylhet frontier, control of trade on the Feni, and extensive valley lying between Lungai and Dalleswar River. Two, the Tipperah rulers attempted to encourage, at times impose, fix farm agriculture on the hill people, which in most cases were resisted either through armed rebellion or age old practice of evading state. This particular problem prompted large scale settlement of Bengalees who are more amenable to fix farm agriculture.

The second objective, i.e. the production of map of its dominion or rule, was styled on the British. Tipperah hired Bengalee administrators (instead of Bengalee Brahmins), British cartographers and invested enormous sums in compiling the map of its newly produced territoriality. Simultaneously, it also carried out population census.\textsuperscript{34} It may be pointed out that the period is filled with incessant out-flow of ūhill peopleû and in-flow of ūplain peopleû\textsuperscript{35}. The difference between British mapping of ūLushai Hillû and Tipperahû new found love for map was that, the former was predicated upon mapping a ūLushai countryû distinguishable from Manipur, Cachar or Tipperah, while the later intended on producing an extractive hill space.

\textsuperscript{34} Tipperah conducted a census in 1901 after it found the earlier census of 1881 inaccurate. Since then census was carried out every tenth year.

\textsuperscript{35} This subject elicited considerable importance from the administrative point of view as evidence by a permanent section, ūImmigration and Emigrationû in the annual administration reports of the state since 1872-78.
The notion of Tipperah-as-nation space has not yet conceptualised by political elites. The political elites, instead, conceptualise itself as separate nation different from other nationality like Tipperah, Bengalee, Manipuri, Reang, or Lushai. Neither the political elites, nor any other group have produced the 'link' between a given identity and mapped place. Identity and place has not yet been cross-mapped onto each other. Despite the tacit acknowledgment of Hill Tipperah as home of Tipperas in the colonial cartography, the political elites in Hill Tipperah viewed it as a realm of its dominion. Bengalees inhabiting Hill Tipperah were defined as subjects of British-India; and Tipperas can refuse subjection to Manikya dynasty by choosing to move out of the state. Hill Tipperah as a 'homeland' space of particular group was yet to be produced, sanctioned and circulated. The edges of the map would soon become sites for selective disassembling of communities and violence.

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36 The division of various groups as separate nationality by the state began from 1901-2. See the section headed Public Instruction in Mahadeve Chakravarty's Administration Report of Tipperah State since 1901.