

'Its interesting situation between Hindoostan and China, two names with which the civilized world has been long familiar, whilst itself remains nearly unknown, is a striking fact and leaves nothing to be wished, but the means and opportunity for exploring it.'

Surveyor-General Blacker to
Lord Amherst about Assam,
22 April, 1824.

DAVID SCOTT
IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

1802-1831

A STUDY IN BRITISH PATERNALISM

by

NIRODE K. BAROOAH



MUNSHIRAM MANOHARLAL, NEW DELHI

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TO THE MEMORY OF
DR. LALIT KUMAR BAROOAH

PREFACE

IN THE long roll of the East India Company's Bengal civil servants, placed in the North-East Frontier region, the name of David Scott stands out, undoubtably, as one of the most fascinating. He served the Company in the various capacities on the northern and eastern frontiers of the Bengal Presidency from 1804 to 1831. First coming into prominence by his handling of relations with Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet during the Nepal war of 1814, Scott was successively concerned with the Garo hills, the Khasi and Jaintia hills and the Brahmaputra valley (along with its eastern frontier) as Agent to the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier of Bengal and as Commissioner of Assam. His career in India, where he also died in harness in 1831, at the early age of forty-five, is the subject of this study. The dominant feature in his ideas of administration was Paternalism and hence the sub-title—the justification of which is fully given in the first chapter of the book (along with the importance and need of such a study). The last chapter, while making some concluding remarks on Scott's philosophy of government, tries to describe what type of Paternalism it was. The chapters in between deal with some of the important subjects that the British Paternalists in India were most concerned with in the early nineteenth century.

This study, being a first attempt at giving as far as possible, a full account of Scott's administrative career and his early background, much fresh material and the hitherto-unknown details on many known facts are incorporated here. I have, however, drawn much from many outstanding authorities in my understanding of the dominant ideas of administration prevalent in India of David Scott's time and also of the region where Scott served and died. I am particularly indebted to the works of Dr. Eric Stokes, Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and Dr. A. Lamb, cited in the pages of my book.

The book includes a few maps and appendices. The maps of the north-east parts of Rangpur and of the Assam valley are adapted from those in M. Martin's *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of the Eastern India*, vol. III, first published from London in 1838. The one showing Scott's route from Sylhet to Nowgong and then to Gauhati in 1824 across the Jaintia hills was found amongst Scott's official despatches of the time. I have made no orthographical change in these maps. For obvious reasons I have, however, modernised, in my text, the spelling of the names of many Khasi and Garo villages found in the despatches. Some extracts from the unpublished report of Scott on the Garos, dated 20 August, 1816 are given in the Appendix D. In many parts the language of this report is far from being smooth and crisp unlike his many other admirable reports on different subjects. But it has its own importance. Besides describing critically the then-existing *Garo-zamindar* relationship, it gives us in the early nineteenth century background, the physical feature of the land of the Garos; the principal tribes and clans among them; their laws of succession; their democratic mindedness; their government; their manufacture; and the practice of head-haunting among them. Appendix E which is an agreement taken in the post-rebellion period from a semi-independent Khasi chief, gives a fair idea of the planned penetration of the British into the Khasi and Jaintia hills.

The research for this work was undertaken in England during 1961-64 and today, at the time of its publication, I gratefully remember the help and guidance that I received from Mr. J. B. Harrison, Reader in Indian History at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. For constant sympathetic encouragement and many other kindnesses I am grateful also to Professor A. L. Basham. I have been further benefited by the comments and suggestions received from Dr. Percival Spear and Dr. I. Cumpston. Mr. M. D. K. Turner of Southlands, Camberley, Surrey; Mr. H. K. Sircar, Assistant Librarian, Carey Library, Serampore; Mr. J. A. Chalmers, M.D., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., Worcester; Mr. T. Henderson, M.A., F.E.I.S., Headmaster, Musselburg

Grammar School, Musselburg, Scotland,—all helped me in my search for information connected with Scott's early life and his missionary zeal.

In the libraries where I worked in England, I always found the greatest courtesy and helpfulness, particularly in the India Office Library, the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies and the library of the University of Nottingham.

I owe a debt of thanks to several of my friends and colleagues for their criticism, help and encouragement. Dr. Imtiaz Hussain made some incisive comments after going through an earlier version of this work which helped me at the time of revision; Mr. Surojit Bannerjee, Mr. N. Hassan, Miss S. Pahwa and Dr. A. J. Cordingly ungrudgingly helped me in many other ways while I was arranging the manuscript for the press; Mr. Devendra Jain, besides agreeing to publish the book in reasonable time, showed many courtesies. The book would not have, however, seen the light of the day without the sustained interest taken in it by my very dear friend J.L-F.

The book is dedicated to a renowned socio-medical worker of modern Assam who, although not alive today, is the chief source of my inspiration.

Kirorimal College,
Delhi.
9 November, 1969.

N. K. B.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>App.</i>	Appendix.
<i>B.C.</i>	Board's Collections.
<i>B.C.J.C.</i>	Bengal Criminal and Judicial Consultations.
<i>B.P.C.</i>	Bengal Political Consultations.
<i>B.S.P.C.</i>	Bengal Secret and Political Consultations.
<i>C.C.O.</i>	Calcutta Christian Observer.
<i>Home Misc.</i>	Home Miscellaneous Series.
<i>J.A.S.B.</i>	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
<i>J.L.B.</i>	Judicial Letters from Bengal.
<i>M.C.L.R.M.</i>	Monthly Circular Letters Regarding Missionary in India.
<i>P.A.S.M.</i>	Periodical Account of the Serampore Mission.
<i>P.L.B.</i>	Political Letters from Bengal.
<i>P.P.</i>	Parliamentary Papers.
<i>R.I.L.C.</i>	Report from the Indian Law Commissioners relating to Slavery in the East Indies.

I

THE MAN : HIS LIFE, DEATH AND ATTITUDES

THE OBJECT of this book is to study the ideas and policies of one of the most distinguished local administrators of British India. This was David Scott, who served in north-east India from 1804 to 1831. The importance of his career lies in the fact that from his first appointment at Gorakhpur¹ the nature of his duties and his zeal for geographical and ethnological survey combined to make him an increasingly trusted expert in the affairs of the independent or semi-independent states of the north and north-east frontier. After the first Nepal war (1814-1816) he became the chief channel of British contact with Bhutan, Sikkim, Tibet, Cooch Behar, the Garo hills and Assam. The conquest and annexation of Assam, which he had advocated, subsequently made him the chief administrator of that state. From 1814, when he first held charge of the Bengal district of Rangpur, until his death in 1831 at Cherrapunji, the destiny of the Assamese people was in great measure influenced by the opinions and decisions of David Scott. His ideas and actions, often unhesitatingly accepted by higher authority, gradually transformed the non-Indian character² of the

¹ *Personal Records*, Vol. XIX, pp. 27-61, a sketch of Scott's career prepared in March 1831 by Thomas Fisher; H. T. Prinsep, *Register of the Hon'ble East India Company's Bengal Civil Servants, 1790-1842*, p. 332.

² 'Assam in the medieval period had, as a result of its conquest by the Ahom kings from the Shan area, become non-Indian in its culture. Its early affiliation with India in the time of Kumara Bhaskara had been practically forgotten.' See K. M. Panikkar, *A Survey of Indian History*, p. 148.

On the economic and sociological planes also the peculiarities of the medieval Assam can be detected. See, A Guha, 'Land rights and social classes in medieval Assam,' *The Indian Economic and Social History*

Ahom administration. He also subdued and settled the hitherto uncompromisingly independent tribes of the Garo and the Khasi hills and the Singphos of the present North-Eastern Frontier. Many of his measures were novel; but, being considered particularly appropriate to this newly conquered region, they secured both acceptance and considerable influence.

Yet few of the ideas and measures David Scott propounded and carried out in this transitional period of Assam's history have been studied in any detail by modern writers. About those of his earlier career, prior to his work in Assam, virtually nothing has been written. This is surprising since Scott's importance was early recognised. More than eighty years ago Alexander Mackenzie, when writing his *History of the relations of the Government with the hill tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*,³ declared "the most interesting and personally instructive part of my task in preparing the present volume has been the perusal of Scott's admirable reports and letters," and he regretted that he lacked the time to prepare a volume of official selections from Scott's writings. He wrote: "The name and fame of David Scott are still green on the North-East Frontier. He was one of those remarkable men who have from time to time been the ornament of our Indian services. Had the scene of his life's labours been in North-West or Central India, where the great problem of Empire was then being worked out, instead of amid the obscure jungles of Assam, he would occupy a place in history by the side of Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe."⁴ Unfortunately these lines have remained merely a 'quotable quote' and nothing more than that. Forty four years later lament was still heard that "an authoritative biography of this great administrator has yet remained

Review, III, No. 3, Sept. 1966. See also by the same author 'Ahom Migration : its Impact on Rice Economy of Medieval Assam,' *Artha Vijnana*, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 1967.

³ Published in 1884.

⁴ A. Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, P. 5 n.

a desideratum, nor has any attempt been made to justify the tribute paid to his genius and attainments in the inscription on his tomb at Cherrapoonji.”⁵

Why then such neglect? Several reasons suggest themselves. Until recently to the general historian of India Assam has seemed a backwater, and India's north-east frontier one lacking in strategic importance. Those who have written on Assamese history have often been concerned with a longer period and wider issues than those of David Scott's career, whose formative stages were in any case passed outside Assam. Finally, David Scott may have deterred would-be biographers by failing to leave behind such private and family papers as would give colour, detail and an insight into the formation of his philosophy.

None of these reasons today seems sufficient bar to a study of David Scott. International events have given Assam an unlooked-for topicality and importance. There is a new or renewed interest in the ideas of the British officials at work in India, as witness works such as Eric Stokes' *English Utilitarians and India*. And if personal papers are lacking, official documents are many, and they describe in great detail many of Scott's more important ideas and measures. Scott had so much to say that was important and interesting, and so many controversial issues of the time were dealt with by him that the attempt must be made to depict his career from official documents and other contemporary publications and journals.

Curiously enough the main handicap in studying Scott's life and career has proved to be not the absence of private papers but the absence of public controversy. By the time he was appointed to the chief office in Assam he had acquired so great a reputation and so much won the confidence

⁵ S. K. Bhuyan, 'Stray notes on David Scott,' *Assam Review*, May 1928.

⁶ Indeed, such was the extent of the discretion granted that in 1834, three years after Scott's death, the Court of Directors reproved the Calcutta Council for "placing unlimited confidence in Mr. Scott's power of management and in allowing him to govern the country in his

of government that many of his early administrative measures—especially revenue and judicial—were accepted almost without discussion by the government at Calcutta. Enormous faith and trust were put in Scott's experience and local knowledge and he was given discretionary powers on many occasions.⁶ This, we are afraid, has made the study of that part of his life mainly narrative. But the growth and development of Scott's measures, especially in Assam, a distant territory with an administrative system so very unlike that of the rest of India, are themselves perhaps sufficient, when considered in detail, to reveal the working of Scott's mind and his contribution to the non-regulation type of government.

David Scott was born on the 14th of May 1786 in the much respected Scott family of Usan and Dunninald in the north-east of Scotland, the second son of Archibald Scott.⁷ His grandfather Robert Scott, born in 1705, was an advocate in Dunninald, a Member of Parliament for the County of Angus in 1732-1734, and was created a freeholder of Forfarshire in 1743.⁸ Robert not only played an active part in public affairs, but also, as Laird of Dunninald, took very good care of his patrimony.⁹ David's father, Archibald Scott, married twice. His first wife was Elizabeth Renny of Usan, by whom he had two daughters. The Rennys of Usan were very wealthy people and Elizabeth as the eldest lawful daughter of Robert Renny of Ulysseshaven had a charter under the great seal (given on 12 Feb., 1751) of the lands

own way without satisfying yourself with respect to the mode in which he governed." Letter from Court, no. 14, 1834, quoted in R. M. Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam*, p. 235.

⁷ Writers Petitions, Vol. 17, no. 32, enclosures attached to Scott's petition to become a writer in the Bengal Establishment.

⁸ A. Jervise, *Epitaphs and Inscriptions from Burial Grounds and Old Buildings in the North East of Scotland*, Vol. II, pp. 393-95; C. H. Philips, *The Correspondence of David Scott Director and Chairman of the East India Company relating to Indian Affairs 1787-1805*, p. XI and n.

⁹ C. H. Philips, *op. cit.*, pp. X-XI and XI n.

and barony of Ulysseshaven with the village, tower, fortalice and the fishery town of the same. Archibald thus in right of his wife Elizabeth—who died in December 1761—became the heir of Usan.¹⁰

Archibald's second wife Margaret Chalmers was the daughter of Principal Chalmers of King's College, Aberdeen. By her Archibald had two sons Robert and David, and two daughters—Isabella and Anne.¹¹ Robert, as a nominee of Henry Dundas, went out to India in 1795 as a writer on the Bengal Establishment and remained well acquainted with all the influential people in the East India affairs through his uncle David Scott (1746-1805), whose daughter he married at a later date.¹²

David Scott thus came from a family of considerable local standing, wealth and importance. He attended a good school, Musselburg Academy now Musselburg Grammar School¹³ where he studied Latin, French, drawing and geography besides writing, arithmetic and book-keeping. The Rector of the Academy, John Taylor certified him to be meritorious and his 'genius' and improvement' to be 'very marked at all our public exhibitions'.¹⁴ But in his career David Scott probably found his family's standing and his own education of much less importance than the position and influence of his uncle. This uncle, Archibald's younger brother, was also named David Scott. After acquiring a fortune and an exceptional knowledge of Eastern trade he had returned to a distinguished public career in Britain in 1786.¹⁵ His native place experienced the full benefit of his

¹⁰ A Jervise, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

¹² C. H. Philips, *op. cit.*, Letter no. 26, David Scott to William Farlie, London, 30 March, 1795, p. 30. See also pp. 53, 134, 159, 160, 161, 177, 284, 303, 304, 315, 357, 390, 400, 416 for Robert's relationship with D. Scott (Sr.).

¹³ This information has been gratefully received from Mr. T. Henderson, the Headmaster of the School.

¹⁴ Writers' Petitions, Vol. 17, enclosures to petition no. 32.

¹⁵ C. H. Philips, *The East Indian Company 1784-1834*, p. 72; See also C. H. Philips, *Correspondence of David Scott*, p. X-XXII.

unwearied services as one of her representatives in successive parliaments for the County of Angus and for the district of Burghs. The records of the East India Company amply attest the zeal and talent with which for many years he helped as a Director and Chairman, to control the affairs of that commercial body.¹⁶ It was through his uncle's recommendation while Chairman of the Court of Directors of the Company, that the younger David also got a job of a writer on the Bengal Establishment in August 1801.¹⁷

David Scott was appointed a writer in August 1801 and on 27 January, 1802 he was selected for the service in India. He sailed that same year landing in India on 15 October, 1802¹⁸

On arrival he joined Fort William College. In the fourth examination held at the College in January 1804 Scott attained a second class both in Hindustani and Persian.¹⁹ During his Fort William days Scott also developed a close friendship with two persons who in later years, being in the most influential positions, probably had more effect upon Scott's career than any knowledge of Persian and Hindustani. One of these was a fellow student George Swinton, who rose to the position of the Chief Secretary to the Government of India. Swinton was an extremely brilliant student who attained the highest distinction in the College examinations which he took, along with David Scott, in 1804.²⁰ Their friendship was an abiding one, and Swinton was of the greatest use in sponsoring Scott's plans and policies and in furthering his career. The other person was

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, and A. Jervise, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

¹⁷ Writers' Petitions, Vol. 17, enclosures to the petition no. 32, David Scott's (Senior) recommendation of his nephew.

¹⁸ H. T. Prinsep, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁹ C. Buchanan, *The College of Fort William in Bengal*, pp. 194-97.

²⁰ Swinton got a degree of Honour in Persian, a degree of honour in Hindustani, stood fifth in Arabic, took part in the public disputation in Persian, secured the second prize for Persian composition and also received an honorary reward in classics. C. Buchanan, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-214.

William Carey who was Scott's teacher in the College.²¹ Scott was a devout Christian²² and Carey's missionary zeal drew the young man to him. When Scott was appointed to Cooch Behar and later took charge of the Garo hills, he used his influence to open up the hill country to missionary activity.²³ His correspondence with Carey at the Serampore mission headquarters became regular and their common aim brought them into a still closer relationship of mutual support and help. To the work of the Serampore College Scott contributed by sending three Garos, who, together with a Punjabi, a Maratha, two Khasis, two Arakanese and several Bengalis helped to give that institution its all-India scope.²⁴

Throughout his career Scott was kept busy in the north-eastern region of India—his headquarters shifting constantly eastwards with the development of new spheres of influence of the Company on that frontier. In August, 1804, when he quitted Fort William College he was appointed assistant to the collector of Gorakhpur. In September, 1807, he was appointed registrar of the zilla court of Gorakhpur and assistant to the magistrate, and then officiating magistrate. In March, 1812, he was made acting judge and magistrate of Purnea. In December he was sent to Rangpur as the judge and magistrate of that district. In September, 1816, he was made the commissioner in Cooch Behar and joint magistrate at Rangpur.²⁵ While in this post Scott became deeply involved in the affairs of the Garo hill tribes. His suggestions for promoting the general civilization of these tribes led the Government of India to create a new post for the execution of these plans, for which of course they found no other person better qualified than Scott himself. Hence in 1822 Scott was made the civil commissioner of the North-East parts of Rangpur with a salary of Rs. 40,000 per annum including

²¹ S. P. Carey, *William Carey*, p. 353.

²² See Chapter VI, 179-180.

²³ S. P. Carey, *op. cit.*, pp. 353, 361, 401, 432-3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 353.

²⁵ H. T. Prinsep, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

all travelling and other personal charges. In addition to this laborious duty he was to continue to hold the office of the commissioner of Cooch Behar. To these joint posts was added on 15 November, 1823, the office of Agent to the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier of Bengal, with an additional allowance of 1,000 rupees per month. The latter appointment was occasioned by the unsatisfactory state of the relation between the British government and the Burmese. On 3 December, 1828, after the occupation of Assam, Scott was selected by the Bengal government for appointment as Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit of Assam with special powers under Regulation I of the year 1829.²⁶ He still retained his office as the governor general's Agent on the North-East Frontier. This multiple situation he held till his death in August, 1831. As agent to the governor-general on the North-East Frontier of Bengal and civil commissioner at Rangpur he drew 12,000 rupees as salary and as commissioner of revenue and circuit of Assam, North-East Rangpur, Sherpur and Sylhet from March, 1829, he drew Rs. 40,000—a total salary of 52,000 rupees per annum.²⁷

Just after Scott's death a Colonel Watson,²⁸ who calls Scott his 'cousin and friend' collected 'a variety of interesting notices' about Scott's public and private life. Some of

²⁶ In several documents the Commissioner of Assam was addressed as 'Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit, 17th Division, Assam.' According to Regulation I of 1829 the 17th Commissioner's Division comprised Sherpore and Sylhet and it was placed for a time under the Commissioner of Assam and North-East Rangpur. See K. N. Dutt, *A Handbook to the Old Records of the Assam Secretariat*, p. 47.

²⁷ Personal Records, Vol. XIX, pp. 27-61.

²⁸ Archibald Watson (1779-1855) was the eldest son of James Watson and his wife Anne, the sixth daughter of Robert Scott of Dunninald and Usan. Archibald Watson married his cousin Anne, daughter of Archibald Scott (David Scott's father) of Usan. His career was distinguished, for going out as a cadet in 1794, he became a Major-General in 1838 and Lieutenant General in 1851. He died at Abbethune on 22 August 1855. See Major V. C. P. Hodson, *List of Officers of the Bengal Army, 1758-1834*, pp. 401-402.

this information was incorporated in Adam White's *Memoir of the late David Scott, Esq.* which he edited; but the rest of the material has since been mislaid or lost.²⁹ It is particularly unfortunate that the information which Col. Waston collected about Scott's early life and education—prior to his embarkation for India and for the period subsequent to his arrival in India in the year 1802 up to the first Burmese war—should have been among the missing material. The reason Watson gives for not incorporating this portion in *Memoir* is described by him thus: “on considering that after all there could be little or nothing new to Mr. Scott's friends and connections in anything I had written; or to speak more candidly, a distrust of my own ability to do justice to the life and character of my departed friend, finally induced me to withhold this part of the intended publication.”³⁰ However, from the little notes which he has incorporated here and there in White's *Memoir* and from Scott's own letters—public and private—and also from the writings of his subordinates, much can be discerned of Scott's personality. White describes him as a stout man, weighing 13 or 15 stone always with a smile on the lips and a sparkle in his small, but lively eyes. He speaks of Scott, in his private life, as “the most unassuming of human beings, and his manners of the most simple and unpretending.”³¹ He was rather tall, inclined to corpulency and of commanding appearance; fond of discussion and was an excellent conversationalist. In discussion his weapon never carried any offensive wound nor was he disposed to suppress any one with the superiority of his intellect.³²

²⁹ Watson said that he transmitted to England most of his collection which he had received from different quarters ‘not then entertaining the most distant idea of the present undertaking’ (the publishing of a memoir). Unfortunately we have failed to find any trace of them anywhere in England and Scotland.

³⁰ Major A. White, *A Memoir of the Late David Scott, Esq.*, pp. VIII-IX.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 66. See also App. 40, p. 133.

Contemporary officials were unanimous in reporting Scott's "uniform kindness of manner" and his high sense of justice towards the natives.³³ He also entertained a high opinion of their intellectual capacity, and Col. Watson, when he visited Scott at Gorakhpur in 1808 found that it was often a subject of complaint with him that Europeans, in general, should evince so little regard for the feelings of natives of rank or respectability with whom they had occasion to associate either in business or in the ordinary intercourse of life.³⁴ In a communication to one of the correspondents of *The Bengal Hurkara and Chronicle* Scott expressed his conviction that "on liberal and extensive employment of the natives depended the result, whether the judicial system could or could not be rendered efficient."³⁵ With regard to the lower ranks of the natives also, Scott seldom exhibited any sense of the moral superiority of Europeans and he was full of praise for the honesty of the native servants in all matters entrusted to their charge. Scott's paternal treatment of his native servants was such that they were devotedly attached to him. Watson writes on this: "I am convinced that, to a man they would at any time, have hazarded their lives in his service had occasion called for such a proof of their attachment."³⁶ In this Scott was considered a second Cleveland and the man who brought the government into honour and won for the European name a high respect among 'the countless inhabitants of the mountains, village, and desolate wild.'³⁷ We are told that the leading feature in Scott's character was an "enlarged and

³³ J. M. Bhattacharya (ed.), *Assam Buraji* (of Haliram Dhekial Phukan), Appendix A, Nos. 7 and 8, Notes from *Samachar Chandrika*, March and August 1832; A. White, *Memoir*, App. Nos. 39 and 40, notes from *Bengal Hurkara* and *The Calcutta John Bull*, Sept. 1831; See also App. 5, p. 83 Lt. H. Vetch to Col. Watson, Jorhat, 9 Dec. 1831.

³⁴ White's *Memoir*, pp. 20 and 25.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, App. 39, pp. 127-128, a news item from a correspondent of *The Bengal Hurkara and Chronicle*, 15 Sept. 1831.

³⁶ White's *Memoir*, p. 25

³⁷ *Ibid.*, App. 39, pp. 129-30.

expanded" benevolence which influenced him to exert himself in advancing individual interests of all under his charge, both Europeans or natives in as much as his limited means would permit."³⁸ "The more intimately one became acquainted with Mr. Scott", wrote one of his subordinates, "the more it must have been to esteem so excellent and benevolent a man. His ear was always attentive to the voice of complaint, by whomsoever preferred, or at whatever hours, however unreasonable; and won for him the hearts of the injured, and the respect of all." The same gentleman however hastened to add: "Exerting himself to the utmost in the performance of his duty, he exacted the same from all under him, and his example gave stimulus to the most indolent."³⁹

The story of Scott's devotion to duty is most incredible not only for the highest degree of conscientiousness which it represented but also for the circumstances under which he had to work. The period between 1825 and 1831 was the busiest period of his career. It was during this period that he applied himself most vigorously both mentally and physically, to propounding and carrying out most of his administrative ideas—ideas known not only for their novelty but also for their peculiar suitability to the areas and peoples concerned. And yet it was also the period when, because of his diseased heart and various other physical ailments, he was under the constant fear of being carried off suddenly.⁴⁰ In 1825 while recommending a particular measure for the welfare of the Garos he beseeched the government that his suggestion, being the best solution under the existing condition, should be immediately accepted so that he could also fulfil his desire before his death.⁴¹ In 1827 after a full diagnosis of Scott's case, Beadon, the medical officer looking after him, came to the conclusion that as in any case Scott was dying

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, App. 5, pp. 84-5, Lt. Vetch to Col. Watson, Jorhat, 9 December, 1831.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Apps. 30 and 40, pp. 118 and 133.

⁴¹ See *infra*, p. 177.

it would be justified if he made Scott's remaining days 'much more comfortable' by means of a strong tonic which would, however, shorten his life otherwise.⁴² But the irony was that the brave and dashing Beadon died three months before the ailing Scott in May 1831 for not following the advice given by his patient. Beadon died due to the severe wound that he received from the hostile khasi archers whose arrows penetrated into his nose, arm and leg. Beadon was determined to take revenge upon the Nongkhlaw Khasis for their cruelties and thereby exposed himself dangerously without caring for Scott's 'remonstration.'⁴³ In fact until May 1831 when he finally became incapacitated for any physical exertion, Scott had been vigorously active alike mentally and physically. In the letter of April 1827 where Beadon stated the incurable condition of Scott's health, he made a note also of the latter's remarkable endurance: "His appetite is good; he drinks three or four glasses of wine daily; has taken a good deal of exercise—having been shooting almost every evening; pulse rather less, and not so full; the thrill, I thought last night, for the first time, rather less than before; and what I think a very good symptom was, that having had information of a tiger the day before yesterday, we did not return to dinner until past nine o'clock whereas every day previous we had dined at four."⁴⁴ In September 1829 when too he was "suffering considerably from his complaint, and in low spirits for the loss of three of his most intimate friends," he was found by another of his subordinates, Lt. Hamilton Vetch of the Assam Light Infantry, to be agile to the extent of exposing his person "to much unnecessary danger." In Lt. Vetch's words:

"His [Scott's] disease, at this time, often obliged him to sleep in a sitting posture, and frequently prevented his getting any sleep at all; his application to business never relaxed, and generally, he

⁴² White's *Memoir*, App. 7, Beadon to Lamb, Singamaree 28 Apr., 1827.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Apps. 26, 27 and 28, Scott to Lamb Nangundee, 21 May, Myrung, 26 May and Myrung, 10 June 1831 respectively.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, App. 7.

commenced hearing petitions, and cases read to him, by daylight in the morning, and often continued at work till it was dark. Sometimes we used to ride through the country, to visit different villages, and endeavour to bring the people to our interest, or gain information of the outlaws; that means might be taken for their capture—for, at this time, the Cassyas had given up all attempts at resistance, but had commenced on a more annoying system; that of attacking coolies coming with supplies, or cutting off their own countrymen who seemed favourably inclined to our government. Although Mr. Scott could scarcely walk from the palpitation of his heart, and, indeed, seldom attempted it, still this was no obstacle to his undertaking long and difficult journeys. Mounted on a small, but strong and active mule, dressed in his tartan shooting jacket, with his double-barrelled gun in his hand, (for he rarely quitted it), I have seen him climb hills, and descend ravines, where it was astonishing his mule kept its footing, or he his seat.”⁴⁵

White informs us that Scott’s official work commenced at sunrise and he remained in the *Kutcherry* until sunset when he strolled in his garden. But even at that time if visits were paid to him he was in the habit of listening to and entering freely into conversation with the natives around him.⁴⁶ In an undated private letter, most probably written in 1829 we get the following information from Scott himself:

“Although I am very desirous of proceeding to Calcutta, the urgency of my business there is not, however, so great as to induce me to go, should you think it likely to prove injurious to my health; and I should therefore be glad to know your opinion on this head; and, also whether you think it likely that any benefit would be derived from a voyage to sea, or residence in a colder climate. Although I do not think that too much attention to business has been the cause of this illness, as I never found myself fatigued, or otherwise affected by it at the time; I may as well mention, that before the accession of the present fit, and, also of the one I experienced in February, last year, I had been much occupied in court, for several months, usually going at seven in the morning, and with exception to an hour or two at breakfast, sitting till sun-set.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, App. 5, pp. 76-79.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, App. 17, Scott to Lamb., n.d.

There is no doubt, therefore, that his health deteriorated due to his excessive application to the official business. His anxiety for the well-being of the numerous population under his care is most conscientiously shown in his last words: "I wish you, gentlemen," he told his death-bed attendants, Lt. Col. Watson, Dr. Rhodes and Lt. Day, "to bear witness to Government, that I am no longer able to conduct the affairs of the country."⁴⁸

Scott is described as being possessed of a vigour and grasp of understanding rarely to be met with and one which exercised itself more readily in moral and political discussion and in scientific pursuits than in imaginative studies.⁴⁹ The appendices to White's *Memoir* containing some of the letters written by and about him give an ample proof of the vast range of his mind. A few excerpts from the letters that he wrote to his friend Lamb, will prove the point so far as his interest in scientific and agricultural pursuits was concerned:

"Many thanks for the drawings, and the promised oat seed. I never saw this lizard—in colour it resembles the biskopra, but the latter has a shorter tail, and is considered (I believe without foundation) poisonous by the natives. We had a tremendous storm of hail a few days ago; which if it extended so far, must, I fear, have greatly injured your coffee crop. I collected a sufficient quantity of the stones to enable me to ascertain the rate at which ice melts; and the result leaves no doubt as to the feasibility of supplying Calcutta from Churra Poonjee. The contents of a small basket, weighing about 14 lbs., and not exceeding eight or nine inches in diameter, took about 40 hours to melt, so that a mass of—[?] inches every direction would not entirely consumed in less than about a month; and, as the voyage might, by proper means, be performed in fifteen days, a sufficient portion of every cargo would reach the presidency."⁵⁰

"Did you hear anything about the cave which was said to be on the top of the hill, and have you seen, or have you any intention of again visiting, the one at Pandua? I have been requested by Mr. Swinton particularly, to examine it for fossil bones; which, indeed, I

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, App. 43, extract from a letter from H. T. Prinsep, Secy. to the Governor-General to Mr. Swinton, Simla, 20 September, 1831.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, App. 8. Scott to Lamb, Singamaree, 8 May [1827].

did, as far as we went in 1824; but, if there is anything of the sort, I think it is most likely that they will be found at the bottom of the deep pit, from which they could not still be removed by the action of the water, that may be supposed to have swept the part we examined."⁵¹

"I have the pleasure to send, for comparison with your register of the state of the wind, the account kept in this quarter. There has been an unusual prevalence of westerly wind for this season of the year, which is perhaps an advantage, as it will more clearly show whether or not there is any corresponding irregularity at Decca. The observations in May were made at Singamaree, from the 8th of June to 4th of this month, at Gowalpara; and subsequently, above it. The man has only put down E. and W.—N. and S; but generally speaking, the wind, when from the former directions, blows due E or W, as it may be: when from the S. it is generally a little to the eastward of it; and when from the north, usually to the westward. I hope you will observe, hourly, on the 17th of this month; which has been appointed for observation of thermometer, barometer, hygrometer, and all other metres, all over the world. This intimidation will, I fear, prove too late; but I hope you may have seen the notice in Brewster's Journal."⁵²

"My cow-boat was wrecked yesterday; and I tried this morning a bottle of milk, prepared with (sugar ?) in thee Lukeerja river, which was perfectly fresh, and, I really think, not distinguishable, in coffee or tea, from new milk—I observe that this mode of preserving milk is noticed by Dr. Paris in his Pharmacologia."⁵³

"This is a very fine part of the country, quite level enough for the use of the plough, and already productive of rice, Indian corn, etc. to which I have little doubt, that wheat, barley, and other grain may soon be added. It is elevated nearly 1,000 feet, and there seem to be none of those mists so prevalent at Churra and Nunkhlow, owing to the proximity of the plains. Could you oblige me by sending, up, in a small boat, to Pundua, three or four maunds of fresh wheat, for seed, and the same quantity of barley, oats, boot-gram, making up the remainder of the cargo with potatoes, and anything that Mr. Mascarenhas or Callogreed may have for me."⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, App. 11, Scott to Lamb, Nunkhlow, 14 Apr. [?].

⁵² *Ibid.*, App. 13, Scott to Lamb, On the Burhampooter, near Gowahatty, 11 July [?].

⁵³ *Ibid.*, as above.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, App. 26, Scott to Lamb, Naugundee, 21 May, 1831.

At the same time Scott's attainments as a linguist were of no mean order. He was well acquainted with Persian, Hindustani and Bengali languages, and had attained considerable knowledge of the local dialects including those of the Garos.⁵⁵ But it was the diversity of his pursuits which characterised his mind more than anything else. It is said that he was interested in philosophy, chemistry, geology, minerology, natural history, and zoology, and from his early years he had been much addicted to the study of mechanics and practical surveying. Being often alone, at a distance from medical aid, he had been compelled to study medicine and the contemporary medical officers working in his area of jurisdiction were of the opinion that his proficiency therein was very respectable.⁵⁶ He was in the habit of subscribing to, and reading the different medical periodicals, and to

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53. One example of Scott's knowledge of Bengali is his translation of Kishan Kant Bose's *Account of Bootan* printed in the volume on *Political Missions to Bootan* by Ashley Eden and others.

⁵⁶ White's *Memoir*, pp. 52-53; Scott took enormous care of his health, noting and studying every odd symptom carefully with the help of books and journals on medical sciences that he subscribed to. He wrote to Lamb once: "After an attentive perusal of Laennec's book, both Mr. B. [Beadon] and myself agreed, as to the probability of the disease being what he terms, a hypertrophy of the heart, in all probability, conjoined, as seems often to be the case, with nervous affection of the same organ." When at one stage his case was referred to Sir Henry Halford the latter observed that Mr. Scott "appears to have observed closely the symptoms of his disorder, and has described his sensations in a striking and accurate manner." In one of Beadon's letters to Lamb we have another interesting account of Scott's medical expertise. Beadon writes on 28 April, 1827 thus: "Your letter I received yesterday, and feel particularly obliged for Mr. Scott's case, previous to my joining him; but I hope the world will not benefit by it for a long time yet... About three days after you left us, Mr. Scott observed, that he thought the sensation conveyed to his fingers was what Laennec describes as the cat-mutter. I told him I thought not exactly that, although evidently not altogether a natural action of the heart; and I *luckily* added, that the sensation from the instrument was just what he would suppose from feeling it with his hand... At the former part of my letter, I made use of the word *luckily*, and I will now tell you why. Last night I went, as I usually do every

the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta he sent a paper on *Chutwan, a febrifuge bark used amongst the Natives*.⁵⁷ Adam White writes about the range of Scott's mind: "On seeing Mr. Scott for the first time, it struck me with astonishment how he had been able to acquire this diversity of knowledge, knowing that throughout his career in India, he had been busily employed: but I ascertained afterwards, that he was in the habit of reading late at night, after his friends had left him for the evening."⁵⁸

Col. Watson tells us a little more about Scott's insatiable love for books. When he visited Scott in 1808 at Gorakhpur, he found that one of the latter's main leisure occupations was general reading. He found Scott particularly interested in chemistry and practical mechanics etc., the last chiefly in connection with his agricultural pursuits and gardening, on both of which he was extremely keen. "Scott's library then, though not extensive, was well chosen and arranged, so that the general reader was sure to find abundant amusement, and the more studious something adapted to his particular train of thought, in whatever branch of research his views might lead him. The translation of the Greek and Roman classics; some of the best historians and most celebrated writers on the subject of natural and moral philosophy and political economy; books of reference; dictionaries of most language; ancient and modern maps etc. occupied select corners of his collection." Watson also makes it clear that the library was not entirely serious and practical in its contents. Fiction, chivalry, romance were all included and acquaintance might be renewed with Defoe, Richardson, Anna Radcliffe, or even with Amadis de Gaul and the renowned son of Mandi. At a later date Scott's "own casket selection" included Russels, Burton's *Anatomy*

second, or third night, to use the stethoscope, and, to my surprise Mr. Scott called for something, which, when produced, turned out to be a tin stethoscope, so made, that he could use it himself." See White's *Memoir*, Apps. 7, 10, 20.

⁵⁷ *Asiatic Journal*, 1827, Vol. 23, p. 507.

⁵⁸ White's *Memoir*, p. 54.

of *Melancholy*, Shakespeare, Thomas a Kempis, *Paradise Lost*, the select works of Bishop Hall and others.⁵⁹

Scott was often moved by the beauty in nature and he always wanted to share his enjoyment of a sceneric beauty with his friends either by recommending the places to them or by just describing his experience. Once in the month of May he was describing to a friend a place in the Khasi hills, some twenty-two miles away from Nangkhlaw : "some evenings ago, after a shower of rain, the scenery towards Assam was beautiful beyond anything we ever saw, or what, judging from its cold weather appearance, I could have expected. We saw the course of the Burhampooter for 90 miles downwards, and about 40 upwards; the view being there closed by the hills. The gradation of tints, from the rich velvet-green of the hills, in our immediate neighbourhood, to the different shades of those various distances to 100 miles, was most superb."⁶⁰ To the same friend he also described his natural gratification at seeing a Khasi dance: "The costume was most elegant; and the dresses, considering the situation of the parties, really splendid. I never saw anything, in the way of dress, off the stage, to be compared to it."⁶¹ Bold and adventurous as he was Scott loved mountain climbing. Archery was his favourite game and while in the Khasi hills he acquired considerable skill in it. In his early career at Gorakhpur Scott was also particularly fond of hunting and shooting and even in Assam amidst official preoccupations he was always ready, at the call of his youthful friends to join in a tiger, rhino or boar hunt.⁶²

The same dash and boldness, the same vigour and enterprise which he displayed in such sports he displayed in no less measure, as will be seen, in his administration or in the skirmishes in which he was involved whether with the rebel Khasis or the Burmese in Assam.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56 n.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, App. 12, Scott to Lamb, 23 May, [1829].

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 53 and 60, see also App. 8.

It was a fact that 'the further the European went into *mufassal* the less he was subject to official control.'⁶³ But it did not necessarily mean, as Professor Furber has rightly pointed out, that the East India Company had become a mere device for the achievement of private ambitions. The civil servants were not entirely devoid of ideals and a standard or sense of duty to the alien people among whom their lot was cast.⁶⁴ The first half of the nineteenth century in India, although it saw a rapid British territorial expansion, was also the period when the duties of the British officers, agents of the paramount power, were greatly extended. This dual growth raised the urgent question of British purpose in India. The period being also famous for the activities of many brilliant young British officers with firm belief and ideas of administration, various answers to the above question were not wanting. Since in the last decade or so, many systematic studies have come out on the attitudes and policies of these administrators—taking them either individually or in groups, representing different schools of thought—, it has been possible now to classify the answers to the question of the British purpose in India under a few broad headings such as, conservative, paternalist, imperialist, liberal, evangelical and utilitarian. It is not however, suggested that any of these attitudes appeared in rigid and clear-cut form having precise demarcations from the allied or opposite attitudes. It was not possible. The younger followers of the departed masters had to modify occasionally their time-honoured policies to suit the changing or newly-encountered political, social and economic conditions of the areas under their jurisdictions. The Munro School paternalists, for example, although they did not believe in any doctrinaire policies, exhibit an authoritarian strain even in their measures seen around 1829. This was because of the changing situation and pragmatic reasons.

David Scott favoured British territorial expansion and played an important role by his advocacy of a forward policy

⁶³ H. Furber, *John Company At Work*, p. 329.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

in Assam during the first Burmese war (1824-26). His imperial vision also extended to the creation of European contonments and even military colonies in the healthy Khasi hills, the basis for a possible fourth presidency centered upon Assam. He encouraged Christian missionary effort, and was a pioneer in advocating its application to the tribal areas of the frontier. Through all his ideas and measures, on the whole, he emerged as a Paternalist of the Munro School, although in some cases an 'authoritarian strain of Liberalism'—to use the expression of Professor Stokes—was not altogether lacking in him. In Scott, as Mackenzie pointed out,⁶⁵ we undoubtedly see the most of the characteristics of the Paternalist School of Munro, Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe—although he never served under any of them and, so far as our research could trace, had no private correspondence with them either.⁶⁶ The paternalists' liking for personal paternal government; their brand of conservatism (not just a desire to return to the pre-Cornwallis era, but an opposition to the wanton uprooting of the time-honoured system of society on speculative principles); austerity of their lives and their commanding sense of public duty; their liking for the *ryotwari* system of land settlement; their imperial vision; their constant awareness of the historical significance of their work; their romantic bent of mind; their dislike of uniformity in the name of reform; their appeal to history and experience; their disbelief in the possibility of sudden improvement⁶⁷—all these we see in Scott's attitudes and his administrative measures. It was the spirit of 'regulation' that the Paternalists fought tooth and nail, in all their lives,⁶⁸ and it is important to note that Scott was the original author of the Regulation X of 1822 which was the basis of

⁶⁵ See *supra*, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Except that when in 1827 Sir Charles Metcalfe became a member of the Supreme Council some of Scott's measures came under his scrutiny.

⁶⁷ E. Stokes, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-25.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

the non-regulation type of government in the newly annexed territories on the eastern frontier of Bengal.

The study of Scott's ideas and actions are specially important because here we see how he understood the people whom he himself conquered, for there are many who hold the opinion that the servants of the East India Company in its early years understood the people whom they had conquered, better than did their grandsons.⁶⁹ In the final chapter we have made some retrospective observations.

⁶⁹ See Furber, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

II

FRONTIER TROUBLES AND SCOTT'S ASCENDANCY

1. *Nepal, Sikkim, Tibet, Bhutan and Cooch Behar*

THE LAST couple of decades of the eighteenth century and the early years of the nineteenth saw an increased British interest and involvement in the politics of the Himalayan states.¹ The establishment of English rule in Bengal coincided with the explosive expansion of the Gurkhas who in the 1760s engulfed the many small states in that part of the Himalayas where Nepal exists today, including the Newar states of Katmandu, Bhatgaon and Patan. Through the erstwhile Newar states ran the traditional trade routes between the gangetic plain and Tibet. The Gurkha conquest resulted in a complete stoppage of this much advantageous trade² between Bengal and Tibet. Besides this direct loss in trade, which required immediate attention to revive the same or an alternative trade route to Tibet, the British being the major power in the Indian side of the frontier were drawn into the politics of the Himalayan states as mediator on behalf of those who suffered from the Gurkha aggression.

Almost all the Himalayan states including those conquered by the Gurkhas had direct link with Tibet either racially or religiously. British policy was, therefore, to proceed cautiously with the problems arising out of the Gurkha aggression so that their ulterior motive to acquire an access to the fabulous markets of the Chinese empire, lying even

¹ For a detailed account of this interest and involvement see A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, Chs. I, II, III.

² It was because Tibet bought more from India than it sold and the balance was made up in gold and silver. See A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

beyond the local trade of Tibet, remained in fact. Such an access, they thought, would redress the Company's adverse balance of the China trade. Warren Hastings was, therefore, trying to open some diplomatic relations with the hill states of the northern frontier of Bengal. The political developments in the Himalayan region in the early decades of the nineteenth century made this need for diplomatic relations more urgent. So here was an opportunity for any ambitious local official of the Company, serving on the Bengal frontier, to come to the limelight by showing the required enthusiasm, intelligence, diplomatic skill and researching zeal. In this context then, the place and time of Scott's first appointment in India were, alike significant for his later rise to position and fame. The place was Gorakhpur and the time 1804 to 1811,³ years when the Nepalese by their ceaseless incursions into the borderlands of the district's northern *parganas* were sowing the seeds of the first Nepalese war of 1814.

Gorakhpur, in the modern Uttar Pradesh had been acquired by the East India Company in 1801. Its first district officer J. Routledge was appalled by the state of the country on his arrival. He had no reliable subordinates, no police and no adequate means of assessing or collecting the revenue; and he was constantly harassed by the presence of the discharged officials and troops who were still busily engaged in plundering the unfortunate inhabitants.⁴ To crown all these internal disorders there was an external danger too: the Nepalese had been taking advantage of the prevailing anarchy in Gorakhpur long before its cession and they continued their incursions thereafter.⁵ The Nepalese

³ Aug. 1804—Asst. to the Collector of Gorakhpur.

Sept. 1807—Registrar of the Zilla Court of Gorakhpur.

Oct. 1811—Officiating Magistrate of Gorakhpur.

See Personal Records, Vol. XIX, p. 27; Prinsep, *op. cit.*, p. 332; C.E. Buckland, *Dictionary of Indian Biography*, p. 378.

⁴ H.R. Nevill, *Gorakhpur*, p. 185.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

first made incursions into the low-lying area at the foot of the Indian side of the mountain range, known as the Terai or, in Bhutan and Assam, as duars. Here the mountain streams meet the plains and spread into rivers with shifting beds. The land is often covered by valuable hardwood forests and is the natural boundary between the hill states and the plains. In 1768 the Company had shown interest in Morung, the Terai area of east Nepal and Sikkim, as a source of ship timber and from this date they watched with concern the gradual encroachment of the Gurkhas into this valuable raw material.⁶ After their conquest of Nepal the Gurkhas even annexed the *parganas* of Tilpur and Binayakpur. These they claimed with the simple logic that they formed the Terai of the hill states of Palpah and others which they had conquered.⁷ In 1805 they claimed to hold Butwal by right of conquest and sent officials to collect the revenue. Thereupon the Butwal raj family, in return for a pension, made over their right to the Company.⁸ The Nepalese were so interested in Butwal that soon after their usurpation of it they actually made an offer to hold Butwal in farm from the British government—an offer which the British government declined.⁹ But by 1806 the Nepalese had annexed two-thirds of this disputed territory and they subsequently completed its annexation. This emboldened them, for in 1810-11 they cross the inner Butwal boundary and seized some villages in Bansi.¹⁰ When the collector of Gorakhpur, J. H. Grant, informed the Government of this, Scott, then officiating magistrate, was asked to report on the matter and to take military action if necessary. Scott did think it necessary to move a sepoy detachment forward, which reported the assembly of Nepalese troops on the Bansi

⁶ A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

⁷ Major-General Sir J. Malcolm, *The Political History of India from 1784 to 1823*, Vol. II, App. VII, p. ccliv.

⁸ H.R. Nevill, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

⁹ Malcolm, *op. cit.*, App. VII, p. ccliv.

¹⁰ Nevill, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

border.¹¹ By 1813, when Lord Moira, later Marquess of Hastings, became governor-general, it proved impossible to improve relations with the Gurkhas and war became inevitable.¹²

Gorakhpur was Scott's training ground in internal and frontier administration. But Scott did not stay there long. In 1812 he was appointed acting judge and magistrate in Purnea and in 1813, with the same designation he was posted to Rungpur. However, Scott continued to be involved in one way or another, in Nepal affairs.¹³ At Purnea he had to tackle the problem of gang-robbery which prevailed on the Morung border of that district, robbery perpetuated by the predatory Nepalese. Scott suggested several police measures, such as the creation of a chain of *chokies* or police posts placed as near as possible to the Morung boundaries and by means calculated to ensure their co-operation on every alarm of plundering incursions.¹⁴ But his contribution on Nepal affairs was made while he was at Rangpur. He was asked by John Adam, Secretary in the secret, political and foreign department, to supply information about the Nepalese and their territory, especially the country around Palpah.¹⁵ From the military point of view, Lord Moira was particularly anxious to know whether there was any route practicable for troops, with or without artillery, from British territory to Palpah. The mass of information Scott supplied¹⁶ established his zeal for enquiry and research. He gave information about the borderland and even about territory inside Nepal, based partly on his own observation and partly on knowledge gathered through his contact with several Nepali messengers. In acknowledging Scott's letter the Governor-General com-

¹¹ B.P.C., 17 January, 1812, nos. 46-47. Letter of J. H. Grant, dated Oct. 1811; Scott to Dodeswell, 30 Dec., 1811.

¹² For the causes of the Nepalese War See Malcolm, *op. cit.*, App. VII, pp. cclx-cclxii.

¹³ Personal Records, Vol. XIX, p. 27-61.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27; J. L. B., 1 March, 1814, paras 8-12.

¹⁵ Home Misc., Vol. 644, pp. 103-5, Adam to Scott, 30 July, 1814.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-73. Scott to Adam, 12 Aug., 1814.

plimented Scott by saying that he considered "the application of time which you were enabled to spare from the performance of your ordinary official duties to the acquisition of knowledge which has thus become beneficial to the public service to be highly creditable to your zeal, industry and spirit of useful enquiry and research."¹⁷

Lord Moira was very impressed with Scott's 'talents, address and zeal' and he desired Scott's continued help in the operation of the Gurkha war. It was thought essential for its prosecution that the other Himalayan states like Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet should be neutralised or incited against Nepal. The latter object was not found difficult to achieve as all three states had a common grievance against Nepal. Scott was, therefore, entrusted with the job of collecting fresh information about the political conditions of these states, supplementing what was already known about them from Dr. Buchanan who had accompanied Captain Knox to Katmandu in 1801, and of opening official negotiations with them.¹⁸

The old ruling family of Sikkim had obvious grievances. For some years the country had been conquered by the Gurkhas and its ruling family made fugitives in the hills. In that conflict the Tibetans had assisted the Sikkim rulers who were linked by marriage with the lamas of Lhasa and Bhutan.¹⁹ Hastings therefore hoped that the promise to restore the old princely family in Sikkim would be well received in all three countries and secure their support. Scott was authorised to assure the raja of Sikkim and through him any other chiefs who might rise in support of the British government, that a stipulation for their future independence would be introduced into any treaty of peace which the British government might conclude with the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-8. Adam to Scott, 9 Sept., 1814.

¹⁸ Home Misc., Vol. 646, pp. 735-44, Adam to Scott, 26 Nov., 1814; A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁹ Home Misc., Vol. 646, Papers relating to Nepal, p. 268 : Memo on Sikkim by Dr. Buchanan, and Adam to Scott, 2 Nov., 1814. See also A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

Nepalese. Scott was further asked to open a channel of communication through Sikkim with Tibet and the Deb Raja of Bhutan in order to clarify the British position and to explain the origin and object of British proceedings against Nepal.²⁰ This was very necessary since, from 1792 Nepal had been a Chinese territory and it was unknown how a British attack upon Nepal would be received by the Chinese authorities.²¹

A second reason for wishing to open such contacts was that rumours were afloat that the Gurkhas had been trying to excite the Bhutanese to join in an attack upon Sikkim and to rise against the British.²² Any junction between them would close the best route for communication with Lhasa. There were, indeed, precise reports that the Bhutanese had assembled their troops at Dalimcotta.²³ Scott was therefore given the immediate task of finding out the truth of such rumours, a task which served to keep him in the public eye.

Two other men were involved in Sikkim-Bhutanese affairs at this time, and Scott was to come into conflict with the views of both of them. They were Captain B. Latter, commanding the Company's northern frontier east of the Kosi, who in the spring of 1815 entered Morung to lend support to the Sikkim authorities, and N. MacLeod, the commissioner of Cooch Behar.²⁴ Like many of the Company's officials of the time these two appreciated Lord Hastings' declaration of war against Nepal with uncontrolled

²⁰ Home Misc., Vol. 646, pp. 735-44, Adam to Scott, 24 Nov., 1814.

²¹ A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 37 and 40-41.

²² Home Misc., Vol. 648, p. 453, Capt. Latter to MacLeod, Commissioner of Cooch Behar, 19 Nov. 1814.

²³ Dalimcotta Duar—one of the eleven passes extending along the Northern Frontier of Bengal, between the Tista river on the west and Manas river on the east. Better known as Darling Fort in English. See S. N. Sen, *Records in Oriental Languages: Vol. I Bengali Letters*, p. 82 of the English Section. For relation with Tibet and Bhutan see A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, Ch. II.

²⁴ See Home Misc., Vol. 648, p. 453, Capt. Latter to MacLeod, 19 Nov., 1814.

enthusiasm.²⁵ Captain Latter had a forceful, aggressive temperament and he deplored any appeasement towards the independent northern states. So, even though he personally found no evidence of the rumoured Bhutanese troop concentration at Dalimcotta, he wrote, "I must state my declared opinion that no time ought to be lost in preparing to repel aggression on the part of the Deb Raja, and any dilatory or indecisive measures might be attended with very serious consequences and, I am so convinced of the necessity of acting in the most firm and decided manner that had I possessed correct information with regard to the assembling of any body of armed men I would on my own responsibility have occupied the post of Kyrantee."²⁶

Captain Latter's bellicose views alone could not do much harm so long as he himself was controlled by the judicial authority. But MacLeod, who invested Latter with discretionary powers to act to his best judgment on that frontier line,²⁷ was also undoubtedly hasty in his judgement and policy. He had gone beyond his power by investing Latter with such power in an area where Scott as magistrate of Rangpur, possessed the controlling authority in time of peace.²⁸ One instance of MacLeod's hasty decision was this: unhappily, he, while commissioner in Cooch Behar, had lost all confidence in the raja of Cooch Behar. He was therefore only too ready to fall in with Captain Latter's views and even to suspect the

²⁵ Lt. Adam White, who was to serve under Scott later in Assam and also to soften his temperament a great deal, criticised Lord Minto's adherence to "Whig policy" to avoid war which led to a dangerous extension of the Nepalese dominion. "In the East," he wrote "force alone is the grand regulating principle. Their poets and philosophers all acknowledge it lawful to use it for the purpose of aggrandisement; and the successful application of it is the standard by which they judge of the fame and glory of their rulers." See Lt. A. White, *Considerations on the State of British India*, pp. 127-8.

²⁶ Home Misc., Vol. 648, p. 453, Latter to MacLeod, 19 Nov., 1814.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 445, Scott to Monckton (Acting Secy. to Govt.), 28 Nov., 1814.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

raja of Cooch Behar of an anti-British conspiracy with the Bhutanese. Indeed he ultimately was led to charge the raja with conspiracy with the Nepalese against the Company, through Bhutanese officials at Baksa Duar. From a *zinkaff*, or minor Bhutanese official,²⁹ MacLeod heard the story that the Cooch Behar raja had surrendered his rights over Maraghat to the Bhutanese to win their support against the British.³⁰

Scott, who in January 1815 had found the Bhutanese willing to accept his agent Krishna Kant Bose at their capital, and to permit his going forward to Lhasa³¹ was not impressed by MacLeod's slender evidence or in agreement with his impetuosity. His study of the situation enabled him to give a much more considered opinion on the Bhutanese problem. Scott said: "although there is reason to believe that the system of forbearance under continued aggression which has been pursued by the British government in its intercourse with the northern states, has from their total incapacity justly to appreciate its motives had the effect of removing in some degree that dread of its power which they formerly entertained yet the pusillanimous character of the Bhutanese and their total want of discipline, arms, and military means of every kind render it in my humble opinion highly improbable that the Deb Raja should seriously think of engaging in a war in which he can gain nothing and may lose, without an effort on the part of his enemy the whole of his territories below the hills."³² Moreover he was able to show the impracticability of a correspondence between the raja and *subahs* of Chamarchi and Baksa Duar, in which

²⁹ *Zinkaffs* were the lowest grade officials of the Bhutan government and almost all high officials originally started their career as *zinkaffs* or *poes* (sepoys or peons)—see Babu Kishen Kant Bose, 'Account of Bootan,' translated into English by D. Scott and incorporated in *Political Missions to Bootan*, p. 201.

³⁰ S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, Letter no. 136, pp. 39, 161.

³¹ See A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

³² Home Misc., Vol. 648, p. 445, Scott to Monckton, 28 Nov., 1814.

MacLeod had believed.³³ With his judgement the vice-president of the Council at Calcutta had independently come to agree. In a letter to MacLeod, who ultimately lost his Cooch Behar commissionership, he argued that the Bhutanese had no hostile intentions. He ascribed the military preparation of the Bhutanese on their Morung frontier entirely to the impression of fear and jealousy produced on their minds by the movements of the British troops to points contiguous to that frontier. That move was clearly defensive, for no corresponding preparations were being made by the Bhutanese on the Rangpur frontier, through whose passes any offensive could best be launched. It was not to be expected that the Deb Raja, without any British provocation and merely to support the Nepalese would involve himself in a war which would be disastrous to him.³⁴ When Scott, through certain Bhutanese merchants subsequently gathered information that no military preparations had been made,³⁵ the Calcutta authorities, confirmed in their own conclusions, came to place still greater reliance upon Scott's judgement. So while the Vice-President-in-Council wrote that he "would have felt regret if the zeal and solicitude of Captain Latter for the honour and interest of Government had led him to adopt that measure,"³⁶ Scott acquired an enhanced reputation for level-headed expertise. He was therefore used as the instrument for assuring the Deb Raja that "the sole object of the British arrangement was to chastise the Nepalese and that its operations had no connection whatever with Bhutan" and for seeking permission to send an agent through Bhutan

³³ S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44. *Subahs* were officers in command of the passes (duars) from the low country to the mountain. They were removable at pleasure and they represented the Deb Raja in his judicial, military, financial, municipal and mercantile capacities. See S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), *An Account of Assam* (by Buchanon-Hamilton) Secd. Impression, p. 68.

³⁴ Home Misc., Vol. 648, p. 473, Monckton to MacLeod, 25 Nov., 1814.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 461, Scott to Monckton, 30 Nov., 1814.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 465, Monckton to Scott, 6 Dec., 1814.

to Lhasa.³⁷ Also in January he despatched the *zamindar* of Baikunthpur to the Sikkim Court as confidential agent.³⁸

In September 1816, Scott's usefulness was recognised by his appointment as commissioner of Cooch Behar in super-session of MacLeod. The government reported to the Court of Directors that "the negotiations in which Mr. Scott had been recently employed with some of those states and the knowledge which he had in consequence acquired of our political relations with them, peculiarly qualified him for the successful discharge of these duties."³⁹ In his new post he was expected to be "the channel for conducting on the part of the British government all business of a political nature with Bhutan, Assam, and other independent states and Chieftains in the northern and north-eastern frontier of Rungpore."⁴⁰ So, besides settling the feuds in Cooch Behar between the families of the raja, the Dewan Deo and Nazir Deo,⁴¹ Scott found himself called upon to interfere in the boundary dispute between the Deb Raja of Bhutan and the raja of

³⁷ The jealousy of the Bhutan government induced it to refuse strangers' admission into the interior of the country and hence to convey the sentiment of the British government Scott was left with two alternatives: either to make a formal application which would take time or to send a person in disguise. Scott considered this latter mode of procedure "neither likely to prove agreeable to any person duly qualified for the duty in question" nor "compatible with the dignity and the views of the British government." Since the reply to his letter would cause considerable delay, Scott meanwhile thought it proper to send a concise statement of British policy towards Nepal through the *zamindar* of Bijni who was connected with Deb Raja. Home Misc., Vol. 650, pp. 77-86, Scott to Adam, 20 Jan., 1815.

³⁸ *Ibid.*,

³⁹ J.L.B., 24 Oct., 1817; Personal Record, Vol. XIX, pp. 27-61; B.P.C., 26 Oct., 1816; no. 71.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ For these feuds and their settlement see S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-31, and pp. IV-X of the English section; A. A. Khan Chaudhury, *A History of Cooch Behar, Part I*, pp. 193-230; Messieurs Mercer and Chauvets, *Report on Cooch Behar*, 1788, in The Cooch Behar Select Records, II.

Cooch Behar. This was another case wherein his thoroughness, sincerity and impartiality could be tested.

The dispute between Cooch Behar and Bhutan was over Maraghat or to speak more precisely the lands which constituted the principal part of the local division called Gird Maraghat.⁴² Scott described it, according to Rennell's map,⁴³ as "bounded on the south by the territory of Cooch Behar, and on the north by an ancient road called the Bhangamallee, on the west by the Joldhoka river and on the east by the Manshi or rather by a branch of that river running somewhat westward of its course as laid down in the map." With the exception of twenty-six insignificant hamlets, the tract in question, previously to the year 1809, had long been in the quiet possession of the Bhutan government. Disturbances on the frontier of Maraghat and the Lakhi Duar* about the end of the year 1808 led to Company troops being despatched for the protection of the raja of Cooch Behar's territory. An enquiry was started soon after by James Morgan, the then Collector of Rangpur and ex-officio Resident of Cooch Behar. This enquiry was completed by John Digby, Morgan's successor in the collectorship of Rangpur. Their verdict was that the lands formed a part of the Cooch Behar territory. The raja consequently took possession of them in the year 1811-12.⁴⁴

Scott found sufficient grounds to believe that the enquiry of Morgan and Digby had not been sufficiently full and detailed, and that they had failed to note the earlier decision of the

⁴² B.P.C., 14 June 1817, no. 30, Scott to Adam, 24 May 1817.

⁴³ This map was published in England in 1779 and the materials for it must, consequently, have been collected several years before the date of the alleged usurpation of the Bhutanese and probably consisted of the survey of the frontier executed after the peace with Bhutan.

B.P.C., 10 Oct. 1817, no. 43, Scott to Lushington, 18 Aug. 1817.

* Lakhi Duar is one of the eleven passes extending along the Northern Frontier of Bengal and is situated between the Tista river on the west and Manas on the east. See S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 88 of the English section.

⁴⁴ B.P.C., 14 June, 1817, no. 30, Scott to Adam, 24 May, 1817.

Dinajpur Council, who, after consulting Charles Purlings⁴⁵ own handwritten document, had declared in 1777 that Maraghat along with some other spots,⁴⁶ was the possession of Bhutan. Scott therefore reported "although it appeared to me . . . that a mere reference to the decree of the Dinajpore Council and to the Raja of Cooch Behar's own statement of his claims was quite sufficient to show that they were totally destitute of foundation yet in order to satisfy the parties and prevent any representations of their witnesses not having been examined, I proceeded to Maraghat in the beginning of January and during fifteen days examined all such persons as the agents of the Bhutan government and of the Raja of Cooch Behar thought fit to bring forward for the purpose of proving the time and mode of obtaining possession of Maraghat."⁴⁷ Scott stated that when war broke out between Bhutan and Cooch Behar in 1772 and the Company moved in support of the latter, the area in question had been occupied by British troops who defeated the Bhutanese near the Bhangamali road. Under the peace treaty negotiated by Bogle with Deb Raja in 1775, which Warren Hastings deliberately made a lenient one, the area was restored to the Bhutanese though without any formal settlement of boundaries.⁴⁸ Some years later in 1780 or 1781 Narendra Narayan Kunwar, as representative of the Cooch Behar royal family, came and possessed himself of the land of Maraghat, or "as one of the witnesses stated, merely plundered the ryots and created a fort from which he was very soon obliged to retire." In the course of a few months after his first appearance he was killed at Bhuthat by the Bhutanese and from that time to the year 1809, the Deb

⁴⁵ Charles Purlings was the Asstt. at Dinajpur or Rangpur in 1771 and he negotiated the treaty with the Raja of Cooch Behar in 1772. He became the collector of Rangpur for 1777-1790. For details of his career see *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. XIV.

⁴⁶ They were : Chachakhata, Paglahat, Lakhi Duar and Kiranti, See S. N. Sen, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁴⁷ B.P.C., 14 June 1817, no. 30, Scott to Adam, 24 May 1817.

⁴⁸ For these early relations with Bhutan, see A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-14.

Raja always held undisputed possession of the lands, excepting the twenty-six *challas* or hamlets belonging to the Cooch Behar raja.⁴⁹ Scott concluded that, taking account of the decree of the Dinajpur Council, the 1775 treaty of peace with Bhutan, and of the acknowledged Bhutanese possession of the lands from within a very few years after the execution of those documents to the year 1809 the claim of the Cooch Behar raja could only be properly allowed in Mauja Maraghat* (comprising the twenty-six hamlets and farms) and not in Gird Maraghat which was the absolute property of the Deb Raja. The Government was satisfied with Scott's findings and ordered that Gird Maraghat should be restored to the Deb Raja. Scott explained the case to Cooch Behar and asked for the hitherto disputed lands to be handed over, together with an account of the collections made in Maraghat during the Cooch Behari occupation of the place.⁵⁰ In 1818 the Deb Raja informed Scott that Dewan Krishna Kant had handed over possession of the disputed land to Chito Tandi, his representative.⁵¹

Mention of Krishna Kant [Kishen Kant Bose] recalls that this was the man whom Scott had sent as his agent to Bhutan, in 1815, in the hope that he would open up a line of communication with Tibet, via Bhutan. He failed in that object—Scott blaming his lack of discretion⁵²—but he did acquire a considerable knowledge of Bhutanese affairs, he was able to assist in the settlement of the Cooch Behar border dispute, and it was he who in 1816 first reported the arrival of a Chinese force at Lhasa which was for a time to cause

⁴⁹ B.P.C., 14 June 1817, no. 30, Scott to Adam, 24 May 1817.

* Mauja Maraghat covered an area of 3,065 bighas of land. See A. Ahmed, *History of Cooch Behar* (in Bengali), pp. 355-6.

⁵⁰ B.P.C., 14 June 1817, no. 31, Adam to Scott, 14 June 1817.

⁵¹ S.N. Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-51.

⁵² See A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 43. But it should be mentioned that Scott wrote to the Government at a later date that 'no capable person but himself [Kishen Kant] could be found to undertake the business.'

B.P.C., 24 Nov. 1821, no. 81, Scott to Swinton, 21 Sept. 1821; Board's Collections, vol. 180/21724, pp. 12-13.

Lord Moira considerable alarm.⁵³ No less important he produced an *Account of Bhootan*,⁵⁴ written in Bengali but translated by David Scott, which contained a full description of the territory, with an elaborate discussion of the administrative system, its economic products, and of the routes leading to it, and which won the praise of such later envoys as R. B. Pemberton and Sir Ashley Eden. Kishen Kant also produced a work on the grammar and vocabulary of the Bhutanese language.⁵⁵

One purpose of Kishen Kant's mission had been to check the reports of a Bhutanese military threat which had been current in 1815, and which had roused the truculence of Captain Latter. Those reports had proved false, but in 1817 there was a real source of conflict when the Bhutanese began stopping boats on the Tista river and demanding duties from the merchants cutting timber in the tract of country ceded to the Company by the Gurkhas between that river and the Mahanadi.⁵⁶ Scott responded by sending an agent to enquire of the Deb Raja by what authority the demands were made. This was once again too mild a proceeding for Captain Latter, now agent for the Government in the ceded Morung *pargana*. Latter wanted immediate action, and he wrote to Calcutta pointing out that the tract had been ceded to the Company, that the exactions were unauthorised, and that if they were not forcibly resisted neither merchants nor ryots would be safe from plunder by the Bhutanese. Scott's mild action he belived "would entirely alter the complexion of the business and in my opinion lead to endless discussion . . . if this should be done it would probably induce the Bhutias to advance a joint claim to the forests itself for they have just as much right to

⁵³ See A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁵⁴ B.C., Vol. 810/21724, pp. 21-133. The published version is included in *Political Missions to Bootan* by Ashley Eden and others, pp. 187-206..

⁵⁵ B.C., vol. 810/21724, pp. 1-21.

⁵⁶ B.P.C., 19 Sept. 1817, nos. 68-70, Scott to Lushington, 6 Sept. 1817; Latter to Scott, 11 July 1817 and 2 Sept. 1817.

one as the other."⁵⁷ On this occasion the Calcutta Council agreed with Latter,⁵⁸ but before any action had been taken, Scott was able to report that the Deb Raja had replied, disclaiming the acts of those who had exacted money from the merchants and stating that positive orders had been issued to the *subah* of Dalimcotta to desist from such claims and release the persons stated to have been confined.⁵⁹ Scott's methods were thus vindicated, and his influence displayed, and not until 1832 were there any further disturbances on the Bhutan frontier.

It is clear from the narrative of events in this chapter that one of the main weaknesses in the Company's position on the northern frontier was that it lacked adequate means of communicating with its neighbours. In the Nepal war it had had to rely on the reports of adventurous travellers, upon bazar gossip, and upon the hurried despatch of such agents as Kishen Kant by Scott to ascertain Bhutanese intentions, or to explain its own to the Chinese authorities in Lhasa. Scott had gathered agents and interpreters on an ad-hoc basis, but something permanent was evidently required. Finally in November, 1823 a single individual was given responsibility for the whole frontier region, and a monthly establishment on 1,256 rupees for the maintenance of a staff capable of treating with all the neighbouring states. The man chosen to be Agent to the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier was of course David Scott, and he was given an officer of recognised linguistic attainments, Siddon, as translator in his office. Scott assembled a team of seven interpreters and twelve messengers, speaking Lepcha, Bhutia, Tibetan, Burmese, Manipuri, Khasi and Assamese, who assisted Siddon in the preparation of grammars and vocabularies.⁶⁰ The special needs and problems of frontier con-

⁵⁷ B.P.C., 19 Sept. 1817, no. 70, Latter to Lushington (private) 10 Sept. 1817.

⁵⁸ B.P.C., 19 Sept. 1817, no. 71, Lushington to Latter, 19 Sept. 1817.

⁵⁹ B.P.C., 3 Oct. 1817, no. 37, Scott to Lushington, 19 Sept. 1817.

⁶⁰ B.S.P.C., 6 August 1824, no. 30, Scott to Swinton, 16 July 1824. In G. A. Grierson's stupendous work, *Linguistic Survey of India* we

trol was thus recognised and provided for and Scott's mastery proclaimed and given still wider scope.

2. *The Garos and the birth of the non-Regulation System*

In many parts of India, the period between Wellesley's 'abortive attempt at supremacy' and Hastings' achievement of it, was one of administrative deterioration.⁶¹ The Indian states system was crumbling; British rule was not firmly seated: it was a time of opportunity for the strong and ruthless. This was evidently so in Pindari-ridden Central India, but true also of more obscure corners like the north-east frontier and of lesser figures such as the *pamindars* of Karai-bari, Kalumalupara, Mechpara and Habraghat.

But the Company's government, in these same years, was increasingly reluctant to ignore disorder outside its borders and readier to accept new duties and responsibilities within them. Wellesley had declared, 'The civil servants of the East India Company can no longer be considered as the Agents of a commercial concern . . . their duties are those of statesmen in every other part of the world, with no other characteristic differences than the obstacles opposed by an unfavourable climate, by a foreign language and by the peculiar usages and laws of India, and by the manner of its inhabitants.'⁶² Kaye, with equal conviction boasted, 'Our English rulers are not now chargeable with obliviousness of their obligation as representatives of Christianity and agents

do not find any mention about these grammars and vocabularies, but the official records show the good use made of them. For example, on Dr. W. Carey's suggestion the grammar and vocabulary of Bhutan prepared by Kishen Kant were transmitted to Fort William College for use. On these particular works Scott opined "the chief merit of the performance is the perfect accuracy with which the pronunciation of the letters and words has been marked." Board's Collections, vol. 810/21724, pp. 1-21.

⁶¹ P. Spear, *India: A Modern History*, p. 214.

⁶² L.S.S. O'Malley, *History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under British rule*, pp. 290-1.

of civilization."⁶³ Scott's share in the general process, during the years 1815-1821 when, as commissioner of Cooch Behar and Judge magistrate of Rangpur, he was responsible for the garo frontier, is the subject of this section.

The present Garo Hills district, which in 1867 was made a part of Assam, is a mountainous area some 70 miles long from east to west and 50 miles from north to south, forming an irregular rectangle, and bounded by the district of Goalpara on the north, Khasi and Jaintia hills on the east, East Bengal district of Mymensing on the south and the district of Goalpara again on the west. It is situated just in the position where the Brahmaputra, after flowing almost due west through lower Assam, turns south to join the Ganges and empty into the Bay of Bengal. Its inhabitants, the Garos*, are a section of the great Bodo race which at one time occupied much of the Brahmaputra valley, but which probably was driven into the hills by the early Hindu invaders from Bengal.⁶⁴ The present political district of the Garo hills corresponds closely with the topography—that is, the district ends exactly where the hills end. Its boundary also approximates the ethnic boundary between the Garos and other groups.⁶⁵ But in Mughal times, at the foot of the hills, lying above the plains districts of Rangpur and Mymensing, Hindu chiefs were found holding a number of great estates embracing many Garo villages. In return for a small tribute paid to the Mughal *faujdar* of Rangamati as a token of fealty to the Mughal emperor these chiefs or *zamindars* were confirmed in their merchant lordships. The tribute took the form of a number of elephants or a small quantity of

⁶³ J. W. Kaye, *Administration of the East India Company*, p. 463.

* The word 'Garo' is a name given by the Bengalis and Assamese plain dwellers. Garos themselves have different name for the people of each different tribe. See S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), *An Account of Assam*, 2d Imp., p. 89.

⁶⁴ B. C. Allen and others, *Eastern Bengal and Assam*, pp. 500-2; A. Playfair, *The Garos*, p. 1.

⁶⁵ R. Burling, *Rengsangri*, pp. 18-19.

the precious wood called *aghur*. Their estates were never subjected to a land revenue assessment, but they were obliged to maintain petty garrisons, to contribute to the maintenance of the Dacca artillery park, and to collect and pay *sair* or miscellaneous duties. These payments were usually made in cotton, grown in the Garo hills.⁶⁶

In these payments the Mughal *faujdar* was further concerned because he usually financed the purchase of the cotton by advance to the *zamindars*. So long as the *faujdar* paid the stipulated revenue to the Mughal authorities of Dacca his transactions with the *zamindars* never came into question. The profit of these cotton dealings were his own concern. For the *zamindars* the advantage of the system was, of course, that the *faujdar* encouraged and supported the extension of their control over the Garo villages and their reduction of these villages to revenue payment.⁶⁷

When the East India Company acquired the Diwani of Bengal, they inherited this system. It was left unchanged. The function of the *faujdar*s as an intermediary was taken by a *sazawal*, annually appointed, who contracted to pay the district revenues to the government, making his own arrangements for collecting them from the *zamindars*. They in their turn, as independent as before, collected the revenues of their *zamindari*s, and paid them over to the *sazawal* in cotton. In 1788, however, the Company abolished *sair* dues and made the collection of such miscellaneous cesses illegal. The *zamindars* who had always enjoyed a percentage of the revenues they collected, were compensated for the loss of the *sair* dues.⁶⁸

Scott's attention, as judge-magistrate, was drawn to the

⁶⁶ A. Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 245. This revenue paid in cotton by the hill chiefs can be compared with *kapas mahal* or cotton revenue collected from the hill tracts of Chittagong from 1713. See A. M. Serajuddin, *The Revenue Administration of Chittagong 1761-1785*, London University Ph.D. thesis approved 1964.

⁶⁷ Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

Garo frontier, not by any such revenue question, but by various outrages and acts of violence, committed by the Garos in January and February of 1815, upon inhabitants of the frontier *zamindari*s of Kalumalupara and Karaibari.⁶⁹ His determination to eradicate such evils, by eliminating their causes, led him to a sustained investigation of the relations between the Garos and the *zamindars* along the foothills.⁷⁰ Scott's first measures against the Garo raiders were military action and installation of an economic blockade by closing the *haths* (markets)—the two traditional remedies. He also suggested a few changes in the jurisdiction of the various *thanas* and their present places of functioning so as to make it more convenient for the *darogah* to take immediate cognizance of a crime.⁷¹ Though the war with Nepal made inconvenient any drastic military action against the Garos, he was given the service of Lt. Davidson, the officer commanding the local corps at Sylhet, and was authorised to employ eastward of the Brahmaputra any of the *burkandazes* or guards who could be spared from the *sadr* station or from the police *thanas* of the district of Rangpur.⁷² But Scott soon discovered that the causes of these outrages were too deep-rooted to be solved by military show or one or two severe military measures.⁷³ Scott asked the Supreme government whether "the state of things which obtains in the *pargana* east of the Brahmaputra is not such as to justify the suspension of the ordinary course of law." This Scott thought was necessary in order to introduce some more efficacious and summary mode of apprehending and punishing delinquents among the Garos.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ B.C.J.C., 7 Feb., 1815, nos. 19-23, Scott to Bayley, 16 Jan. 1815, 17 Jan. 1815, 25 Jan. 1815; Latter to Scott, 21 Jan. 1815; Bayley to Scott, 7 Feb. 1815.

⁷⁰ J.L.B., vol. 4, 7 Oct. 1815, paras 261-267; B.C.J.C., 16 Feb. 1816, nos. 15-16, Scott to Bayley, 16 Jan. 1816 and 31 Jan. 1816.

⁷¹ B.C.J.C., 16 Feb. 1816, nos. 15-18, Scott to Bayley, 16 Jan. 1816, Bayley to Scott, 16 Feb., 1816.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ B.C.J.C., 16 Feb. 1816, no. 17, Scott to Bayley, 31 Jan. 1816.

The Supreme Government at Calcutta approved of Scott's punitive measures, noted his suggestions about change in the Regulation, but asked that he should make further inquiries into the topography of the country, the habits and the character of the tribes and their motives before endeavouring to make any change in the existing order. Scott was given extra allowance for touring in the Garo frontier. The governor-general, Lord Hastings, further asked Scott whether a system of internal management similar to that successfully applied by Cleveland in the hills of Bhagalpur, could be introduced into the Garo hills. In particular he asked Scott to consider the establishment of a small local corps, mainly of Garo hillmen, to be stationed on the frontier at the *haths* and passes; the permanent posting of an officer in that part of Rangpur lying east of the Brahmaputra, vested with civil and criminal powers; and the regulation of trade so as to encourage commercial intercourse with the Garos and other frontier tribes.⁷⁵

To these instructions and queries, issued in February, Scott replied after months of touring the areas inhabited by the dependent and tributary Garos, with a statement outlining his major conclusions, on 20 August, 1816. The Company had hitherto known little of the *Garo-zamindars* relationships, and like the Mughals had cared little so long as the revenues were paid. The causes of the Garo risings were therefore not understood until Scott undertook his enquiries and produced his report of August, 1816.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 18, Bayley to Scott, 16 Feb. 1816.

⁷⁶ The two other European sources on the Garos, prior to that of Scott's were those of J. Eliot (1788-89) and F. Hamilton (Buchanon) (1807-14). Hamilton's account is comparatively speaking more full than Eliot's. But neither of these two men had opportunity to describe the *Garo-zamindars* relationship from an on-the-spot observation. See John Eliot, 'Observation on the inhabitants of the Garrow Hills, made during a publick deputation in the year 1788 and 1789,' *Asiatic Researches* (1792); S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), *An Account of Assam*, first compiled in 1807-14 by Francis Hamilton (Buchanon), 2d. Imp. pp. 85-96.

After giving a general account of the extent and physical appearance of the habitation of the Garos, their various tribes and clans, their agriculture, manufacture and customs, Scott came to the causes of the recent troubles.⁷⁷

Scott found that the four great *zamindars* of the frontier had all sought to reduce the Garos to a tributary or completely subject status. In Karaibari the vigorous measures adopted by the former *zamindars* had enabled them to reduce the greater part of the Garos on the estate to the condition of the other ryots. Only a few of the Garo frontier chiefs still remained on a tributary footing, supplying cotton on terms highly favourable to the *zamindars*, and making considerable money payments, nominally gifts at the festivals, but really extorted by threat of the *zamindar's* displeasure.

In Kalumalupara the original *zamindari* family was less vigorous; and the Garos contiguous to the estate had merely paid tribute. When the whole of the *pargana* was sold for revenue arrears the purchaser lost all authority over them, though some chiefs still took a few rupees advance and delivered a small quantity of cotton.

In Mechpara, the *zamindars*, especially in the years 1776 and 1777, had made extensive conquests, but a minor succeeding soon after, most of these had been lost by 1816. Only a few outlying Garo villages in the plains remained assimilated, and subject to the regulations of government. In the hill tracts the chiefs were merely tributary, paying cotton on favourable terms and occasionally admitting the *zamindar* as their criminal judge.

In Habraghat, the estate on the left bank of the Brahmaputra and towards the Assam side, the *zamindar* had adopted the most successful measures of all. The Garos of the plains villages and of the first range of hills had all been reduced to unconditional subjection to the laws and regulations of Bengal. Their *sardars* had been transformed into jagirdars, charged with defence of the passes. The clans further within the hills, on the other hand, had been released from all depen-

⁷⁷ See B.C.J.C., 27 Sept., 1816, no. 47, Scott's report of August 1816.

dence on, or connection with, the *zamindar*, except such as resulted from their resorting to the *haths* on this estate.⁷⁸

Such findings of Scott's confirmed what Francis Buchanon (Hamilton) had learnt only a few years before from his informers (some of whom were Garos) about the Bengali *zamindar's* encroachments on the Garo territories. The reason for the Bengali *zamindar's* success was due to the fact that they could call to their assistance the terror of the British arms to combat with the Garos fighting with bows, swords and spears of inferior kind. Although no regulars were engaged, the terror of their name and the general belief that the *zamindars* were the officers of the Company were sufficient to coerce them into submission.⁷⁹ The Assamese landowners in comparison, were in an humbler position. They were not under the Company nor was the art of war in them progressed to such an extent as to outstrip the Garo chiefs of their side of the frontier, of their dominion. The Assamese, therefore, contented themselves with a moderate tribute and conciliated the friendship of the independent hill tribes.⁸⁰

The existing political relationships between the *zamindars* and the Garos were the result, as Scott pointed out, of the two generations of conflict, waged without interference from the government.⁸¹ In the same years an explosive economic relationship had been established. Garo cotton, though coarse and of short staple and useful mainly for stuffing or adulteration,⁸² was a main item in the eastern internal trade.⁸³ Over this *zamindars* secured control, partly through the *haths*

⁷⁸ B.C.J.C., 27 Sep. 1816, no. 47, Scott's report of 20 Aug. 1816, paras 30-36.

⁷⁹ S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), *An Account of Assam*, p. 86.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Such relationship between the Assamese and the Assam hill tribes might have prevented the more extreme forms of caste from developing in Assam. See R. Burling, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

⁸¹ Statements of Ramrag Sardar, Ram Dany Sardar and Dany Singh Sardar taken in the *thana* of Dhubri in zilla Rangpur on 7 Apr. 1816. B.C.J.C., 27 Sept. 1816, no. 48, enclosures 1, 2 and 3.

⁸² A. Playfair, *op. cit.*, p. XV.

⁸³ N. Ahman, *An Economic Geography of East Pakistan*, p. 78.

established on their estates, partly by continuing quite illegally to exact *sair* and other payments in cotton, even after their abolition in 1788⁸⁴ When the Regulations of 1793 were promulgated the inhabitants of the Garo villages on the conquered tracts were much too independent to submit to such a code of law. But for many years they continued to submit to the authority of the *zamindars* as their judges and to deliver their cotton, as tribute or revenue, on the established terms.⁸⁵

But the diffusion of British authority in Bengal had two results. As the Garo became aware that the *zamindars* had lost the right to enforce their demands for dues, they came openly to assert their independence and to demand redress or revenge for their grievances. They complained that heavy dues were exacted at the *zamindari haths*, that advances were forced upon them for the supply of cotton which was then taken at only about one-sixth of its real value, that fines were levied on whole villages for any criminal offence and that wholesale seizure and imprisonment of the inhabitants was likewise inflicted.⁸⁶ That such grievances were real is to be seen from the account of the working of such a *hath* in the Habraghat *zamindari* given by Montgomery Martin: "At each market place a person who paid a rent to the Vijn Raja kept a warehouse for salt. This he sold to petty traders at eight rupees a *man* (84 10/16s.w. a ser). The petty trader, adding clay and water, increased its weight of 1/8 part, and then exchanged it with the Garos, at one *man* of salt for three *mans* of cotton. The Garo therefore, for a eight rupees worth of salt, which, were there no monopoly or duties except the Company's would cost about 5½ rupees, gives 3 *mans* 15 *sers* of cotton in the seed, which at Goalpara is usually worth 5 rupees the *man*. He besides pays a share of the cotton to the Raja, for permission to trade in his market."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Same as in 81.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ M. Martin, *Eastern India*, vol. III, p. 686-7.

At the same time, the weakening of the zamindars' police and military power made forcible retaliation more tempting to the Garos. Although they had the duty of guarding the passes, the *zamindars* no longer maintained large military establishments preferring to rely on occasional punitive expeditions rather than make a sustained effort to guard the settled villages.⁸⁸ The Garos had a tradition of raiding, for they believed that the spirits of their headmen required the souls of others to attend them, they had real grievances, they had opportunity for revenge. There was thus both an element of the universal warfare of the hills upon the plains and of that social banditry which Hobsbawm calls the "endemic peasant protest against oppression and poverty, a cry for vengeance on the rich and the oppressors."⁸⁹ The Garos, Scott reported, would descend on Kalumalupara demanding pigs, goats, fowls or such other articles as took their fancy, and the ryots, knowing there was nothing to deter the hillmen, complied. If the raid was not attended with violence or murder it was seldom reported, for the sufferers had repeatedly seen people of consequence murdered and their houses plundered with perfect impunity. When such acts became too frequent for endurance they either used to desert the villages or purchase the forbearance of the Garos by an additional donation of *mata-rakha* or blackmail.⁹⁰

Scott's first conclusion was that the zamindars' assertions that the Garo villages which they had subdued formed a part of the estates upon which they paid revenue was totally groundless. But if the *zamindars* had no revenue rights over the Garo hills, were they then within British jurisdiction at all, and if so, in what sense? Scott put forward the interesting argument that "whatever may have been the motive of the *chaudhuries* [*zamindars*] for concealing the real nature of their interests in this tract of country from Government, it

⁸⁸ B.C.J.C., 27 Sept. 1816, no. 47, Scott's report of 20 Aug. 1816, paras 23-24; B.C. Allen and others, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

⁸⁹ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, p. 5.

⁹⁰ B.C.J.C., 16 Feb. 1816, no. 15, Scott to Bayley, 16 Jan. 1816.

appears to me that their conquests if made at the time they held their estates, for the defence of the frontier, must be considered as legal acquisitions conferring a right on the British government as the superior of the conquerors, to sovereignty of the country subdued."⁹¹ Scott went on to add, "the zamindars themselves after being released from the responsibility of defending the country, and deprived of the official character in which they acquired these territories, cannot be entitled, as mere individuals and subjects, to derive any pecuniary profit from the lands which have all along continued in the hands of the original occupants and of their descendants over whom the zamindars have rather exercised the right of property appertaining to the sovereign than those of mere land holders."⁹² Scott thus argued that the British government had the right to step over the heads of the *zamindars* since they failed to perform the duties of defence laid on them by the Government, and make its own arrangements with the Garos.

Scott also considered the applicability to the Garo hills of Cleveland's system in Bhagalpur. Cleveland in 1778 had allotted subsidies to the headmen of the Mal Paharias and had supported the influence thus acquired by raising a corps of 400 Mal Paharias archers which functioned as an effective police force, keeping order in the hills by tribal methods, and enforcing the decisions of the tribunal created by Cleveland and known as the Hill Assembly.⁹³ Such expedients Scott did not think would work among the Garos. He pointed out that when Cleveland introduced British authority into the Bhagalpur hills the inhabitants appeared to have been governed by a regular gradation of chiefs whose authority was undisputed. These persons had first been taught to respect the British government's power by repeated and severe chastisement for their inroads upon the plains. Then they had been induced to relinquish the raiding to which

⁹¹ B.C.J.C., 27 Sept. 1816, no. 47, Scott's report of 20 Aug. 1816, para 49.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ J. H. Hutton, 'Primitive Tribes' in O'Malley's *Modern India and the West*, p. 418.

they were driven by their extreme poverty, by the grant of adequate subsidies. They had thereby been made into ready and willing instruments for the control and management of their fellow countrymen.⁹⁴

The Garos, by contrast, were rich,* and their leading men were unlikely to be tempted by the subsidies which had such weight with the Bhagalpur chiefs. Moreover, Garo society was very democratic: the Garos exultingly compared their country to a crab, which they affirm has no head. Whatever, then, might be the force of influence which the Garo chiefs acquired from personal character, extensive family connections or wealth, their goodwill, Scott believed, would be of little political value to the Company. However efficient a popular chief might prove in commanding the service of numerous followers for external warfare, or even in the exercise of arbitrary power at home, such leadership was still far from being consolidated into any system of acknowledged legal authority. An influence founded principally, if not solely, upon public opinion was evidently not capable of being instrumental to any purpose obnoxious to the general sentiments and national spirit of the people at large.⁹⁵

Under such circumstances, Scott held that the introduction of British authority amongst the Garos, merely by winning over the chiefs was quite impracticable. Instead, a direct connexion with the tribes should be established, if necessary, imposed by force. Since the frontier Garos, though in the past merely tributaries of the *zamindars*, currently were more or less dependent upon them, Scott felt that the British were in a position forcibly to intervene in their affairs.⁹⁶

Scott therefore recommended that the Garo villages should be brought directly under government control and

⁹⁴ B.C.J.C., 27 Sept. 1816, no. 47, Scott's report of 20 Aug. 1816, paras 25-27.

* "There can hardly be another aboriginal tribe in India more easily circumstanced than the Garos. Real famine never touches them." A. Playfair, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁹⁵ Scott's report of 20 Aug. 1816, paras 25-27.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, para 28.

that a special code of regulations should be applied to them. With the exception of those in Habraghat all the Garo villages over which the *zamindars* had exercised authority, but which had neither been recorded in the Collector's office nor subject to the Bengal Code, should be placed under the immediate superintendence of a British official. If the *zamindars* appeared entitled to compensation they should be allowed a deduction from their revenue payments. Thereafter special rules should be worked out for the internal management of the inhabitants. These rules should provide both for the security of British subjects and eventually for the improvement of the Garos themselves. But for the present British interference with the 'protected' Garos ought to be extremely limited : they should be required to make a simple acknowledgement of the supremacy of Government by paying a trifling tribute.⁹⁷

Scott had already questioned the suitability of the Bengal Regulation for the inhabitants of the frontier areas and now he was planning a non-Regulation system with its own rules suited to the customs and temperament of the people governed by it. Despite his earlier statements about the limited influence of the chiefs, Scott set out a detailed plan for enlisting their co-operation in the control of their clansmen. He proposed that up to one thousand rupees a year might be put at the disposal of the magistrate for distribution in presents to those Garo chiefs who had been receiving blackmail from the plains villages. Such grants, and permission to trade at the *haths* during the ensuring cold season should only be granted after the Garo *sardars* or headmen of the frontier villages had subscribed to some seven conditions.⁹⁸

These conditions were that they should pay an annual tribute in cotton, in acknowledgement of the supremacy of the Company; that they should stand surety for one another, and for the appearance of their dependents and villages; that they and their dependants should refrain from outrages upon the ryots, surrender any raider seeking refuge in their *para*,

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, para 50.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, paras 50-51.

and cease to keep human skulls in their houses; that they should report any plans for raiding that might come to their knowledge; that they should come unarmed to the *haths*, abandon all claims to exact perquisites, pay fair prices and engage to refer all differences to the police *muharrir* of the *hath*, abiding by the magistrate; that they should allow the interpreters and officers of government to enter their villages without molestation; and finally, that if they should break the foregoing conditions, their houses and other property should be considered subject to confiscation by the magistrate.⁹⁹

The *haths* or markets of the foothills have always been exceedingly important to the Garos of the interior hills. They supply some essential goods available in no other place. These markets besides being the centres of economic transaction offer opportunities to the people with conservative villages to have contacts with the world beyond their immediate neighbourhood.¹⁰⁰ On the market day the Garos of the hills used to descend—as they do today—to the foothills in large and well armed parties for protection against enemies. It was, therefore, necessary to provide a congenial atmosphere to the Garos in the market place not only to root out one of the traditional causes of the Garo-Bengali strife¹⁰¹ but also to impress upon the interior Garos the superior strength of the Company.

To start with, Scott suggested that there should be a limited number of markets for the present—not more than eleven or twelve—and that light dues in kind known as *phul kapas* should be collected from those Garos who remained independent, not so much to increase revenue as for the purpose of asserting the Company's authority.¹⁰² To

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, paras 52-53.

¹⁰⁰ See Burling, *op. cit.*, p. 274 for the Garo *hath* scenes of the present day.

¹⁰¹ Scott wrote that the late Mr. Eliot in his report on Sherpur had stated that the zamindars of Sherpur called Garos their enemies, and that the same attitude pervaded the whole frontier. B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 88, Scott to Bayley, 27 Sept. 1819.

¹⁰² Scott's report of 20 Aug. 1816, paras 80-82.

encourage peaceful trade Scott therefore suggested that 50 acres at each station ought to be taken by government, adequate remission of revenue being granted to the *zamindars*, for use as a market place and for warehousing. The rent of the ground appropriated to warehouses would cover the remission of revenue while a sales-tax of 12 annas per maund of cotton would very much more than cover the cost of managing the markets. Scott estimated expenditure at about 3,000 rupees and the probable tax yield at 30,000 rupees since he calculated that cotton sales amounted to eight thousand maunds at Habraghat, ten at Mechpara, twelve at Kalumalupara, ten at Karaibari, or a total of forty thousand maunds.¹⁰³

The revenues to be expected from the Garo *haths* were considered by Scott sufficient to meet the expenses of a native judicial establishment, a local corps and a Garo *hath* police, which he estimated as follows:

Judicial establishment	..	5,000
Garó police and presents	..	3,880
Collection of duties	..	3,000
Local corps	..	14,400
		<hr/>
		26,280
		<hr/>

But the yield would be far short of the expenses that would be entailed if an additional English officer were appointed. Scott, therefore suggested that the tract should be placed under the care of the commissioner for Cooch Behar and that that officer should be required to spend at least four months every year visiting the Garo frontier and making a tour throughout his jurisdiction.¹⁰⁴ Dhubri, he suggested, would be a very convenient tour centre, being only forty miles from Cooch Behar and as central a spot as could be found for the established *haths* at Chitabari, Titaria, Ben-

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, paras 83 and 86-87.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, para 97.

gakuta, Rajballab, Singimari and Palumari at which two-thirds of the whole Garo trade was carried on.¹⁰⁵

The Council at Calcutta was duly impressed with Scott's "able and very interesting" report. They considered that the fruitfulness of his proposed measures would chiefly depend on the "character, temper and qualifications of the individual to whose execution they might be entrusted,"¹⁰⁶ and what better person then to undertake the responsibility than Scott himself? But Scott could scarcely undertake this additional duty without serious interruption to his administration of civil and criminal justice as judge-magistrate of Rangpur. Their solution was to appoint another judicial officer to Rangpur, making Scott Commissioner in Cooch Behar and joint magistrate of Rangpur with special charge of that part of the district eastward of the Brahmaputra, and between that river and Cooch Behar. This new charge consisted of the *thanas* of Dhubri, Nageswari, Goalpara and Karaibari.¹⁰⁷ The government further gave Scott the widest discretionary power to make 'any such arrangements as local considerations might appear to demand.'¹⁰⁸

Scott was already on his fact-finding tour in the tributary Garo villages with Ensign Terranean and his detachment when in April 1817 he received his new charge and orders from the government. He thereupon published a proclamation in all the villages expressing the government's readiness to grant a general amnesty provided the Garos paid a fine, restored the property plundered in the raids of 1815, delivered up all their human skulls and pledged themselves to submit to the rules which the government would establish with due regard to their legitimate customs.¹⁰⁹

In every Garo village there was (and still is) at least one man referred to by the term *noḱma*, which was generally, though badly—as pointed out by a modern American writer

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, para 99.

¹⁰⁶ J.L.B., vol. 6, letter of 24 Oct. 1817.

¹⁰⁷ B.C.J.C., 27 Sept. 1816, no. 48, Bayley to Scott, 27 Sept. 1816.

¹⁰⁸ B.C.J.C., 5 April 1817, no. 18, Bayley to Scott, 5 April, 1817.

¹⁰⁹ B.C.J.C., 5 April 1817, no. 16, Scott to Bayley, 5 March 1817.

on the Garos—translated by the British as chief or headman.¹¹⁰ Scott referred to him as *sardar*. These *sardars* did not, as Scott had observed earlier, have much power to influence decision on others. But yet they being the occupants of houses with great geneological depth, possessors of substantial land titles and wealth, and performers of some customary duties,¹¹¹ commanded some respect. In any case, it was through them only that the recalcitrant Garos could be brought to negotiation.

In consequence of the *parwana* several of the *sardars* in Mechpara attended Scott at different places. Scott left no room for compromise on the conditions considering that it was essential that the Garos should plainly see that nothing would come of resistance and that the very favourable terms offered by the government merely showed its clemency.¹¹² His plan was successful and early in March, 1817, the *sardars* of nine out of the twelve villages belonging to the pass of Tikri in Mechpara attended Scott, paid a fine of 800 rupees and agreed to the other conditions laid down by Scott.¹¹³ The articles of agreement which they signed were these:

The chiefs promised never to commit violence upon the Company's subjects—or any one else—or to permit British subjects to do so, upon pain of such punishment as the magistrate might think fit to inflict.

They bound themselves to apprehend and deliver to the magistrate's people at Tikri and Garo belonging to that *duar* or pass who should be guilty of such violence to the Company's subjects.

They promised to give early information to the police of any plan by any Garo assembly to invade the lowlands.

They undertook to settle their disputes among themselves by arbitration, according to the ancient customs and to give up private blood feuds.

¹¹⁰ Burling, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² B.C.J.C., 5 April 1817, no. 16, Scott to Bayley, 5 March 1817.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

They agreed to grant to the *wazirs*, interpreters and servants of the Company, easy access at all times to their villages, and to assume responsibility for their safety.

They also undertook to take such *punji* advances from government as were sanctioned by established custom and to deliver cotton at the established rate or pay the value in money.

The British magistrates were to ascertain the boundaries of the lands which the chiefs and their ancestors had long cultivated on *punji* advances and settle them according to justice.

The Garos for their part agreed to pay rents, like other ryots upon any lands they cultivated within the *zamindaries* under the Company.

The chiefs promised that they would go unarmed to the *haths*, make no pretensions to perquisites and pay the market price for what they purchased.

The chiefs also promised to abandon the practice of keeping, buying or selling human heads, and, for the due performance of these articles of agreement, became mutually responsible.¹¹⁴

This agreement became the model for Scott's subsequent agreements with tributary Garo chiefs of Halugaon and Nibari and the independent villages of Boku, Okra, Sunal, Buraduki, Rangbugri, Rangsigri, Ramchugri, Jamgonda, Mamupara, Khamagri, Mangsang and Dubungri. In the case of the independent villages the provision relating to the payment of tribute in cotton and reference of disputes to the decision of the magistrate were not applicable.¹¹⁵

Even though the Government was yet to determine the keeping of the former tributary Garos as such in future also, Scott was interested in contacting as many *sardars* as possible, with the view that in any future set-up these agreements would be useful.¹¹⁶ But shortly after making these

¹¹⁴ B.C.J.C., 2 May 1817, no. 26, Scott to Bayley, 14 April 1817.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ B.C.J.C., 9 Sept. 1817, no. 21, Scott to Bayley, 10 Aug. 1817; J.L.B., vol. 6, 24 Oct. 1817.

engagements in April 1817 Scott and Ensign Wilton who was surveying the Garo frontier, together with many of their servants, were attacked with violent fever. Ensign Wilton fell a victim to the climate and Scott suffered a dangerous and protracted illness which interrupted the progress of his settlement of Garo affairs.¹¹⁷

Despite this set-back the governor-general was able to report to the Directors, in a despatch of 24 October 1817 that Scott's first measures had proved most successful. The Garos released from the vexatious interference of the *zamindars*, had been quiet and orderly. So much so, indeed, that the Company's forces had been withdrawn, and it had proved unnecessary to raise the whole of the local corps for service on the Garo frontier which had been proposed by Scott.¹¹⁸

The improvement which Scott's activities and settlement produced are evident from the figures of crime on the Garo frontier. In 1807 three villages, in 1813 and 1815 two villages and in 1816 about 150 villages in the plains had been burned during Garo raids, while in every year from 1807, for which records were available, there had been some loss of life, often considerable. In 1817 however there were no raids, in 1818 three persons only were killed, and in 1819 again there were no raids.¹¹⁹

No less impressive was the success of the new system in bringing offenders to justice. In 1819 thirty out of thirty-one persons concerned in dacoity were apprehended and brought to trial,¹²⁰ in 1820 all four concerned in the one recorded dacoity were apprehended. In all other forms of crime of a heinous nature except burglary the police success

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ J.L.B., vol. 6, letter of 24 Oct. 1817.

¹¹⁹ B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 88, Scott to Bayley, 27 Sept. 1819. Comparative figures of Garo raids.

¹²⁰ 'Statement of robberies and crimes of a heinous nature committed in the paraganas of Habraghat, Mechpara, Kalumalupara and Karai-bari in 1819.' B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 95, Scott to Bayley, 20 Jan. 1821.

was complete.¹²¹ Such evident success made it the easier for Scott to secure the approval of the Government for his further proposals.

So far all the arrangements made with the tributary Garos had been carried out by the government without any hint that legislative sanction might be required, as a purely political measure. But Scott's concern was with all the Garos, including those settled within the Company's territories and thus nominally subject to the Company's laws and regulations. It was not possible, Scott believed, to exclude all the Garos from the Company's jurisdiction and to rely upon the restored authority of the *zamindars* for the peace and protection of the border, though that was what the Directors had suggested in 1815.¹²² There were several reasons for Scott's not willing to bring back *zamindars* into the new arrangement. Firstly, he felt that the powers exercised freely and abusively by the Mughal agents could not be engrafted upon the Company's system of government, which denied such powers rigidly even to its confidential servants. According to Scott the Mughal system of government was "regardless of the means by which its objects were effected." Secondly, Scott found the *zamindars* to be devoid of principle—again a legacy of the Mughal government, he thought—and very indolent and incapable. Such vices had been remedied in the Mughal times, Scott observed, only on the eve of petty revolutions or plan for usurpation both of which were so common. Scott's third argument against the restoration of the *zamindar's* authority over the Garos was that the hereditary enmity that existed between the *zamindar* families and the Garos would deprive the latter of the personal care*, so much desired on the part of the owner of

¹²¹ Ditto. 1820, B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 97, Scott to Bayley, 7 Nov. 1821.

¹²² B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 92, Extract from Scott's letter to Secy. Bayley 15 Aug. 1816.

* Scott, on his part, took a great deal of personal care of the Garos. He introduced vaccination to fight against large scale small-pox ravages and seeing the Garos being inclined to adopt some more

the estates. Scott's next argument against the *zamindars* was that they being mostly absentees, no congenial contact would be forthcoming. Lastly, Scott was convinced that even the dread of the occasional Garo raids would not stop the *zamindars* in demanding from the Garos as much as they could for he found out that it was highly advantageous to them to foment or create disturbances in the neighbouring estates as by that means they gained accession of ryots and wealth.¹²³

Scott was equally against administering the Garos with the existing Bengal Regulation. He pointed out that "The Regulations are evidently inapplicable to the existing state of society amongst them, a people in general entirely ignorant of the Bengal language or any other dialect understood in our courts."¹²⁴ Scott also ruled out the Government's suggestion to fit in all the Garo criminal cases in Regulation I of 1796 introduced for the trial of the mountaineers of Rajmahal and Bhagalpur with the help of an assembly of a certain number of hill chiefs. The reason why Scott was not sanguine about the helpfulness of such an assembly of Garo chiefs, was that his enquiries on the subject of the northern and western part of the Garo country confirmed the account given by Dr. Buchanon (Hamilton) and quoted in Sission's report of 15 February 1815, that the submission of the Garos in that part to the decision of their Councils known as *Jingma Changga*, and assembled to settle their differences, was entirely optional and totally independent of any power exercised or claimed by these bodies.¹²⁵

What then, was to be done about the future administration of the Garo frontier. Scott proposed the enactment

refined religious creed, thought in terms of introducing some of "the more practical points" of Christian doctrines. He also insisted on direct relationships between the British officials with independent Garos to dispel distrust and establish authority of the Government.

B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 88, Scott to Bayley, 27 Sept. 1819; *Ibid.*, no. 95, Scott to Bayley, 20 Jan. 1821. See also Ch. VI.

¹²³ B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, No. 88. Scott to Bayley, 27 Sept. 1819.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 92, Extract from Scott's letter to Bayley, 15 Aug. 1816.

¹²⁵ J.L.B., 24 Oct., 1817; B.C.C., 28 Dec. 1821.

of a regulation for separating from the estates of the border *zamindars* all lands held by the hill tribes and for the resumption to the government and eventual restoration to their former owners of all lands of which the Garos or other hill tribes might have been forcibly dispossessed by the *zamindars* since 1765.¹²⁶

Scott proposed that the administration of civil and criminal justice, the collection of revenue, the superintendence of the police, and every other branch of government within the tract should be vested in a special commissioner appointed by the governor-general-in-council. Paragraph 24 in the Draft Regulation framed by Scott thus read "The authority of the Commissioner in revenue matters and in civil causes and the jurisdiction in criminal cases vested in that officer and in the court of Nizamut Adawlat by this regulation, shall extend from the Burhampootar river eastward over all lands occupied by Garrows or other hill tribes formerly considered as tributary to, or dependent upon, the zumeendars of Habraghat, Mechpara, Caloomaloo para and Currybaree. The Governor-General-in-Council will, however, exercise his discretion in releasing the inhabitants of any of the above villages from the control of the British government. He will also exercise a similar discretion in extending its authority over other Garrow communities which may be at present independent . . . and it shall in cases of above nature be sufficient for the separation or annexation of such territory that a proclamation be issued to that effect by order of Government in the villages thereby affected without any further special enactment for that purpose."¹²⁷

Scott's draft Regulation, containing twenty-six sections, covered precisely the extent of the existing and the proposed Regulations and the jurisdiction of the new commissioner in numerous cases on civil, criminal and police matters relating to the Garos and other hill tribes in their relations with one another and with other subjects of the new division. A distinction was made

¹²⁶ B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 88 Scott to Bayley, 27 Sept. 1819.

¹²⁷ B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 89. Scott's draft Regulation of 1819.

between the Garos and other hill tribes and the other subjects speaking Bengali. In the latter's case the existing Bengal Regulations were to be considered in force and the commissioner in such a case was to perform the functions then exercised by the judge and magistrate. Provisions were made for trials of the criminals among the Garos and other hill tribes and the commissioner was empowered to judge and punish either by himself directly, in minor offences, or with the prior approval of the *Nizamat adalat* in cases of graver charges. On the procedures of dealing with crimes committed by the people from the low country or by other individuals subject to the general regulations and of collecting revenue, it was to be left to the governor-general for further orders.¹²⁸

The important thing was to bring all the Garos, whether dependent or tributary, under the direct British control, without the interposition of the *zamindars*. Cleveland in 1778 had attained the same object in Bhagalpur by making the country of the Mal Paharias "a government estate holding rent-free from government direct."¹²⁹ But the very much greater extent of the Garo lands, coupled with the fact that many Garos had long lived in the lowland areas under the Bengal Regulations demanded a broader plan. Scott saw that a separate administration was essential. As had happened in the case of the tribes of Chota Nagpur and Palamau,¹³⁰ the introduction of the 'Cornwallis system' with scant respect for tribal language and tribal custom had done little justice to the Garos of the north-east frontier of Bengal. The tribemen, subjected to an alien judicial system administered by men who neither spoke nor understood their language, had been driven into a hostile isolation. Scott argued that his new plan would remove this anomaly and attain the security and general welfare of the Garos and other hill tribes

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ J. H. Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

¹³⁰ See J. C. Jha, *Tribal unrest on the south-west Frontier of the Bengal Presidency, 1831-1833*, p. 310.

living in the eastern part of Rangpur on the left bank of the Brahmaputra.¹³¹

Although Scott believed that trial by the commissioner, alone or with the aid of Garo assessors, would be the most efficient mode of trial, and proposed that the new regulations should make the commissioner the supreme judicator,¹³² he was conscious that more and more Garos should be employed in the police and judicial administration. In his Draft Regulation of 1819 he therefore suggested rules to that end which might be issued by the governor-general.

The rules had a double purpose, to give the Garo chiefs a share in the policing of the Garo hills, and to associate them with the judicial administration. The rules provided in the first place for the recognition of existing *sardars* or heads of villages, and of *laskars* or chiefs of the local divisions called *duars*, whose authority was established within their respective limits, and for the nomination of fit persons for such posts by the inhabitants of the village or the *sardars* of the division where none at present enjoyed such authority.

These *sardars and laskars* should be responsible for reporting murders and other heinous offences within their limits and for attempting the discovery and apprehension of the perpetrators thereof. They should also be made responsible for the security of the lowland territory adjoining their villages or *duars* and for preventing Garo inroads or outrages upon that territory, and for apprehending any Garo who should commit such outrage. To assist them in preserving order, the *mandals* or village officers of all border lowland villages should be obliged to report all crimes committed by the hillmen both to the police officers and to the nearest Garo *sardar*, who would then, in concert with the *laskars* and other *sardars*, seek to trace and apprehend the offenders. In return for these services the *laskars* and *sardars* would be allowed a salary. In case of misconduct, however, they would be removable from office by the commissioner.

For administration of justice the draft rules provided that

¹³¹ B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 88, Scott to Bayley 27 Sept. 1819.

¹³² *Ibid.*

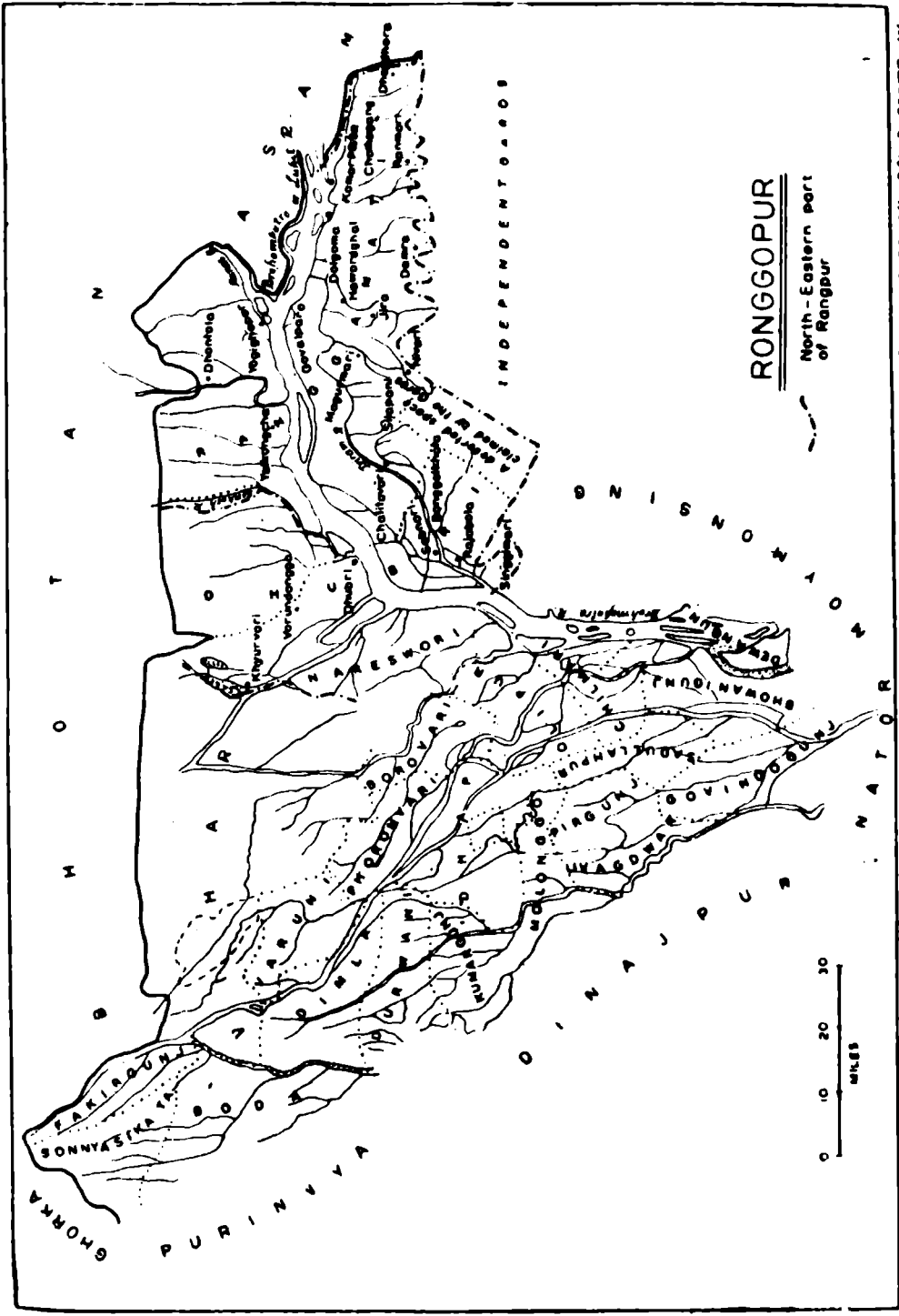
the *sardar* should be empowered to take cognizance of civil disputes between the inhabitants of his village, and the *laskar* of such disputes between villages in his division. In either case the aid should be taken of a *panchayat* consisting of the principal husbandmen or persons chosen by the parties themselves. Where a decision had to be enforced upon one of the parties it should be first referred to the commissioner. Petty criminal offences should be treated as civil causes and settled accordingly, the *panchayat* awarding such damages to the injured party as custom provided.

Scott proposed that police *darogahs* should be appointed with the usual powers at convenient stations in the lowlands, but that they should take cognizance only of murder, homicide, and of robbery, theft, burglary and affrays attended with homicide or wounding, in the hills. Even in such cases the *darogah* should observe the principle of securing the aid of the Garo *sardars* and *laskars* and of their *barkandazes* in apprehending the offenders.

Finally Scott proposed that when the commissioner tried Garo cases he should be assisted by five Garo assessors. They should be consulted on all points connected with the peculiar customs and manners of the Garos, and their opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the prisoner should be recorded, though this should not bind the court in passing judgment. All other matters of dispute, civil or criminal, which the *sardars* and *laskars* were unable to settle in the manner above prescribed should be tried before a *panchayat* either appointed by the commissioner or chosen by the parties. Their decision if not considered by the commissioner to be obviously unjust, should immediately be carried into execution.¹³³

By using their own chiefs in police and judicial matters Scott hoped to make the Garos the agents in the process of their own civilization. Cleveland had employed this method in Bhagalpur, and like Cleveland Scott hoped also by this means to earn the hill peoples' confidence. By limiting the normal jurisdiction of the Company's *darogahs* to the low-

¹³³ Enclosure 2 of Scott's Draft Regulation of 1819. B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 90.



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lands only, and making them work together with the *sardars* and *laskars* in arresting serious criminals, it was intended to promote better understanding and co-operation between the Garos and the Company's servants. But Scott's task was more difficult than Cleveland's, for in the Garo hills a strong body of organised and co-operative chiefs had in some measure to be created. To this end he proposed to arrange two annual assemblies of the Garo chiefs of each *paragana* where the commissioner would entertain them at public expense, and they would renew their fealty to the Government. At these assemblies any pending criminal cases would also be tried.¹³⁴ Through such regular meetings, and by such co-operation in the judicial administration it was hoped to bring into existence a powerful body of hill chiefs, loyal to the government and serving as useful subsidiary agents for the maintenance of law and order.¹³⁵

To these various proposals the governer-general-in-council and the Court of Directors eventually replied with approval. The Government resolved that the tract of the country lying between the rivers Sankash and Brahmaputra as well as the Garo hills and lowlands on the left bank of the Brahmaputra and the *churs* or islands on the latter river, which had been hitherto attached to the *thana* divisions of Dhubri and Karai-buri in Rangpur, be separated from the district of Rangpur and placed under the special charge of an officer to be denominated Civil Commissioner of the North-East parts of Rangpur.¹³⁶ In December, 1821 Scott was nominated as the first civil commissioner of the north-east parts of Rangpur. The Calcutta Council speaking of the zeal and intelligence displayed by Scott, expressed their desire to make use of his 'talents and local experience'. In recognition of "the responsibility and arduous nature of the functions" which their new commissioner would have to perform they allowed him a salary of 40,000 rupees a year, including all travelling and

¹³⁴ B.C.J.C., 28 Dec. 1821, no. 90, Enclosure 2 of Scott's letter of 27 Sept. 1819.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ B.C.J.C., 28 Dec., 1821, no. 100.

personal charges, a sum they considered to be no more than adequate.¹³⁷ This administrative action was followed in 1822 by legislation. The Regulation X of 1822 was passed on the 19 September 1822, embodying Scott's proposals. Its preamble declared that "with a view to promote the desirable object of reclaiming these races to the habits of civilized life, it seems necessary that a special plan for the administration of justice, of a kind adapted to their peculiar customs and prejudices, should be arranged and concerted with the headmen, and that measures should at the same time be taken for freeing them from dependence on the *zamindars* of the British provinces."¹³⁸ Accordingly, section II of the Regulation separated the tract of country comprised in the *thanas* of Goalpara, Dhubri, and Karaibari from the jurisdiction of the district of Rangpur and declared the operation of the existing Regulations to be suspended except in cases of subjects other than the Garos and other hill tribes. The new Regulation then defined the powers of the civil commissioner for the north-east parts of Rangpur in administering civil and criminal justice, the collection of revenue, and the superintendence of the police. Although strictly based on Scott's draft, it did not incorporate all the rules which Scott had drafted, but it left sufficient discretion in the hands of the government to meet all cases that might arise subsequently.

¹³⁷ J.L.B., vol. 8, letter of 8 Feb. 1822.

¹³⁸ R. Clarke, *The Regulations of the Government of Fort William in Bengal*, Vol. II, pp. 659-663, preamble of the Regulation of 1822.

III

SCOTT'S TERRITORIAL ACQUISITION

The Burmese Threat and the Annexation of Lower Assam

To THE Company the strategic north-east frontier or Bengal meant the whole of the hill ranges surrounding the Assam valley, for the security of its Bengal territories rested not only on the peaceable demeanour of the peoples of the immediate frontier hills, but also of those of the independent regions such as Cachar, Assam, Manipur and Burma beyond them. Any power which might advance along the Brahmaputra into central and eastern Bengal was a potential threat.

In the early part of the nineteenth century the Company's government felt no fear of the Ahom dynasty in Assam, for its weakness was very evident. But from 1817 the gradual rise to dominance of the Burmese in Assam demanded serious attention, for it gave a new complexion to the problem of a Burmese threat to Rangpur and Chittagong. Scott saw with alarm the Burmese encroachments upon the Chittagong frontier, and the greater danger inherent in their seizure of power in the upper Brahmaputra valley, and he concluded that the safety of the Company's north-east frontier depended on the existence of a strong and friendly power in Assam. The Ahom rulers were certainly friendly but clearly not strong enough to stand unaided against the Burmese aggressors. Therefore, Scott argued, the British should intervene on their behalf, driving out the Burmese, and making the Assamese strong friendly neighbours. Scott held and expressed these views strongly. The purpose of this chapter is to show the dominant role which the opinions of this trusted frontier officer played in the preparation of Amherst's controversial¹ Burmese war.

¹ The President of the Board of Control, C. W. Williams Wynn, was to comment on this war that Britain could not conquer the world out of 'mere humanity' just because Britons believed that only under their

Scott first came into contact with the confused politics of Ahom Assam as magistrate of Rangpur. The old king Suklingpha Kamaleswar Singh (1795—1811) died in January 1811 and thereafter a struggle for power developed between members of the royal line and their hereditary prime ministers—the *buragohains*. In February, 1814, the young raja (19 years), Chandra Kanta, brother of Kamaleswar, wrote to the governor-general, Lord Hastings, recalling the friendship extended to his family by Lord Minto, his immediate predecessor, and asking for assistance in quelling the internal dissensions within his kingdom. The raja mentioned the incursions of the Nora, Khamti, Dafla and Moamaria tribes, the plundering of *parganas* in Kamrup and on the Bijni boundary² by such rebels as Manik Chand, and the threat of invasion from Rangpur district by a royal pretender, Brajanath Kunwar, aided by an adventurous English trader Robert Bruce, who owned a factory at Jugighopa.³ It was with this last threat that Scott was immediately concerned, for the Supreme Government ordered him to take prompt and rigorous measures to prevent any such invasions. This was a duty, they felt, “imposed on the British government no less by its subsisting relation with that power, than by a regard for the tranquillity of its own possessions which must be endangered by the proceedings under consideration.”⁴

This open attack upon the raja's position Scott duly prevented.⁵ But more difficult to deal with were the pleas of an envoy Badan Chandra Barphukan, through whom the

rule were people happy. See G.D. Bearce, *British Attitudes Towards India, 1784-1858*, p. 50.

² B.P.C., 29 Apr. 1814, no. 51. The Raja of Assam to the Governor General, received on 3 Feb. 1814.

³ B.P.C., 29 Apr. 1814, no. 23, Scott to Adam, 18 Apr. 1814. Brajanath was a great-grandson of King Rajeshwar Singha (1751-69). For details about this prince, see Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 443-447. Robert Bruce, who appeared before David Scott on Apr. 25, 1814, stated that he was a native of India, see B.P.C. 29 Apr. nos. 24, 59.

⁴ B.P.C., 29 Apr. 1814, no. 52, Adam to Scott, 29 Apr. 1814.

⁵ B.P.C., 13 May 1814, nos. 58-59. Scott to Adam, 29 Apr. 1814.

raja appealed for help against the *buragohain*,* who was alleged to be keeping the raja virtually a prisoner. The letter the envoy bore complained about the continued enmity of the *buragohain*, who was accused of poisoning the raja's father and uncle and of putting to death nearly one thousand persons who, being faithful servants of the royal family, had ventured to remonstrate against his mischievous proceedings. The raja sought British help against this one man's tyranny, reminding Lord Hastings that the Company had previously given help to Raja Gaurinath (1780—1795). He asked for at least six companies of sipahis to be sent to his aid, declaring his readiness in return to become a tributary ruler under British protection, and to pay a sum of one lakh and a half of Narayani rupees. He also promised a favourable settlement of custom dues for the benefit of both the British traders and his own government.⁶

The government, which had recognized a special relationship with the royal family in 1814, declined in 1815 to take any action on Chandra Kanta's behalf. The secretary to the governor-general wrote to Scott to say "the British government not being bound by any engagements to support the raja and being connected with the government of Assam merely by the general relation of amity and friendship it cannot consistently with its own principles of policy comply with the Raja's solicitation while the government of Assam shall continue to maintain with us the same friendly relations which now exist, and while the domestic feuds of the government are not of a nature to affect the tranquillity of the Company's provinces we are necessarily precluded from interference in its internal affairs and you will accordingly be pleased to observe generally to the raja's agent in reply to his propositions that our policy is merely to attend to the concerns of our own government and not to inter-

* *Buragohain* when used as official designation means one of the three great ministers of the Ahom government.

⁶ B.P.C., 8 Dec. 1815, no. 53, enclosure 2, Raja Chandra Kanta's letter of 28 Kartic 1822 (B.S.); B.P.C., 8 Dec. 1815, nos. 52-53 (1), Scott to Adam, 15 Nov. 1815.

fere into those of other states even although the greatest advantage be offered as the price of our interference.”⁷ Scott duly performed his task of politely refusing the agent of the raja, and there the matter ended.

On 17 May, 1817, however, Scott had to report that since the British had refused to help resolve the conflicts within the Ahom kingdom, Badan Chandra had sought the aid of the Burmese, with whose help the *buragohain* had been expelled. What is more, though the expelled *buragohain* Purnananda died soon after, his eldest son Ruchinath had taken post at Gauhati and another son Jagannath, a *dhekhial phukan*, had arrived at Rungpur to invite the exiled Brajanath Kunwar to ascend the throne, and to solicit British armed intervention.⁸ Three days later, Scott giving “more precise information on Assam”, reported that the army which had entered Assam was not composed of Burmese and Cachar people but of the subjects of the rajas of Moran, Khamti and Singpho—the three independent chiefs whose territories lay between Assam and Ava.⁹

Scott also reported the immediate action he had taken in response to the pleas of Ruchinath Buragohain and of Brajanath Kunwar who had also waited on him.¹⁰ He had

⁷ B.P.C., 8 Dec. 1815, no. 54, Adam to Scott, 8 Dec. 1815.

⁸ B.P.C., 24 May 1817, no. 32, Scott to Adam, 17 May 1817. See also G. Borooah, *Assam Buranji*, p. 192.

⁹ B.P.C., 31 May 1817, nos. 91-92, Scott to Adam, 20 May 1817. As will be seen Scott’s earlier information was more correct for it was the Burmese, assisted by these people who invaded Assam. There are evidences of grievance of the Burmese against the Ahoms.

See G. C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 375-6, and J.A.S.B., Aug. 1838, p. 673 about the Burmese grievances against Purnananda Buragohain who had given support to the refractory Shans or Naras. In Assamese parlance the country and tribe of Sukapha’s origin (Shan state of Maulung in the kingdom of Mungmau or Pong) are both known as Nara. See Bhuyan, *Ang.-Ass.-Relations*, p. 2 and n. 4.

¹⁰ Towards the end of 1817 Jagannath Dhektal Phukan appeared before Scott, with an application for military assistance or permission to purchase and transport to Assam 700 stand of fire arms. A few days later Brajanath himself met Scott. See B.P.C., 31 May 1817, nos. 91-92, Scott to Adam, 20 May, 1817.

informed the Buragohain's men that as it was inconsistent with the principle of the British government to interfere with the internal concerns of foreign nations he was fully persuaded that no military aid would be granted to them, but that he would nevertheless submit their request to government. He also told them that though he was not aware of any objections to Brajanath Kunwar's proceeding to Assam unaccompanied by any armed force, the latter would be required to secure the British government's previous sanction for his departure. Scott also explained to Brajanath that he could not be allowed to take any military force with him and that in the event of his again being compelled to take refuge in British territory, government would not then sanction the renewal of his pension. But Brajanath decided to leave for Assam on any terms.¹¹ Following Ruchinath Buragohain's plan, Brajanath, with his son, arrived safely at Jorhat. There was no opposition worth the name, and Raja Chandra Kanta fled to Rangpore.* Though unfortunately, Brajanath could not be enthroned as he had a scar on his body, which was a disqualification for the raj according to Ahom custom, his son Purandar Singh was accepted by people as King of Assam early in 1818.¹² All this time Scott remained under the impression that it was the Singphos, Khamtis and Moamarias and not the Burmese who had invaded Assam in answer to Barphukan's call for help.

In 1819 the young *buragohain* and Raja Purandar Singh were driven from Gauhati by the faction headed by Chandra Kanta, supported by the Burmese. In September both of them addressed letters to Government from their refuge at Chilmari, in the district of Rangpur, asking for British help.¹³ By this time the Burmese had received from Raja Chandra Kanta an acknowledgement of his vassal sta-

¹¹ *Ibid.*

* This Rangpore is in Upper Assam and from here onwards this spelling will be used to distinguish it from Rangpur district in Bengal.

¹² G. Borooh, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-3.

¹³ B.C., vol. 770/20904, pp. 9-11; H. H. Wilson, *Documents illustrative of the Burmese War*, p. 6, Document no. 8.

tus and many thousand of Assamese had fled to British territory. The question of interfering in Assam politics was thus again raised.¹⁴ Scott forwarded petitions from Purandar Singh,¹⁵ offering to become a tributary of the Company in return for their aid, and from Ruchinath,¹⁶ claimant to the post of *buragohain*. He also forwarded a counter-claim from Raja Chandra Kanta for the surrender of the two pretenders.¹⁷ To this last, answer was made by Swinton in 1820 that while they remained peaceable refugees the British government would continue to offer them asylum.¹⁸ It was not quite so easy to deal with the *Buragohain's* petition, which had also explained the power and position of the Assamese prime minister vis-a-vis the raja, for the Supreme Government felt uncertain about the Buragohain's true authority. "We should remark" they told the Court of Directors, "that there is some confusion and obscurity in the petition presented by the Bura Goheyn, he sometimes represented himself as the adherent and supporter of Poorander Singh and at other times seems to state the supreme authority as resting in his own person, owing to the default of legal heirs to the Raj."¹⁹ Nevertheless, the government made it clear to the fugitives that it was not its policy to interfere in the internal affairs of a foreign state, nor to pronounce on disputed titles to the musnad, but rather to maintain friendly relations with whoever was the reigning prince.²⁰

The reply was a restatement of the position earlier taken up by Barlow and by the Court of Directors in relation to

¹⁴ B.P.C., 29 July 1820, no. 79, Scott to Swinton, 4 Sept. 1819.

¹⁵ B.P.C., 29 July 1820, no. 80, Scott to Swinton, 1 Nov. 1819.

¹⁶ B.P.C., 29 July 1820, nos. 81-82, Scott to Swinton, 27 Dec. 1819.

¹⁷ B.P.C., 29 July 1820, nos. 90 & 94, Raja Chandra Kanta's letters received on 8 Nov. 1819 and 14 June 1820.

¹⁸ B.C., vol. 770/20904, p. 14; P.L.B. 12 Sept. 1823, para 94, B.P.C., 29 July 1820, Governor General's letter to Raja Chandra Kanta, 20 July 1820.

¹⁹ H. H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 6, Document no. 8.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

the affairs of Rajputana and Central India.²¹ That position had proved untenable in the face of Pindari inroads, and the hopes of a self-contained peace false. Under Lord Hastings, extensive campaigns had been necessary before the Pindaris were crushed, the Marathas humbled and the peshwaship abolished, and all the important chiefs of India made to enter into treaty relations with the Company. The hope that the Company could remain aloof and indifferent to events in Assam soon proved equally misplaced. 1821 saw a further complication of the affairs of Ahom Assam and the raising of wider policy issues by Scott. In February, Scott reported that there were not more than one thousand Burmese in Assam,²² and that Raja Chandra Kanta emboldened by their slackness, was planning to throw off their yoke with the aid of Ahom refugees in the Company's territory.²³ He had also to report preparations by the ex-*raja* Purandar Singh for an attack from Bhutan upon Assam.²⁴ In May, the Burmese declared Raja Chandra Kanta deposed for his connivance at the murder of their supporter Badan Chandra Barphukan.²⁵ The Burmese installed another Ahom prince, Jogeswar Singh in Chandra Kanta's place, who was a mere puppet in their hands.²⁶ The Calcutta Council, whose earlier non-interference policy had been approved by the Court of

²¹ Barlow rejected the appeals of the Rajput ruler of Jaipur for protection against the Pindaris and Marathas, declaring his determination to observe the principle of non-interference in the internal concerns of the Indian states and in their transactions with each other. The British government's attention would henceforth be limited to the internal prosperity of the Company's territory. (B.S.P.C. 13 Feb. 1806 no. 67. Barlow to Rajah of Jaipur, 3 Feb. 1816). Against this General Lake—in Scott's role—argued that to abandon the Rajput states would “probably terminate in a renewal of hostilities under circumstances of the most serious disadvantage.” (B.S.P.C. 6 Feb. 1806, no. 15, Lake to Barlow, 17 Jan. 1806). In the event Lake's predictions proved correct.

²² B.P.C., 19 March 1821, no. 111, Scott to Swinton, 6 Feb. 1821.

²³ B.P.C., 19 March 1821, no. 112, Scott to Swinton, 6 Feb. 1821.

²⁴ B.C., vol. 770/20904, pp. 19-20.

²⁵ H.H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 7, Document no. 8.

²⁶ B.C., vol. 770/20904, p. 21.

Directors,²⁷ now began to feel that “continued refusal to interfere in the affairs of Assam has by no means prevented the troubles and discontented state of that country from proving a source of embarrassment to the British government.” The government of Ava had taken advantage of the dissensions prevailing in the Assamese territory to occupy the country, so that Burmese forces had come into contact with British territories at another and most inconvenient point.²⁸

Scott took advantage of these doubts to press again for intervention. In his letter of 19 May he argued that the arrogant character of the Burmese, and their government’s spirit of conquest must make their advance into Assam dangerous. He therefore asked “whether the interests of the British government would not be best consulted by permitting the Assam refugees to obtain the necessary means for the expulsion of the invaders.”²⁹ Scott offered two arguments for such a course: an Assamese rising against the Burmese was inevitable; and if, for lack of support it failed, and consolidation of Burmese authority in Assam went on unhampered, the Company would be driven to station a considerable force on the unhealthy eastern frontier.³⁰ He added, that the cruelties practised by the Burmese, and the devastation of property had made the whole people desirous of being relieved from them, and that all that seemed necessary to enable either Purandar Singh or the Buragohain to establish their authority, was a supply of firearms.³¹

The Calcutta authorities did furnish the Buragohain with a *rahdari* pass for two hundred armed men and permitted him to purchase arms privately. But they did so without in any way accepting Scott’s analysis of the situation. Since no effective authority existed in Assam, such limited assistance

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ B.P.C., 16 June 1821, no. 69, Scott to Swinton, 19 May 1821.

³⁰ B.P.C., 16 June 1821, no. 69, Scott to Swinton, 19 May 1821.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 7, Document no. 8; B.C., Vol. 770/20904, pp. 22-3.

could not be construed, they felt, as a hostile move against a neighbouring power,³² and they were careful to prevent any appearance of countenancing the Buragohain's attempt. But although the assistance rendered was meagre, Scott helped the fugitives to make full use of it. He issued instructions to lieutenant McGowan of the Rangpur Local Battalion that the transport of arms, ammunitions, and other military stores to Assam be permitted and that natives of Assam should be at liberty to return to their country with arms either singly or in a body. He also allowed Hindustani soldiers to go to Assam provided they went singly.³³

For all the favour shown, Purandar Singh's bid failed, his troops being defeated by Chandra Kanta in May 1821, his rival for the throne, to whom Robert Bruce thereupon transferred his services. At the end of October 1821 it was Chandra Kanta's turn to apply for British assistance, through Robert Bruce. On Scott's advice the government issued orders to the Territorial Department to give effect to any pass that Scott might issue and to grant permission for the transport of military stores to Assam should application be made at the Presidency.³⁴ Scott believing Chandra Kanta's position to be favourable after Purandar's defeat³⁵ and in the absence of any large force of Burmese, gave permission to Bruce to purchase three hundred muskets and ninety maunds of gunpowder for Chandra Kanta.³⁶ It is to be noted that although at this time the Company's relations with Burma were strained they were not declaredly hostile. The Supreme Government by giving a free hand to Scott had allowed itself, however reluctantly, to be driven into conflict with the Burmese; "one of those unjustifiable and improper proceed-

³² B.P.C., 16 June 1821, no. 71, Prinsep to Scott, 9 June 1821.

³³ B.P.C., 26 January 1822, no. 77, Scott to Lt. Magowan, 19 Dec. 1821, and to Prinsep, 23 Dec. 1821.

³⁴ B.P.C., 8 Dec. 1821, nos. 81-82, Scott to Swinton, 3 Nov. 1821 and Swinton to Scott, 30 Nov. 1821; H. H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 8, Document no. 8.

³⁵ B.P.C., 8 Dec. 1821, no. 81, Scott to Swinton, 3 Nov. 1821.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

ings," its critic declared, "which the legislature in their enactment wisely and judiciously meant to prohibit."³⁷

Chandra Kanta's success in defeating Purandar and capturing all the districts bordering upon the Company's territories led the enthusiastic Scott to abandon Purandar Singh and the Buragohain.³⁸ But such success also drove the Burmese government to send the greatest of its generals, Mingi Maha Bandula,³⁹ to Assam with a large force in the month of April 1822.⁴⁰ At Mahgarh, near Jorhat, a battle took place in which Chandra Kanta, after fighting gallantly for a long time, succumbed to the superior force of Bandula.⁴¹ On 30 September Scott reported that Chandra Kanta had been expelled from Assam by the Burmese party, and had fled to the chowky opposite Goalpara.⁴²

Chandra Kanta's defeat marked the extinction of Ahom authority in Assam, for towards the end of June 1822, Mingi Maha Tilwa, the commanding officer of the Burmese army at the Assam *chowky*, was declared Raja of Assam. Scott wrote to the Supreme Government at Calcutta: "the Burmese having obtained complete mastery of Assam and a person of that nation having been appointed to the supreme authority, the country may now be considered as a province of the Burman empire."⁴³

Though in June 1822 Scott and Lt. Davidson, who commanded at Goalpara, reported the Burmese peaceable,

³⁷ Captain W. White, *A political history of the Extraordinary Events which led to the Burmese War*, p. 118.

³⁸ B.C., vol. 770/20904, p. 24.

³⁹ He is still a great hero in Burma, and when sovereignty was transferred to the Burmese by the Labour Government in 1948, the big square in the centre of Rangoon was renamed after him. D. Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, p. 70.

⁴⁰ B.P.C., 6 July 1822, no. 49, Scott to Swinton, 10 July 1822; also in Scott's Historical Notes, B.S.P.C., 14 July 1826.

⁴¹ B.C., vol. 770/20904, p. 25.

⁴² H. H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 8, Document no. 8.

⁴³ B.P.C., 26 July 1822, no. 50, Scott to Prinsep, 11 July 1822.

they found ample cause to fear their forces.⁴⁴ Davidson from his own experience knew the effectiveness of their swift warboats each carrying anything up to 150 armed men. Davidson and Scott were careful therefore not to allow Ahom refugees to provoke the Burmese, and Scott urged the despatch to the frontier of considerable reinforcements.⁴⁵ In July Scott heard from a Burmese *vakil* that two months earlier the Burmese commander Mingi Maha Tilwa had contemplated a full scale attack upon the Goalpara district with an army of 20,000 men,⁴⁶ and Scott in a private letter addressed to George Swinton, political secretary to the government, reported the danger threatening the eastern frontier of Bengal. "Government will now begin to feel," Scott wrote, "the inconvenience of the line of conduct imposed upon them by the Act of Parliament,⁴⁷ and will have to keep a much larger force in this quarter than would have sufficed in 1816."⁴⁸ He then stressed the gravity of the Burmese menace by pointing out that the whole of Dacca, Mymensing, Rangpur, and Natore districts now lay at the mercy of the Burmese. They now commanded the river routes into eastern Bengal and it would be as difficult to fight with them on water as it was to fight against the Pindaris on land in South India. Their occupation of the Brahmaputra valley had changed the whole complexion of the Burmese problem. It would be a great miscalculation, Scott thought, to judge the capacities of the Burmese in control of the Brahmaputra simply by the slow movements of their troops in the mountainous tract bordering on Chittagong and Tipperah. From the Brahmaputra valley they could

⁴⁴ B.C., vol. 770/20904, p. 41. Reports of various outrages, committed on the British frontier villages by the Burmese troops had been received by Scott; H. H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 8, Document no. 8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ B.C. vol. 770/20904, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Meaning the 'Charter Act of 1793', which laid down that the pursuit of schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India were repugnant to the wish, honour and policy of British nation.

⁴⁸ B.P.C., 26 July 1822, no. 51, Scott to Swinton, 10 July 1822.

easily sail down and sack Dacca and the adjoining districts, and against such a naval attack the superior discipline of the British troops would not be of much use.⁴⁹

Despite the government's plain statement in 1820 that it was not concerned with the internal politics of Assam, and despite the falsification of his hopes first of Purandar Singh and then of Chandra Kanta, Scott continued to develop and press for a forward policy in Assam. He pointed out that the Burmese had laid claim to Dacca and that in 1793 Captain Cox had represented to the Burmese government that Assam was a tributary of the British government. "It does not require much insight into Asiatic politics," he said, "to enable me to predict that they will not neglect the first opportunity of asserting their claims under the encouragement of being allowed quietly to possess themselves of a country that we not long ago declared to be a dependency of ours."⁵⁰

Scott's forceful advocacy did induce the government to adopt various precautionary measures. The whole frontier was placed under the special command of a lieutenant-colonel assisted by a brigade-major. The river Tista was considered to be the western boundary of his command, which included the frontier districts of Rangpur, Dacca, Sylhet and Tipperah. The particular threat from the Burmese war boats was also tackled by the despatch of oared boats of the longest size, armed with a twelve-pounder carronade in the bows and a party of five *golandazes* (matchlockmen) per boat. Later, Lord Hastings reporting to London on the Burmese conquest of Assam, said that there was not the remotest danger of a rupture with the Burmese. Only because the accumulation of disorderly troops on the Assam-Bengal border exposed British villages to marauding parties had it been thought necessary to reinforce that frontier.⁵¹

Yet it is clear that the addition of six hundred miles to the Anglo-Burmese border did increase the danger of

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ B.P.C., 26 July 1822, no. 51, Scott to Swinton, 10 July 1822.

⁵¹ Home Misc., vol. 673, pp. 659-60, extract from a letter of Marquis of Hastings dated Calcutta, 27 July 1822.

conflict and the strategic importance of the Bengal frontier regions. By the end of August, 1822, Scott was able to point to one clear case of Burmese aggression—the occupation of an island in the Brahmaputra near Goalpara which had been in British hands. He made this the occasion to stress the impolicy of submitting to such Burmese provocation, the more so as Burmese reinforcements were known to be moving up.⁵² But the government rather pooh-poohed Scott's report about the island incident and he was gently reproved for being so bellicose and alarmist about "points of no importance, where expense may be entailed without possibility of advantage."⁵³ The report was softened by giving to Scott the charge of direct relations with Sikkim, in addition to his other duties, on the death of the previous superintendent Major Latter.⁵⁴ However, by the autumn of 1823 Scott's warnings about Burmese intentions and his proposals for active measures came to seem more reasonable. In October Swinton told Scott of Burmese attacks upon an island in the Naaf river (in the Chittagong district) and their threats to commence a general invasion if their possession of it were disputed. He also announced precautionary troop movements to Rangpur, Sylhet and Dacca.⁵⁵

This letter of Swinton's crossed with one of Scott's, also of 31 Oct. 1823, in which he pressed for action. Though he was sure the Burmese in Assam had no intention of committing any hostile act there, he saw in the Chittagong dispute an occasion for settling the problem of security along the whole eastern frontier. Any rupture with Ava over the Naaf river island should be followed by the march of a Company's force into Assam "when there is not a doubt that the inhabitants of the country would rise in all directions upon the Burmese, who do not at present exceed 1,000 men, and cut them off in detail."⁵⁶ In a private letter to Swinton,

⁵² B.P.C., 27 Sept. 1822, no. 68, Davidson to Scott, 25 Aug. 1822.

⁵³ B.P.C., 27 Sept. 1822, no. 69, Swinton to Scott, 27 Sept. 1822.

⁵⁴ B.P.C., 27 Sept. 1822, no. 65, Swinton to Scott, 27 Sept. 1822.

⁵⁵ B.S.P.C., 31 Oct. 1823, no. 15, Swinton to Scott, 31 Oct. 1823.

⁵⁶ B.S.P.C., 14 Nov. 1823, no. 13, Scott to Swinton, 31 Oct. 1823.

Scott put it, "the best and cheapest defence of this frontier would be the invasion of Assam."⁵⁷ Even if the existing differences⁵⁸ with the Burmese Court were adjusted by negotiations, the evacuation of Assam by the Burmese "should be insisted upon as a *sine qua non*—were it even at the expense of our paying to them the annual tribute they at present derive from that country, and which does not probably exceed a lac of rupees."⁵⁹ Should force be needed to evict the Burmese from Assam Scott thought that eight to nine hundred infantry, two *risalas* of irregular cavalry, six field pieces, and a few battering guns "in case of accidents" would suffice. Of no less interest were Scott's comments upon what should be done after the Burmese had been evicted, peacefully or otherwise, from Assam. Scott assumed that a native ruler whoever might seem to have the best claim to be raja would be installed. But he did not believe that a satisfactory administration would emerge without British tutelage. "The imbecility, rapacity and barbarous cruelty of the Assam native administration having always been remarkable even amongst Asiatic states," he held out little hope "that such rulers should improve in the art of governing when relieved from the risk of...rebellion or foreign invasion." He therefore urged the need to provide such a ruler with a subsidiary force, or with officers to discipline the native Assamese forces. He also pressed that the Company should insist upon a rigid observance of the commercial treaty of 1793, "owing to the infringement of which a great loss is sustained to the British merchants and also by the government in a diminished demand for Bengal salt occasioned by the exorbitant price to which it is now raised."⁶⁰ Finally Scott urged, with passion, that the Company should, from the first avow its right to interfere in the internal administration of the country.⁶¹

⁵⁷ B.S.P.C., 14 Nov. 1823, no. 16, Scott to Swinton, 31 Oct. 1823.

⁵⁸ The Sahapuri and other incidents on the Chittagong border.

⁵⁹ B.S.P.C., 14 Nov. 1823, no. 16, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 31 Oct. 1823.

⁶⁰ B.S.P.C., 14 Nov. 1823, no. 16, Scott to Swinton, 31 Oct. 1823.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Scott, in a most interesting passage, attacked the wisdom of past treaties of subsidiary alliance under which such interference had been excluded. "Policy and justice alike require an open and previously understood departure from the principle that has hitherto formed the basis of our tributary alliances, viz. that we shall not interfere in the internal administration of the dependent prince. This principle of the international law of the European states appears to be founded upon a consideration of the nature of the Feudal and Representative Governments of that portion of the globe, which sufficiently provided against any gross mismanagement on the part of the dependent Ally and rendered unnecessary the interference of the Protecting state." But in India, where the Company was dealing with despotic governments—and Assam was a very bad example—"the impracticality of reconciling the actual observance of this system with the plainest dictates of justice and humanity, has repeatedly forced the British government to acts of at least a questionable colour." Better, then, Scott argued, establish the right to interfere.⁶²

Scott's arguments might not have carried much weight with Calcutta had not events in Cachar and Manipur increased the tension. These two petty states had known no peace for years. Manipur had been forced to acknowledge Burmese suzerainty in 1812. Cachar, under a succession of weak rulers had become an easy prey to invasions from Manipur and Jaintia. In the early years of the century the rulers of Manipur had fled to Cachar whenever they were seriously threatened by the Burmese,⁶³ and in 1823 the legitimate ruler of Cachar Gobind Chandra was expelled by Manipuri adventurers. Gobind Chandra had thereupon appealed to the Burmese for help.

In November 1823 a Burmese force began concentrating at Gauhati, and Scott, fearing they were destined for an advance into Cachar, warned the Burmese on 24 November

⁶² B.S.P.C., 14 Nov. 1823, no. 16, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 31 Oct. 1823.

⁶³ See J. M. Roy, *The History of Manipur*, pp. 63-68.

that an alliance existed between the English and Cachar.⁶⁴ On 28 November Amherst gave Scott authority to move troops from Sylhet into Cachar if his warning went unheeded.⁶⁵ On 1 December Scott repeated his warning in the governor-general's name.⁶⁶ On 15 December news was sent by Bruce at Gauhati of three thousand Burmese troops having advanced.⁶⁷

Scott, forwarding this news to Calcutta, outlined the political or military measures which he thought might be taken. His first proposal was for a military advance up river towards Assam to compel the Burmese to abandon their movement into Cachar. His second was for an alliance with the ruler of Jaintia. His third was for a joint Anglo-Burmese guarantee of the independence of Gobind Chandra, as ruler of Cachar.⁶⁸ To this news government reacted first by expressing some doubt as to the reality of the reported move on Cachar or at least as to its seriousness, and then by giving a reluctant permission to take the proposed military measures, but only if matters came to extremities. The proposal for a joint guarantee of Gobind Chandra was disallowed since it would give to the Burmese that very right to interfere in Cachar which it was wished to prevent.⁶⁹

Meanwhile, on 14 January 1824, Scott hearing of a continuing Burmese advance had ordered Major Cooper to advance up river towards Goalpara, and had himself set off for Sylhet.⁷⁰ By the 19th Scott was reporting a first clash with Burmese forces,⁷¹ at Bikrampur, in which the Company's troops had won the day. Scott sought to press the

⁶⁴ B.S.P.C., 12 Dec. 1823, no. 3, Scott to Burmese officer commanding, 24 Nov. 1823.

⁶⁵ B.S.P.C., 28 Nov. 1823, no. 6, Swinton to Scott, 28 Nov. 1823.

⁶⁶ B.S.P.C., 2 Jan. 1824, no. 14, Scott to Swinton, 15 Dec. 1823.

⁶⁷ B.S.P.C., 9 Jan. 1824, no. 1, Scott to Swinton, 19 Dec. 1823.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ B.S.P.C., 17 Jan. 1824, no. 6, Swinton to Scott, 17 Jan. 1824.

⁷⁰ B.S.P.C., 30 Jan. 1824, no. 17, Scott to Swinton, 14 Jan. 1824.

⁷¹ B.S.P.C., 30 Jan. 1824, nos. 8-9, Scott to Swinton, 19 Jan. 1824.

advantage, diplomatic as well as military, by advancing into Assam, but though Scott was authorised to expel the Burmese from Cachar whilst the season was still favourable, he was told not to commit the Company to an attack on Assam.⁷² On 22 January, after moving from Sylhet to Badarpur, Scott opened communications with the Burmese commander.⁷³

On the 23rd he wrote to the Burmese commander requesting him to withdraw from Cachar.⁷⁴ On the 25th he privately wrote to Swinton for the reinforcements he obviously hoped would have to be used. His mind was also actively considering the advantages of seizing the southern bank of the Brahmaputra as far as Gauhati, and of constructing a road thence to link up with Sylhet.⁷⁵ On 1st February he received the Burmese commander's reply, declaring that his orders were to pursue the Manipurians into English territory if they were not surrendered.⁷⁶ On the 2nd Scott warned them against any advance, and threatened action against Assam should they move. Meanwhile, having warned the Burmese that Jaintia was under British protection;⁷⁷ Scott was busy threatening the raja of that territory to prevent his submitting to them.⁷⁸

On the 6th February Scott wrote another long and detailed analysis of the danger threatening Bengal while the Burmese were allowed to hold Assam. Calling upon

⁷² B.S.P.C., 30 Jan. 1824, nos. 13-14, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 20 Jan. 1824 and Swinton's reply, 27 Jan. 1824.

⁷³ B.S.P.C., 6 Feb. 1824, no. 6, Scott to Swinton, 25 Jan. 1824.

⁷⁴ B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, no. 9, Scott to Burmese commander, 23 Jan. 1824.

⁷⁵ B.S.P.C., 6 Feb. 1824, no. 6, Scott to Swinton, 25 Jan. 1824.

⁷⁶ B.S.P.C., Translation of a letter from the Burmese chief commander Mingi Maha Nanda Kroden. B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, no. 7.

⁷⁷ B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, no. 9, Scott to Burmese commander, 2 Feb. 1824.

⁷⁸ B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, no. 8, Scott to Swinton, 3 Feb. 1824. The Burmese claimed to have inherited suzerainty over Jaintia from the Assam ruler.

the experience of Symes embassy to Ava⁷⁹ he painted a vivid and alarming picture of Burmese war boats speeding to the plunder of monsoon inundated Bengali villages. Against such enemies no defence was possible except their expulsion from their base in Assam.⁸⁰ By the 10th Amherst and his council were so far convinced of the inevitability of war that they wrote to Bombay and Madras asking for their military support.⁸¹ On that day Scott asked for permission to set in motion the advance from Goalpara.⁸²

After rejecting all Assamese appeals for aid in 1820 the British Government had come by stages first to permit unofficial countenance of arms running and invasion, then to a more positive belief in the need to encourage the Assamese to expel the Burmese invaders and the Cacharis to stand against them,⁸³ and finally to accept Scott's arguments for an advance into Lower Assam. Swinton in November 1823 reported that government had admitted that a British advance to Gauhati and the occupation of the valley between Gauhati and Goalpara was necessary "even as a measure of defensive policy."⁸⁴ Scott in his letter to the Burmese commander in Cachar could at last boldly say: "Hitherto you have experienced the advantage of being at

⁷⁹ Bodawpaya's conquests had created a frontier situation necessitating British political intercourse with Burma and Captain Michael Symes was the first of the three envoys who were sent to Ava in the eighteenth century. Symes visited Ava both in 1795 and in 1802 (*Cambridge History of India*, vol. V, p. 559). In his *An account of an embassy to the Kingdom of Ava in the year 1795*, Symes gives a vivid picture of the well-equipped Burmese war boats and their "extremely impetuous" attack. He says: "By far the most respectable part of the Birman military force is their establishment of war-boats."

See Lt.-Col. Michael Symes, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 58-60.

⁸⁰ B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, no. 16, Scott to Swinton, 6 Feb. 1824.

⁸¹ B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, nos. 1, 2, 3. Council's letter to Presidencies, 10 Feb. 1824.

⁸² B.S.P.C., 20 Feb. 1824, no. 7, Scott to Swinton, 10 Feb. 1824.

⁸³ B.S.P.C., 14 Nov. 1823, no. 17, Swinton to Scott, 17 Nov. 1823.

⁸⁴ B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, no. 17, Swinton to Scott, 13 Feb. 1824.

peace with us, now, if you insist upon war you will also taste its bitter fruits."⁸⁵

On 20 February 1824, a resolution of the governor-general-in-council, reviewing Burmese actions in Arakan, Cachar and Assam declared that they "must be regarded as having placed the two countries in a state of actual war." They further resolved "that the force assembled at Goalpara be ordered to advance upon Gauhati...to expel the enemy from the commanding position which they occupy at the upper part of the Brahmaputra." They had at last been convinced by Scott that only thus could Bengal be safeguarded.⁸⁶ On 5 March war was publicly declared and on the 13th the British forces moved forward from their camp at Goalpara under the command of Lt. Col. George MacMorine.⁸⁷

Scott played a great part in planning and carrying out the military operations during the Burmese war. Even after war had been declared and the troops set in motion, it was the civilian Scott who guided the advance of the force, supplying information regarding the state of roads, the possibility of obtaining supplies, and the attitude of the local people of the country.⁸⁸

In all his despatches about the Burmese in Assam Scott had shown himself keenly aware of the strength and weaknesses of the Company's defences, and particularly concerned about the Burmese naval threat to Eastern Bengal. Scott

⁸⁵ H.H. Wilson, *op. cit.* Document no. 22(d).

⁸⁶ B.S.P.C., 20 Feb. 1824, no. 13. Resolution of the Governor-General-in-Council, 20 Feb. 1824; B.S.P.C., 20 Feb. 1824, no. 15, Swinton to Scott. 20 Feb. 1824, H. H. Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 28—33, Documents nos. 28-29.

⁸⁷ H. H. Wilson, *Historical sketch of the Burmese war*, p. 18.

⁸⁸ Lt. Col. J. MacMorine was in regular correspondence with Scott. "I feel extremely obliged" he wrote, "by your kind and free communications and suggestions on the subject which your knowledge of the country and people renders you of course more capable of forming a correct judgment on the means to be employed than what I can possibly devise" MacMorine to Scott, 10 Feb. 1824. B.S.P.C., 12 March 1824, no. 17; Home Misc., vol. 662, pp. 434-9.

had visualised three possible Burmese invasion routes: the first from Manipur by Tipperah and Cachar; the second by Cachar and Jaintia and the third from Assam by the Brahmaputra.⁸⁹ From the first route he expected little danger, since it ran through jungle almost impenetrable at any season of the year, and with the minimum of British military support could be defended by the inhabitants of Tipperah. The second and the third routes needed immediate attention. To the military commander Lt. Col. MacMoline he wrote of the third route, down the Brahmaputra, "I must confess that after mature reflection on this subject during the course of several years I am unable to devise any effectual and readily practicable means of meeting it other than that of expelling the Burmese from the upper part of the river."⁹⁰ That was because the Burmese war canoes with a speed of 8-10 miles an hour, once they had broken through the Company's flotilla at Goalpara could never be caught by British gunboats with a speed of only 4 to 5 miles an hour.⁹¹ When in February the Government ordered an advance from Goalpara up the Assam valley they were putting into practice the measure so often urged by Scott to meet the greatest Burmese threat. The subsequent military operations, as Scott had foreseen, put paid to any possible Burmese thrust down the Brahmaputra.

But Scott, while assisting the successful military advance up the Brahmaputra did not cease to try to ward off the other danger he had foreseen—that of a Burmese advance through Cachar and Jaintia. Here his chosen method was diplomatic. On 6 March he concluded a treaty with Raja Gobind Chandra of Cachar, by which the latter placed Cachar under British protection.⁹² On the 10th, he secured a similar treaty with Raja Ram Singh of Jaintia, the raja promising to give his military support to the Company by advancing

⁸⁹ B.S.P.C., 13 Feb. 1824, no. 16, Scott to MacMoline, 6 Feb. 1824.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Treaty with Cachar made by David Scott on 6 March 1824. B.S.P.C., 2 April 1824, no. 7.

to attack the Burmese east of Gauhati.⁹³ On the 20th Scott agreed with Raja Gambhir Singh of Manipur to supply him with arms for the recovery of Manipur from the Burmese.⁹⁴ On the 21st and 24th Scott made arrangements with raja of Khyrim and Sulang, one of the rulers of the Khasi hills, for the passage of Scott and his troops through the hills to Gauhati, the raja opening a *dak* route and improving the road in return for a small jagir.⁹⁵ To all these efforts to secure the eastern flank of Bengal and Sylhet—efforts made in the midst of active military preparation—the governor-general-in-council accorded a gratified approval.⁹⁶ Scott also sought to use Assamese dislike of the Burmese.⁹⁷ He had assured the government of the likelihood of Assamese support and received sanction for appeals to them to rise. He had hopes also of securing the services of other tribes such as the Singhos and Khamtis.

Col. MacMoline on 13 March led his troops from Goalpara towards Gauhati along both banks of the Brahmaputra. At this time Scott's early presence in Assam had been declared an 'object of the highest importance' for the government.⁹⁸ Scott therefore prepared to leave Sylhet for the Assam valley.⁹⁹ His flank-march with an escort of three companies of the 23rd Native Infantry over the Jaintia hills

⁹³ Treaty with Jaintia, B.S.P.C. 2 April 1824, nos. 8-9.

⁹⁴ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, no. 22, Scott to Swinton, 20 March 1824.

⁹⁵ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, nos. 10 and 16, Scott's private letters to Swinton of 21 March 1824 and of 24 March 1824.

⁹⁶ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, no. 13, Swinton to Scott, 2 Apr. 1824.

⁹⁷ In a proclamation to the Assamese soon after the British Troops entered the territory of Assam Scott recounted the miserable condition of the local inhabitants under the Burmese rule of terror and sought to incite the Assamese to wreak vengeance on the remnant of those who had caused them so many calamities, by helping the British army.

See, Home Misc., vol. 662, pp. 169-175.

⁹⁸ B.S.P.C., 12 March 1824, no. 23, Swinton to Scott, 12 March 1824.

⁹⁹ B.S.P.C., 2 March 1824, no. 12, Scott to Swinton.

to attack the Burmese east of Gauhati.⁹³ On the 20th Scott agreed with Raja Gambhir Singh of Manipur to supply him with arms for the recovery of Manipur from the Burmese.⁹⁴ On the 21st and 24th Scott made arrangements with raja of Khyrim and Sulang, one of the rulers of the Khasi hills, for the passage of Scott and his troops through the hills to Gauhati, the raja opening a *dak* route and improving the road in return for a small jagir.⁹⁵ To all these efforts to secure the eastern flank of Bengal and Sylhet—efforts made in the midst of active military preparation—the governor-general-in-council accorded a gratified approval.⁹⁶ Scott also sought to use Assamese dislike of the Burmese.⁹⁷ He had assured the government of the likelihood of Assamese support and received sanction for appeals to them to rise. He had hopes also of securing the services of other tribes such as the Singhos and Khamtis.

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⁹⁵ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, nos. 10 and 16, Scott's private letters to Swinton of 21 March 1824 and of 24 March 1824.

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⁹⁸ B.S.P.C., 12 March 1824, no. 23, Swinton to Scott, 12 March 1824.

⁹⁹ B.S.P.C., 2 March 1824, no. 12, Scott to Swinton.

formed Scott's chief contribution to the campaign.¹⁰⁰ He secured co-operation in this march of the raja of Jaintia and his brother-in-law Esang Kunwar,¹⁰¹ and was much assisted by Durgaram Khound, a one-time *Khargharia Phukan* (one in charge of magazine), whose local knowledge of the Nowgong area was to prove invaluable and who later showed great courage when employed by the intelligence department.¹⁰² By 14 April Scott had reached Raha *chowky* and he thereupon set off for Kaliabar, hoping to link up with Colonel MacMorine's force and prevent any return of the Burmese who had withdrawn when the raja of Jaintia's forces advanced.¹⁰³ On 15 April he arrived at Nowgong, seventy-five miles up river from Gauhati.

Nowgong was then one of the largest towns in Assam, extending for some seven miles along both banks of the Kalang river, and containing some four thousand families.¹⁰⁴ Here in Nowgong, which was and still is, the granary of Assam, Scott first learnt about the *paik* system¹⁰⁵ of labour contributions to the State and immediately took advantage of the system by commuting the service of 500 of the existing *paiks* in return for the supply of 4,000 maunds of rice. The remaining crown *paiks* were asked to clean, store and to take care of this rice as their labour service.¹⁰⁶

Not content with these immediate practical measures, Scott was seen assessing the strategic importance of Nowgong. On 16 April he wrote to Calcutta recommending that the 2nd Battalion of the 23rd Regiment should be posted

¹⁰⁰ E.B. Shaw, 'The First Burmese War and the British Conquest of Assam,' *Assam Review*, May 1928, p. 16. The long-term importance of Scott's march was that it led to the British occupation of the Khasi-Hills.

¹⁰¹ B.S.P.C., 30 Nov. 1827, no. 4, Scott to Sterling, 11 Sept. 1826.

¹⁰² B.S.P.C., 16 Nov. 1827, nos. 48-49, Scott to Swinton, 10 Sept. 1827.

¹⁰³ B.S.P.C., 7 May 1824, no. 6, Scott to Swinton, 14 Apr. 1824.

¹⁰⁴ B.S.P.C., 7 May 1824, no. 7, Scott to Swinton, 16 Apr. 1824.

¹⁰⁵ See chapter IV. (1).

¹⁰⁶ B.S.P.C., 7 May 1824, no. 7, Scott to Swinton, 16 Apr. 1824.

at Nowgong both with reference to the expediency of keeping up a sufficient force in Assam and also because the town was likely to prove much more healthy and better provisioned than any other part of the frontier. The cantonment for the troops, he pointed out, would be built by the *paiks* without any expense to the Company. Scott made the further point that the maintenance of a body of troops at Nowgong was also required on account of the marriage ties between the Burmese and many of the chief inhabitants, whose wives, daughters and female relations had been given to, or forcibly taken by the Burmese conquerors. In consequence of this state of things the chief people of Nowgong were, Scott thought, perhaps less inclined to a change of masters than those in any other considerable district in Assam.¹⁰⁷ The general masses, Scott reported, felt the utmost satisfaction at the arrival of the British troops.¹⁰⁸

The first phase of the campaign in Assam ended in July when Col. Richards, who had succeeded to the command in Assam¹⁰⁹ returned to Gauhati after the Burmese retreat to Maramukh. Up to this time the result had been decidedly in favour of the English.

Throughout this period, as government had requested, Scott had been in constant touch with Col. Richards, pouring out ideas and suggestions. He had ordered the building of cantonments at Nowgong,¹¹⁰ he urged the procurement of Tibetan mules,¹¹¹ Assamese bullocks or Dangar porters of Ranghar¹¹² for the next advance into Upper Assam or the invasion of Burma. But throughout July and August his great preoccupation came to be with Col. Richards himself, who wished to retire upon Gauhati after his success. Scott

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ On 30 May Brig. MacMorine died of cholera and Col. Richards took the charge of C.-in-C.

¹¹⁰ B.S.P.C., 7 May 1824, no. 7, Scott to Swinton, 16 Apr. 1824.

¹¹¹ B.S.P.C., 1 Oct. 1824, nos. 26-27, Scott to Swinton, 10 Sept. 1824.

¹¹² B.S.P.C., 9 Apr. 1824, no. 5, Scott to Swinton, 28 March 1824.

pressed for the continuance of the corps at Raha *chowky*, whence the newly liberated Assamese could be protected from Burmese revenge and the invasion route to Cachar could be blocked.¹¹³ To this, however, Col. Richards could not be persuaded to agree, despite Scott's appeals to him and to Swinton. Scott feared that all would be undone by the British withdrawal of their protecting forces, and he later expressed his belief that if Col. Richards had advanced soon after the occupation of Gauhati, the greater part of Assam could have been cleared of the enemy—their numbers and their equipment being in no way formidable. A forward march, he thought, would also have effectively prevented the enemy from recruiting their finances by contributions levied from Nowgong and elsewhere.¹¹⁴ He was particularly unhappy about Richards' decision to withdraw because it upset his plans for the establishment of commercial links with the country to the east of Assam. Even at this very early stage, Scott had opened up relations with the hereditary chiefs of Burmese-held Mogaon by sending Assamese messengers to his court. A withdrawal now would destroy the favourable impression Scott had made and destroy all hopes of future trade relations.¹¹⁵

The government had recognized, before hostilities had begun, that any advance into Assam would commit them to supporting its inhabitants against the Burmese.¹¹⁶ But, as their enquiries from Scott made clear, they had in mind that such protection should be afforded by means of a defensive alliance with one of the Ahom princes. This Scott opposed: any declaration on the subject of setting up a native prince in Assam, he argued, was "premature and impolitic" as it would discourage the people who had lost all confidence

¹¹³ B.S.P.C., 23 July 1824, nos. 9-10.

¹¹⁴ Home Misc., vol. 663, pp. 755-765, Scott to Swinton, 16 Oct. 1824; B.S.P.C., 29 Oct. 1824, nos. 25-26.

¹¹⁵ B.S.P.C., 29 Oct. 1824, nos. 25-26, Scott to Swinton, 16 Oct. 1824.

¹¹⁶ B.S.P.C., 17 Jan. 1824, no. 6.

in their chiefs, "their imbecility, cowardice and treacherous principles having been so fully developed in the last contest so as to remain no longer concealed even to the meanest peasant."¹¹⁷ Scott also strongly urged the annexation of the southern bank of the Brahmaputra as far as Raha *chowky* on the border of Cachar, so as to seal off the invasion routes into Cachar.¹¹⁸

Scott's views on the inadvisability of any commitment to the Ahom princes "much divided among themselves, and . . . generally obnoxious to the body of the people," were accepted. So, after the occupation of Gauhati, was his desire to see Lower Assam occupied. Early in October, therefore Col. Richards was ordered to resume his advance from Gauhati, his task "the conquest of Assam and the entire expulsion of the Burmese." Scott, for his part was to win over the Singphos and other hill tribes and to establish an administration—revenue, police and judicial—in the wake of the advancing army.¹¹⁹ By mid-January 1825 Col. Richards' forces had reached Jorhat and before the end of the month the Burmese had surrendered their fort at Rangpore and thus virtually abandoned Assam to British control.¹²⁰ By March 1828 Scott could finally convince the Calcutta council about the necessity of annexing Lower Assam permanently to British possession.¹²¹ But annexation involved the creation of an administration, especially revenue and judicial; and the question of restoration of the Eastern or Upper Assam was linked with two major issues, the tranquillization of the north-east frontier of Assam and the future military defence of that frontier.

¹¹⁷ B.S.P.C., 20 Feb. 1824, no. 7, Scott to Swinton, 10 Feb. 1824.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Resolution of the Governor-General-in-Council on 8 Oct. 1824. B.S.P.C., 8 Oct. 1824, no. 4.

¹²⁰ B.S.P.C., 18 Jan. 1825, nos. 4 and 7, Richards to Scott, 19 Jan. 1825 and 29 Jan. 1825.

¹²¹ B.S.P.C., 7 March 1828, nos. 4 and 8. Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb. 1828, Swinton to Scott, 7 March 1828.

IV

POST-ANNEXATION PROPOSITIONS

1. *On Assam's Economy*

NO SOONER had British forces occupied Western Assam in 1824 than Scott began to investigate the revenue possibilities of the area, even though no decision had yet been taken at Calcutta about the future disposal of the territory. Some action, as he said later on, was essential if the future defence of the country was to be provided for.¹

Although initially Scott did not think there would be much difficulty in the assessment and collection of revenue, the system of land revenue in Assam was not a simple one. More important, it bore little resemblance to the Bengal system. When in the first half of the seventeenth century Assam was invaded by the Mughals, Kamrup was conquered and for sometime (1612-1627) held by them. In that part of Assam the *Paragana* system which the Mughals introduced took root and was retained unchanged during later Ahom rule. But even here the British found the system much less regular than in Bengal. Some of the *parganas* had *talucs* scattered throughout the division and the *parganas* themselves were very unequal in size.² The reason was that the Mughals remained in Kamrup like an army of occupation, the basis of their rule being essentially military. The collection of revenue, suppression of local insurrection and conduct of *khedah* operations seem to have been the main aims of Mughal government in Kamrup.³

¹ B. S. P. C., 7 March, 1828, no. 4, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb., 1828.

² F. Jenkin's report, 13 Nov., 1849, *Memorandum on the Revenue Administration of the Lower Provinces of Bengal*, p. 62.

³ See S. N. Bhattacharyya, *A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*, pp. 163-168.

The system in the rest of Assam was linked with the *paik* or the *khel system*,⁴ which was the nucleus of all Ahom administration. The revenue of the state were, for the most part, realized on articles of produce and personal labour, for not only the soil, but the subject was the property of the state.⁵ Every adult male or *paik* worked for the benefit of the state for three or four months a year. In return for this he was given two *puras* (nearly three acres) of *rupit* or first class cultivable land. This land was called *gamati* or bodyland and was free of rent.⁶ For his homestead plot or *bari* also a *paik* paid no rent. In practice, the *bari* lands were permitted to be dealt with as hereditary and transferable; but the two *puras* of *gamati*, rice land, were considered the property of the state, neither hereditary nor transferable.⁷

Three, or less often four, *paiks* were formed into a *gote* or squad. When one of the *gote* was away on his three or four months' service the remaining members cultivated not only their own fields but also those of the absentee member of the *gote*. Thus all the members of a *gote* could be employed in rotation upon public work during the year without hardship to their families. *Paiks* were also grouped into *khels* or guilds according to the nature of their duties, each *khel* ranging in strength from three to six thousand men.⁸

Not all *paiks* were required to render manual labour for their *gamati*. There were some who paid a tax in money in lieu of manual labour, though this was very rare and only a few *khels* comprising men of superior birth or caste had this privilege. They were called *chamuas* meaning independent, and they comprised a higher order of subjects.⁹ Those who

⁴ The system is said to have been invented during the reign of Raja Pratap Singh (1603-1641) by Mumai Tamuli Barbarua. G. Borooah, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁵ *Memorandum on the Revenue Administration of the Lower Provinces*, p. 61n.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 61n.

⁸ S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 530.

⁹ Haliram Dhekial Phukan in his book, *Assam Buranji* (first published in 1829) mentions the following *khels* as *chamua khels*:

rendered manual labour belonged to two types. The majority were *ḡari-paiḡs* who in wartime had to fight, and in peacetime, were employed in building and repairing roads and bridges, in excavating tanks and in other works of public utility.¹⁰ The other main group of *paiḡs* were not field labourers but artisans—smiths, weavers, oil-pressers, gold-washers and the like whose skilled labour was applied by the state to the production of the goods of their craft or trade. They received their *gamati* lands in return for the products of their skills.¹¹

Above the various *paiḡs* and *ḡhels* there was a hierarchy of administrators and officers. High officers such as *phukans*, *baruas*, *rajḡhowas* were the heads of the *ḡhels* and the *paiḡs* were under their command. These officials presided, too, over *mels*—a kind of *panchayat* where minor civil and criminal disputes were settled. Under these officers were junior officers—*hazarikas*, *saiḡias* and *boras* in charge of one thousand, of one hundred, and of twenty *paiḡs*.¹²

It can be seen from this brief review, that the Ahom state drew little of its revenue in money : the Ahom economy was a barter rather than a monetised economy. Persons cultivating land in excess of the usual allotment used to pay a nominal cash revenue per *pura* of such *ubar* or *ḡatani* land.¹³ Again, some non-cultivating *ḡhels*, like the gold washers, paid a high tax in money. Further, defaulting crown *paiḡs* had to pay a fine in cash. Moreover, the farming of the dues levied at *haths* or markets, and in the *chowḡies*, or custom houses also brought a cash revenue to the state exchequer. The tribute from the vassal chiefs was yet another source of

Kataḡi, Kaḡati, Boragi, Dalaiganak, Jyotishiya, Changḡhataniar, Sabhapandit, Bej, Strutiparha, Pharsiparha garia. J. M. Bhattacharya, (ed.) *op. cit.*, pp. 52-55.

¹⁰ S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 529.

¹¹ *Memorandum on the Revenue Administration of the Lower Provinces of Bengal*, p. 60.

¹² For the power and position of the various Ahom officials see Sir Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, pp. 235-239.

¹³ J. M. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 52; *Memorandum on the Revenue Administration of Lower Provinces*, p. 61.

money income. Furthermore, during the period of civil strife and on the eve of the Burmese war, when money was required for war purposes the Ahom government introduced a capitation tax. This tax was variously named and imposed. The British found on their arrival in Assam, that in Kamrup it was a house tax, *kharika-tana*, in Nowgong and Upper Assam, it was a body or poll tax, *gadhan* of one rupee for each *paik* of full age and in Darrang a hearth tax, *charukar*, or a tax upon every family or person cooking separately again of one rupee.¹⁴ Even so the Ahom government could not pay cash salaries to its officials. Hence there sprang up another distinctive feature of the Ahom society—the payment of the official nobility in labour services. Officials were allotted the services of a number of *paiks* called *likchows*, in lieu of salary. They were also given certain rent-free lands *nankar* or *maunmati*, and were also allowed to occupy vast tracts of *khats* or waste lands. On both of these types of land they could employ their *likchows* and slaves.¹⁵ This then was the system which Scott had to learn to understand, and to use or modify for British government.

From May, 1824, though his powers had not yet been defined, Scott began a search for revenue documents of the former government, and made his first estimate of possible revenue yields. In view of the devastation latterly caused by the Burmese, he pitched the demand at about one-fourth of the rate of land revenue levied by the *zamindars* of Goalpara and of the adjoining Company territories. Even so, thanks to the fact Burmese damage proved on investigation to have been less extensive in Western Assam than anticipated, Scott hoped that with the custom duties from the Kandahar *chowky* he might secure revenues of up to one and a half lakhs of rupees from Lower Assam, up to Kalia-bar.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁵ See *infra*, pp. 160.

¹⁶ B. S. P. C., 28th May, 1824, no. 19, Scott to Swinton, 12th May, 1824; B.S.P.C., 2nd July, 1824, no. 15, Scott to Swinton, 15 June, 1824.

For the Bengal year of 1231 (1824/25) Scott's actual total demand from Lower Assam was Narayani Rs.1,48,112. The areas on which revenue was assessed were Kamrup, Darrang, Naduar (situated at the foot of the southern hills between Habraghat and Gauhati) and land occupied by rajas of Dimarua, Beltola and Rani (lying to the south of the Kalang river), with Raja Vijayanarayan of Darrang was for a total *jama* of Ny. Rs. 42,000 and 1500 *paiks* to be furnished for the use of the army.¹⁷ From nineteen *chaudhuries* and other *malguzars* of the various *mahals* of Kamrup some 69,086 Narayani rupees was demanded. The assessment made with Uttam Singh of Dimarua, Balukan Singh of Rani and Sambadari Singh of Beltola were fixed at 6,349; 4,000 and 2,000 Narayani rupees respectively. Scott wrote about these three chiefs that they "in former times were merely tributary to the Assamese if not to the Mughuls, but having frequently rebelled they were latterly reduced to complete subjugation. There were no accurate accounts of the assets of their estates, some of which are very productive and adverting to the expediency of conciliating persons so situated the settlement was made in a great measure, with reference to what individuals in possession voluntarily offered to pay."¹⁸

The principle followed by Scott in the settlement in Kamrup district was to double the assessment on inalienable land which was found to have once been paid by the *malguzars* according to the old documents. An additional amount was also charged on account of the house tax, first imposed by Raja Chandra Kanta in Lower Assam. This Scott continued as a useful way to equalizing the burden of taxation, from which many "of the lesser order of the inhabitants" had been previously exempted on account of their caste or class.¹⁹

¹⁷ The amount charged upon the raja of Darrang was thought by the people to be an over-assessment and Scott proposed to make a revenue survey which would afterwards be extended to the *pargana* of Kamrup also, B. S. P. C., 5 Apr., 1825, no. 27, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb. 1825.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

The settlement was made with the hereditary *chaudhuries* who were on the same footing as *chaudhuries* of Bengal before the decennial settlement. That is, they were officials, not owners of land, or rent receivers, and were liable to be removed at the government's pleasure. When in office, they enjoyed *nankar* lands called *manumati* and the service of a certain number of *paiks*. Their *nankar* lands varied from two hundred to one thousand Bengal *bighas*, and similar but smaller assignment were made to the *patwaris*—their assistants. Scott made no alteration in this arrangement.²⁰

To widen the tax base Scott started collecting revenue from *lakhiraj paiks*²¹ and lands. These lands were classified as *debottar*—lands granted for the maintenance of temples; *brahmottar*—lands for Brahmins; and *dharmottar*—lands granted for religious and charitable purposes. Scott imposed a tax on these lands²² using as a precedent that levied by the Buragohain Purnananda who had been the prime minister during the Burmese invasion nine years previously. The fact that the lands of this description in Kamrup were equal in extent to those cultivated by the *paiks* strengthened him in his decision. To prevent distress to the poorer class of Brahmins and other holders of such lands, Scott directed that it should not be collected from holdings smaller than two *puras* or about seven Bengal *bighas*.²³

These assessments concluded, Scott hastened to make the first half-yearly collection. The account of the revenue col-

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ The lands granted by the Ahom rajas to temples, religious institutions and pious and meritorious persons in Lower Assam were known as *Nisfkhiraj* or half-revenue-paying estates, as distinguished from *khiraj* or full-revenue-paying estates. In course of time these lands were held revenue-free, and the owners called themselves *Lakhirajdars*. W. E. Ward, *Note on the Assam land revenue system*, p. 60.

²² Sir W. E. Ward writes that "these lands had been assessed at five annas a *pura* (four *bighas*) by the Assam Rajas themselves. Scott therefore fixed their assessment at this rate, and subsequently increased it to 7 or 8 annas a *pura* by imposition of a tax known as *Barangani*." W. E. Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

²³ B. S. P. C., 5 Apr., 1825, no. 27. Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1825

lection for the first six months of the Bengal year 1231 (1824/5) was the following:²⁴

Mahals	Malguzars	Demand	Collection	Recoverable balance
Darrang	Raja Vijayanagram	21,000	12,831	8,168
Assessed pargana of Kamrup	The Chaudharies	34,149	21,531	13,510
Unsettled mahals	Sazawals	2,188	2,188	—
Nadaur	The Raja	6,180	2,133	3,547
Dimarua Rani, Beltola	The Rajas	6,174	5,084	1,090
Brahmottar Lands	The Proprietors	5,090	3,294	1,796
Devalay [Lakhiraj]	The Managers	1,462	693	769
Total Ny. Rs.		76,244	48,255	28,880
Sicca Rs. (after deducting batta of 37%)		48,033	30,400	18,195

After this first half-yearly collection, though a sum of Narayani Rs. 28,880 or over one third of the demand still remained to be collected, the demand for the rest of the year was much increased. The demand for the second six months was pitched at Rs. 106,255 and the collection was pushed up to Rs. 123,569, though this evidently included arrears from the first half-year.²⁵ Scott explained the increase as being due to the bringing of new areas such as the *mahals* near

²⁴ B. S. P. C., 5 Apr., 1825, nos. 27-28, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1825.

²⁵ B.S.P.C., 20 Jan., 1826, nos. 23-24, Scott to Swinton, 14 Dec., 1825, *Comparative Statement of the Settlement for the Land Revenue of Lower Assam for the years 1213 and 1232, Bengal style or 1746 and 1747, Assam style.*

Raha *chowky* under collection.²⁶ The total received in the year came to Rs. 171,824.²⁷

The basis of Scott's new assessment was the documents which he got from Majumdar Barua the head *qanungo* of Kamrup.²⁸ But they were of so ancient a date that they offered little real insight into the existing state of the country. It was too late in the season, as Scott said, to undertake any effective but lengthy scrutiny into the assets of the different *parganas*. He therefore acted upon "the best information immediately obtainable" in assessing the specific amount due from the different *malguzars*.²⁹

Scott had his own reasons for such gradual enhancement of land revenue. Reporting on the country's agricultural capabilities, he stated that the land throughout the division was fertile and produced far more luxuriant crops than any part of Bengal. A greater amount of capital was also applied by individuals to agricultural improvement in Lower Assam than he had witnessed in any other British province. This capital was also more profitably laid out than was usual—people taking great care in rearing the *muga* silk worms and the lac insect, both sources of considerable wealth to the inhabitants.³⁰

Thus from his actual inspection of the country and the information derived from the records of the Ahom and Mughal governments, Scott felt that government might reasonably expect that within a few years Lower Assam up to Bishnath would be yielding an annual revenue of from four to six lakhs, exclusive of custom duties but including

²⁶ B. S. P. C., 20 Jan., 1826, nos. 23-24, Scott to Swinton, 14 Dec., 1825, *Comparative Statement of the Settlement for the Land Revenue of Lower Assam for the Year 1232, Bengal style or 1746 and 1747, Assam style*.

²⁷ B. S. P. C., 7 March, 1828, no. 5, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb., 1828.

²⁸ The origin of these documents goes back to 1678 when after the death of Raja Pramatta Singh the first revenue Settlement in Kamrup was made on the basis of a survey. These settlement papers were known as *parakakats*. J. M. Bhattacharya (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 41.

²⁹ B. S. P. C., 5 Apr., 1825, no. 27, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1825.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

an *abkari* tax on opium and profits from the elephants hunts or *khedas*. Mughal records, Scott stated, exhibited a revenue of upwards of Rs. 300,000 from this area. An annual revenue of over five lakhs would provide an ample allowance for the profits of an intermediate class of agents between the government and peasantry. Since Scott also thought that it should be possible quite soon to monetise the economy so as to permit these revenues to be collected in cash, he now strongly urged that government should annex the recently occupied areas of Lower Assam.³¹

In the administration of Lower Assam, therefore, it was thought expedient to keep more closely to the rules observed in the judicial and revenue departments in the older British possessions. This was essential because of the possibility that this part of the country might be retained by the British. It was facilitated, too, by the fact that the area had been long under Muslim rule and its inhabitants did not differ so substantially from those of the neighbouring parts of British territory, previous to the introduction of the decennial settlement. Scott argued that the methods introduced by the Ahoms had been unproductive and were disliked by the people. He therefore transferred the *barphukan*, who had been ruling Kamrup as the viceroy of the Ahom raja, assigning him to a judicial post in Upper Assam, and allotting him a monthly salary of three hundred rupees as compensation for the loss of the large emoluments of his viceregal office. The revenue establishment of Lower Assam Scott then placed under a native *sarishtadar*. Since the Duaria Barua* family had been particularly helpful ever since his arrival in Assam,

³¹ *Ibid.*

* "The Duaria Barua or Baruas received the goods of the Assam merchants and exchanged them for Bengal products. They realised the duties on all exports and imports. The rate equitably fixed by the government of Assam underwent fluctuations at the hands of different Duaria Baruas."

See S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 50-51; See also G. Borooah, *The Life of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan* (in Assamese) for the duties of the Duaria Baruas, pp. 13-15.

Scott appointed one of their members, named Haliram, who was given the title of *Dhekial phukan* by the raja, to this new office.³²

In 1825-26, the Bengal year 1232, the *jama* was again increased to a total of Rs. 245,361, which was an increase of over sixty thousand rupees upon the previous year's demand.³³ Once again the demand proved difficult to realise, and in February, 1827, Scott had to write to Swinton for permission to write off about ten thousand rupees as not recoverable, from *parganas* which had proved to have been much over assessed. In 1828 government approval was finally given to Scott's request.³⁴

The existence of the large balances made it clear that some revision and reappraisal of the revenue resources of Lower Assam was required. In mid 1825 Scott had proposed that a proper survey of the area should be undertaken. A considerable number of native surveyors had already been taught the use of the compass, and Scott now asked government for the services of a Mr. Mathews, lately employed on the Cachar frontier, and of a native draughtsman to direct a scientific revenue survey. The establishment for which he sought sanction was to consist of ten native surveyors, one draughtsman, one Bengali *muharrir* and a writer of English, at a cost of not more than six hundred rupees a month. Such were the number of interesting subjects of enquiry, Scott pleaded, that a scientific survey on the line of originally planned by the surveyor-general of India was surely needed. He estimated that it would take the team some fifteen months.³⁵

Though not all that Scott had asked for was granted, a provisional survey was conducted, under a Lieutenant

³² G. Borooah, *The Life of Anandaram*, p. 30, and also pp. 9, 13-15, 26, 28. Anandaram was the son of Haliram.

³³ B.S.P.C., 20 Jan., 1826, nos. 23-24, Scott to Swinton, 14 Dec., 1825.

³⁴ B.S.P.C., 23 Feb., 1827, no. 12, Scott to Swinton, 13 Feb., 1827; B.S.P.C., 8 Feb., 1828, no. 34, Swinton to Scott, 8 Feb., 1828; B.S.P.C., 28 May, 1830, no. 92, Scott to Swinton, 6 May, 1830.

³⁵ B. S. P. C., 5 Apr., 1825, no. 27, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1825.

Bedingfield, in 1825-1826. The measurement survey showed that there was some 529,735 *puras* about 1,600,000 *bighas* of cultivable land in Lower Assam, of which 112,858 *puras* or 480,000 *bighas* were held under rent free grants or otherwise exempted from the payment of revenue.³⁶

Though the survey did not reveal a larger area liable to taxation than had been previously known, it proved impossible to enhance the demand to any but a very minor degree. The fact was that Scott had been very anxious to collect the maximum revenue possible, so as to cover military costs and so convince the Supreme Government of the desirability of annexing Lower Assam permanently. He had therefore levied taxes on every source which had ever been taxed by the Ahoms or Mughals, and though he had intended to make the British assessment a light one, so making allowance for the difficulties which the people had undergone in the transitional period, he had in practice taken all, or more than the country could afford. The collection for 1233 (1826-27) at 2,90,457 Narayani rupees was therefore greater only by 42,774 rupees than the previous year.³⁷

Moreover, recognizing a degree of over assessment in the past, Scott agreed to certain deductions upon the gross produce being made in the settlement of 1826-27. These were :

- (1) Five per cent upon the cultivated portion to provide for mistakes or deficiency of assets from the flight of *ryots*.
- (2) From seven to ten per cent according to the extent of the *parganas* for the expense of the *mufassal* collection, including the pay of the *patwaris*, *gomasthas* and other *mufassal* revenue and police officers.
- (3) Ten per cent on the remaining assets for the *mulguzars* (which in some few cases, principally of the hill chiefs, was increased to fifteen and twenty per

³⁶ B.S.P.C., 28 Dec., 1827, no. 48, Scott to Swinton, 2 Dec., 1827; B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 5, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb., 1828.

³⁷ B.S.P.C., 9 March, 1828, no. 19, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1828. B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 5, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb., 1828.

cent) where local circumstances and the lightness of the assessment under the former government appeared to render such indulgence necessary.³⁸

Scott felt it necessary to explain to government why such indulgences were necessary, and to excuse the smallness of the revenue secured from so large an area of cultivation. He therefore pointed out that under the Ahom government the *pargana* rate had been as low as from Rs. 1-8 annas to less than 4 annas per *pura* or four *bighas* of the very best quality land. Inferior soils had either been exempted from taxation altogether, or had been assessed at one third of the rates for good land. He had begun by doubling these *pargana* rates in commutation of fines levied on the *paiks*, and other irregular cesses. Even so the new rates still averaged less than three annas per Bengal *bigha* or twelve annas per *pura*. Furthermore, Scott, in surveying the sources of revenue, had to indicate that some were likely to disappear.³⁹

One source of revenue which he wished to discontinue was provided by the receipt from the Kandahar *chowky*, at the frontier between Lower Assam and Bengal. The duties from this custom post had yielded only Rs. 14,324 in 1825-26, and not only did they offer little hope of increases, but they had obviously become anomalous once Lower Assam was occupied by the British.⁴⁰ The loss of this amount in the event of abolition of the *chowky*, compared with the great advantages which could be expected from a free intercourse with Bengal, appeared to Scott to be a matter of small account.

The second resource which he wished to relinquish was the tax on certain rent free lands, which he had introduced in 1825. The total yield from these lands had been 26,465 Narayani rupees, of which 2,533 rupees had been collected from the *paiks* and lands attached to the Hindu temples, and 2,032 rupees from *dharmottar* lands, granted to certain monasteries or *satras*. It was these two small items which Scott now

³⁸ B.S.P.C., 9 March, 1827, no. 18, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1827.

³⁹ B.S.P.C., 9 March, 1827, no. 18, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1827.

⁴⁰ B.S.P.C., 16 Aug., 1828, Scott to Swinton, 15 July, 1828.

wished, for social and political reasons to give up. The curtailment of temple rites occasioned by the former tax had caused very general regret among a population whose superstitions invariably led them to ascribe sickness, drought and other accidents of the seasons thereto. The loss to the *satras* of revenues devoted to the invocation of deities and provision for the *mohantas* or supervisors of such monasteries, had much influence amongst the people and, therefore, he thought that it would be both popular and desirable to sacrifice the tax.⁴¹

The remaining portion of the collection for the present year amounting to 21,899 rupees was derived from *nankar* and *brahmottar* lands, the extent of which was unusually great in Assam. Scott reported that he had no wish to show leniency in taxing these.⁴²

Scott had explained why the revenue yield was low. He set out measures which he hoped would arrest any further decline. It was obvious that however low they were according to the standards of Bengal, Scott's assessment rates in Assam represented a high figure in comparison with Ahom demands, and the increase had been sudden. He had therefore assumed the discretionary power to remit the interest nominally claimed upon arrears of revenue—an action approved by government—and he proposed that a reduction of five per cent be allowed upon the revenue due, to all who paid in good time.⁴³ He also set out ways in which he hoped it might be raised. He did not wish, for example, to forgo all revenue from the *lakhiraj* lands. He therefore turned to the Ahom government's practice of levying a tax called *barangani** from rent-free lands whenever the expenses of

⁴¹ B.S.P.C., 9 March, 1827, no. 18, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1827.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ B.S.P.C., 18 Apr., 1828, nos. 3-4, Scott to Sterling, 27 March, 1828; Sterling to Scott, 18 Apr., 1828.

* The history of the *barangani* tax is worth noting. "In 1834, when Capt. Jenkins had become Commissioner, the *Lakhirajdars* objected to pay this tax on the ground that Mr. Scott had only imposed it temporarily and had promised to remit it. The question having been referred to the Government of India, the Government replied that there was 'no reason to believe that Mr. Scott intended

the state exceeded its ordinary receipts. The holders of such property therefore, Scott proposed, might be called upon to continue their share towards the support of the army and other establishment maintained by the British Government in Assam. Since, however, there seemed to be a general expectation that this source of revenue would ultimately be relinquished, Scott thought it might be advisable to follow a middle course. Without entirely exempting the holders of rent-free lands from the payments of tax, Scott proposed to reduce the amount of the assessment somewhat and to appropriate the entire sum realised to purposes of obvious public utility, such as the education of youth and construction of roads, bridges and *bunds*.⁴⁴

Scott also sought new heads of taxation and methods of developing the country so as to increase its tax paying capacity. One measure Scott proposed was a tax of twenty rupees per *pura* upon opium poppy cultivation. The opium produced in Assam was entirely consumed in the country and the number of the inhabitants who used the drug was vast. Scott therefore conceived that a serious mortality would result from putting an entire stop to the cultivation, or from introducing the ordinary *abkari* regulations—unless a material reduction was made in the retail price of the opium. For that reason he proposed his moderate tax on cultivation. Scott estimated that throughout the country the cultivation of poppy might extend to two thousand *puras* of land, which were not separately assessed, and that the net yield of the tax might be estimated at Rs. 25,000.⁴⁵

As another measure for ultimately augmenting the revenue, while meanwhile promoting the convenience of the public and facility in trade, Scott proposed the withdrawal of the Narayani currency from circulation and the substitution of

to give up any of the lands claimed to be held rent-free which he brought under his immediate assessment, and if he did, he could not have done so without the sanction of Government previously obtained.'” W. E. Ward, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

⁴⁴ B.S.P.C., 9 March, 1827, no. 18, Scott to Swinton, 28 Feb., 1827.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

the Company's Sicca rupees. The measure would result in an initial loss to the government of 150,000 Sicca rupees, but he pointed out that if the existing revenue was thereafter made payable in Sicca rupees, instead of in Narayani, an annual profit of about 50,000 Sicca rupees would be derived after the end of the second year.⁴⁶

Finally Scott sought to broaden the tax base and to secure an influx of much needed capital by a generous policy of grants of waste lands. The grant of waste lands or *khats* at a nominal revenue had been a normal way of remunerating high officers during the Ahom rule. Scott now, in September 1827, put forward plans which he hoped would increase the cash revenues and provide for the want of capital in Assam. He proposed that waste lands be granted to anyone who would engage to bring waste land under cultivation and to pay revenue under the following conditions :

- (1) That the grantee bring one fourth of his allocation into cultivation by the expiration of the third year; an additional fourth on the expiration of the sixth year; another fourth on the expiration of the ninth year; after which period the grantee should be entitled to hold the land in perpetuity on paying the *pargana* rates upon $\frac{3}{4}$ of the whole.
- (2) That the tenure created should be liable to be transferred by sale or otherwise, subject to the conditions of the grant, and that where the revenue ultimately assessable amounted to fifty rupees or more or the holder voluntarily agreed to make it up to that sum, he should be entitled to pay it direct into the public treasury, (and thus assume the status of a *zamindar*).
- (3) That applicants for lands on the above terms should be required to deposit or give security for the first two years revenue, to be forfeited to government and the land resumed if the terms were not complied with on the expiration of the fourth year, after

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

which period the land-holding should be liable to sale for arrears of revenue in the usual manner.⁴⁷

What is of interest to note is that though Scott did not live to put these plans into action, his proposals were implemented not long after his death by the large scale grant of waste land on such terms.

In February, 1828, Scott was able to assure the government that in no case would the gross revenue derivable from Lower Assam in future, be less than Rs. 300,000—the sum produced at the moment under the provisional system—and that rather it would considerably increase under a regular system, with money abundant and the inhabitants more accustomed to the fiscal arrangements of the Mughal British type.⁴⁸ Thus reassured as to the revenue possibilities of Lower Assam, and that they would cover the costs of a regular British administration, the Supreme Government finally decided, in that same month, upon the permanent annexation of Lower Assam. In April, the Government approved Scott's plan for a full regular survey and review of the former revenue measurements.⁴⁹ These two decisions inaugurated a new era in the revenue history of Assam, for henceforward ad-hoc and temporary collections were gradually reduced into a regular system of revenue administration.

The land revenue conditions in Lower Assam did not, however, improve immediately till quite some time even after the death of Scott.⁵⁰ But in 1830, a year before his death, Scott seemed to have found out not only the causes but also the cure of all Assam's economic ills. In April of that year he applied to the Calcutta authorities for the urgent adoption of measures to improve the general resources of

⁴⁷ B.S.P.C., 5 Oct., 1827, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 12 Sept., 1827.

⁴⁸ B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 4, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb., 1828.

⁴⁹ B.S.P.C., 25 Apr., 1828, no. 52, Sterling to Scott, 25 Apr., 1828.

⁵⁰ See H. K. Barpujari, *Assam : In the Days of the Company*, pp. 58-65.

Assam.⁵¹ He pointed out that commerce was depressed and the currency deficient, for there was a constant drain of the small existing stock of coin remittance to the Presidency.⁵² The general shortage of cash compelled the government, on the one hand, to revert to the old Ahom system of receiving revenue in kind at many places⁵³ and the defaulting farmers on the other, to leave their hearths and homes and look for shelter in the adjoining hills.⁵⁴ The cheapness of rice during 1830 did not necessarily bring any prospect of its export and the increased exports⁵⁵ of other commodities from Assam such as lac and *muga* silk did not help meet the requirements of a monetised revenue system, for such goods were generally bartered for salt.⁵⁶ Improvement could only be achieved, he argued therefore, "by encouraging the production of commodities fit for exportation, and by substituting on the part of the government for a remittance of the surplus revenue in cash, on investment of the produce of the district."⁵⁷ In the early stage of British occupation, Scott had been under the impression that the abolition of commercial restrictions which he had eventually brought about and the influx of

⁵¹ B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 51, Scott to Swinton, 17 Apr., 1830.

⁵² *Ibid.* This money drain occurred in many ways: In the very first place the old *khel* (kind) system of revenue settlement was replaced gradually by a proprietary system involving cash payment; Secondly, the mint of the Assam Rajah, the source of the local currency, was put out of operation; thirdly, the surplus of Assam's exports over imports, visible in the early British administration, did not bring any influx of currency, for the export goods were generally bartered for salt; fourthly, the Government's revenue collection in local currency was annually remitted to Calcutta for recoinage. See A. Guha, 'Colonization of Assam: Years of transitional Crisis (1825—40),' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, V. no. 2, June, 1968, pp. 129-133.

⁵³ B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 51, Scott to Swinton, 17 Apr., 1830.

⁵⁴ Barpujari, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵⁵ Due to the approval by the Calcutta Council of Scott's conduct in allowing certain products of Assam to pass free of all duty so that to encourage exportation. See P.L.B., Vol. 26, 9 Oct., 1830, para 253.

⁵⁶ B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 51, Scott to Swinton, 17 Apr., 1830.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

capital from Bengal, would gradually remove the evils complained of. But to his utter surprise, five years' experience had showed that no improvement could be expected from the unassisted efforts of the Assamese. Then, again, the want of enterprise amongst the Bengali capitalists and the exorbitant rate of interest which led them to prefer the trade of users to "making any advance of cash in those less immediately profitable speculations" had compelled Scott to think about other measures of achieving his objects.⁵⁸

He pointed out that Assam was an agricultural not a manufacturing country, and that with a present population there could be no great market for rice and such crops. Moreover, owing to the want of boats and the navigational difficulties of the Brahmaputra, "no relief from the evils" could be expected from the exportation of so cheap and bulky a commodity as grain. Scott therefore argued forcefully that unless means were immediately adopted by government to encourage the production of the more costly articles of export such as raw silk and muga* in particular, it would soon become necessary either to reduce materially the amount of the scanty revenue at present derived from the districts or to revert to the former system of compulsory labour.⁵⁹

Scott had in fact been pressing for the development of the Assam silk industry since 1826. In that year he had sent some specimens of Assam silk pieces to Calcutta for study by the Board of Trade. He had also urged that the Assamese be instructed in the most modern methods of winding their silk and that the machinery in use in Rangpur should be introduced into Assam. He considered that the muga silk was likely to become the most important article of export

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

* The muga silk comes from a kind of worm known as *antheroea Assamoea*. It is much lighter and handsomer than *eri* (see p. 127 n*) and is largely worn by women, and as a holiday dress by men. In colour it is a brownish yellow, which after washing assumes a fine gloss. Sibsagar and more especially Jorhat is the great centre for the production of the *muga* cloth. See B. C. Allen, *Monograph on the silk cloth of Assam*, pp. 4-14.

⁵⁹ B.P.C., 13 Oct., 1826, no. 44, Scott to Swinton, 18 Sept., 1826.

from Assam for Asiatic consumption and with reference to its well-known superior strength and durability, he found it highly probable that it might capture the European market too.⁶⁰ But on receipt of an unfavourable reply⁶¹ from the Board of Trade the plan was pronounced unprofitable by the government. In bringing up the issue again in 1830, Scott reminded the government that he had initiated the plan not with a view to commercial profit, but in hopes that the measures would benefit the inhabitants, and ultimately increase the revenue of the district under his charge.⁶²

He again urged a trial of his plans, "although they may in the first instance involve some trifling outlay on the part of the state, and even though it should appear that the more immediate and direct pecuniary return for such outlay will accrue rather to its subjects than to government itself."⁶³ Scott had specific reasons for directing his attention specially towards the development of raw silk. He wrote: "Although the soil and climate of Assam is well adapted to the production of articles raised in Bengal, I shall confine my observations to the single commodity of raw silk both because it does not necessarily require continued European superintendance to bring it to perfection and because the inhabitants of Assam are already so universally acquainted with the analogous operation of winding the silk called moogah that there is every reason to think that they would soon become competent to prepare the ordinary raw silk in a manner superior to that which can be expected from the cotton clothed natives of Bengal, among whom the art of rearing silk worms and the subsequent treatment of the produce was by no means so generally known and where it is indeed still in a great measure confined to a particular class."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ B.P.C., 13 Oct., 1826, no. 44, Scott to Swinton, 18 Sept., 1826.

⁶¹ B.P.C., 30 Dec., 1826, no. 66, George Udny and Mackenzie to Lord Combermer, Vice-President-in-Council, 14 Dec., 1826.

⁶² B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 51, Scott to Swinton, 17 Apr., 1830.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

The ultimate commercial value of the trade for the Company was also not ruled out. Scott went on to point out "it is very necessary to keep in mind that the Assamese are already like the Chinese, chiefly clad in a species of silk which although not of a description known to be suited to the European market is nevertheless prepared in a manner entirely similar to that sort, so that any person acquainted with the mode of winding the one is competent, with a little practice, to perform the same operation on the other, under which circumstances it is not perhaps expecting too much to suppose that many of the inhabitants will engage in the preparation of the real silk if [Government were] to render available to agricultural purposes land which is not at present considered worth cultivating and of which there are large tracts unoccupied merely for the want of any suitable article of culture."⁶⁵

With this end in view Scott presented three point plan to the government. First, plantations of the mulberry should be prepared at the expense of government in favourable situations in Assam. The inhabitants could thus be taught the plantation method of mulberry cultivation, for mass production of silk worms. Secondly, the people should be instructed in the improved mode of winding silk, reels of a proper description being prepared in the country and distributed to those who would undertake to rear silk worms and to use the apparatus for winding the muga silk. Finally, when progress had been sufficient to warrant the measure, a small commercial Residency should be established, superintended by the medical officer at Gauhati, with a view, not so much to securing an immediate profit on the investment, but to create a steady demand for the silk.⁶⁶ To effect the first two objects Scott conceived that an outlay of from twelve to fifteen thousand rupees would be required. If government was not prepared to lay out such a sum, then Scott suggested that an extra cess should be levied upon the inhabitants. "The trifling additional burden to which the people would thus be individually subjected," Scott assured

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

the government, "would be speedily and amply repaid by the increased value of the land and by the introduction of an article of exchangeable value so much wanted at present to enable them to provide for the payment of revenue."⁶⁷

Scott's proposals were discussed again in official and business circles and expert opinions were called for from firms like "MacIntyre and Co." and "Palmer and Co."⁶⁸ The experts appreciated the quality of the Assam silk but about its immediate commercial value they were not so sure.⁶⁹ This again discouraged the government. But Scott was tenacious. He pointed out to the government that such plans ought to be undertaken if they really wanted prosperity in Assam. He also reminded them that "the perfection of manufacture of raw silk in Bengal was not attended but at a considerable expense and trouble, Italian artificers* having been brought out to teach the native spinners."⁷⁰ In arguing further, Scott reminded the government of its duty to its subjects and the folly it would commit in failing to encourage such a plan. He said: "Where the interest of Government in promoting agricultural improvement is so direct and obvious as it is in a country situated like Assam, blessed with a fertile soil and favourable climate, but at the same time labouring under an almost hopeless state of penury from ignorance of or inattention to the measures of benefitting by those advantages, it will seem to be a most imperfect system of policy that would reject all certain obvious methods of improving the resources of the country and increasing the revenue of govern-

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 52, Swinton's note on the market value of Assam silk—the sample of which was sent by Scott, 7 May, 1830.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

* The advantages of the Italian method over that of the country was said to be very evident. The experiment had been made at Kashimbazar factory under the supervision of 'Wiss and Robinson.' See Bengal Public Consultation, Vol. I, R. 2, (25 May, 1772), p. 325, Committee of Commerce Proceedings, 5 March, 1772.

⁷⁰ B.P.C., 29 Oct., 1830, no. 36, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 6 Oct., 1830.

ment.”⁷¹ Scott charged the government with “a continued reliance that the need will be met by private individuals although that expectation has been contradicted by experience of sixty years in Bengal.”⁷²

The quantity of raw silk exports from Bengal to England exceeded 12 lakh lbs in 1826—the highest even till then. Despite falling prices, the Company’s total export of raw silk increased from 6,141 bales in 1826 to 7,014 bales in 1828.⁷³ He referred to this ‘recent change in the state of the British silk trade’, which made it particularly necessary “to adopt every practicable means to increase the quantity of raw silk imported and to lower the price.” He then placed before the authorities yet one more proposal, that a grant of ten thousand *bighas* of land fit for cultivation of the mulberry and other dry crops, to be held rent-free in perpetuity, should be offered to any individual, European or native, who would invest one lakh of rupees in mulberry plantation and the establishment in Assam of silk filatures on the Italian model. In taking such a step, Scott declared, the government would, in reality, sacrifice nothing, since land of that sort was mostly unassessed and uncultivated.⁷⁴

The government acknowledged with pleasure “the laudable spirit of zeal” which prompted Scott to offer the suggestions, but remained reluctant to sanction any outlay in establishing a silk filature in Assam and also averse to the sanction of any increased cess on the people.⁷⁵ However, it did ask for a modification of Scott’s plan with regard to granting of a free tenure in perpetuity or for a given period of years. A moderate proportion of land on conditions likely

⁷¹ B.P.C., 29 Oct., 1830, no. 36, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 6 Oct., 1830.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ See Guha, *Idn. Econ. Soc. Hist. Riv.*, V2, June, 1968, p. 136. n. 16.

⁷⁴ B.P.C., 29 Oct., 1830, no. 36, Scott to Chief Secretary, 6 Oct., 1830.

⁷⁵ B.P.C., 29 Oct., 1830, no. 37, Chief Secretary to Scott, 29 Oct., 1830.

to be more acceptable to speculators—native or European—than the outlay of so large a capital was suggested by the government.⁷⁶ During the remaining period of Scott's career nothing was heard about such modified plans, but Scott continued to take a keen interest in instructing the Assamese through experts from Bengal, in modern devices for manufacturing raw silk.⁷⁷ Only four months before his death he submitted another novel plan of experimenting on a small scale with the manufacture of raw silk by means of convicts from the silk districts of Bengal. He suggested that such a measure would not involve any extra charge to the government and he requested therefore, that the magistrate of the silk districts should be instructed to place at his disposal any prisoners in their jails acquainted with the art of winding silk.⁷⁸ Scott was giving a great deal of thought on Assam's economic development during this period. A couple of days before this last novel suggestion, Scott had reminded the government that some immediate and effectual measures should be taken for the improvement of Assam's agricultural and commercial resources. Referring to his earlier letter of 17th April, 1830, in which he had mentioned about Assam silk, Scott said "I beg again respectfully to submit that unless some such measures as that recommended be sanctioned, we can have nothing to expect in Assam, but comparative penury on the part of the people and disappointment on that of Government, which will continue to hold, on no very secure tenure, a possession that must long continue worthless in a mere pecuniary point of view although it is one which there is strong reason to believe, might at no great expense be made capable of rivalling the richest parts of Asia in value of its original produce."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Scott introduced from Rangpur (Bengal) reelers, reels and plants of the *morus alba* and established a factory at Darrang with the object of extending the cultivation of the *pat* or mulberry-reared silk worm, and of improving the reeling of the *muga* worm. See B. C. Allen, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-10.

⁷⁸ B.P.C., 20 May, 1831, no. 38, Scott to Chief Secy., 30 Apr., 1831.

⁷⁹ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50. Scott to Chief Secy., 18 May, 1831.

These prolonged discussion over the development of an Assamese silk industry, pressed with vigour and tenacity, are revealing. By the time Scott arrived at the conclusion that it was only silk that could bring about ultimate economic prosperity to Assam, he was also encouraged by the prospect of having coal in abundance in Assam. The latter would make the introduction of steam navigation in the Brahmaputra easier. Scott's enquiries about coal and steam navigation had begun at about the same time. He first urged upon the government for the introduction of steam boat on the Brahmaputra in July 1825, and in December, 1826 he wrote to Wilcox, the revenue surveyer posted at Sadiya to find out how true was the rumour about coal being procurable in Upper Assam without much digging and how far and at what expense the coal in question could be made available for the use of steam vessels proposed to be introduced on the Brahmaputra.⁸⁰ In February next year, Lt. Jones replied to Scott on behalf of Wilcox that not far from an Assamese village called Teerogong near the Naga territory, there was a hill stream called Suffrie and there he discovered floating coal. Jones informed Scott that if the latter thought it a worthwhile experiment—digging coal mines—it would not be difficult for him to use '10 *gotes* or 30 men' at present working in an iron mine at Teerogong, although these men did not appear to have ever used coal to smelt the ore.⁸¹ By June, 1827 Scott could manage to send Calcutta various specimens of Assam coal as was asked by the Government.⁸² In October, 1827 Scott could write to Swinton that the result of Lt. Wilcox's expedition under his instructions, resulted in the discovery of coal mine twenty miles east of Rangpore in Upper Assam. Scott wrote also that the river Suffrie upon

⁸⁰ B.S.P.C., 26 Oct., 1827, no. 21, Scott to Wilcox, 22 Dec., 1826. Barpujari's information that 'A proposal for the introduction of the Government steamer communication with Assam was made by Mr. Scott, as early as 1831...' is not, therefore, correct. In 1831 the Government only succumbed to Scott's persistent plea by sanctioning a trial round of a steam boat. See H. Barpujari, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁸¹ B.S.P.C., 26 Oct., 1827, Lt. Jones to Scott, 17 Feb., 1827.

⁸² B.S.P.C., 24 Aug., 1827, no. 13, Scott to Swinton, 29 June, 1827.

which the coal mine was situated might be rendered navigable for canoes of 60 or 70 maunds at an inconsiderable expense. Scott therefore hoped that the government would soon be taking this advantage in the progress of steam navigation on the Brahmaputra.⁸³ In February, 1828 Scott could inform about the discovery of coal in yet another place in the Assam region. He informed that there were beds of coal in an accessible place on the Someswari river at the Garo villages of Sijuk and Rwok from which places it seemed probable that coal for the use of steam vessels might be supplied much cheaper, on the lower part of the Brahmaputra than if sent from Upper Assam.⁸⁴ Scott however concentrated his effort on the earlier spot and asked Secretary Swinton to give him the detailed information as to the quantity of coal that the proposed vessel would consume daily; the quantity she could carry and her velocity in still waters; and whether in the lower part of the river where coal would necessarily prove expensive wood might not be substituted as fuel.⁸⁵ Swinton passed on Scott's queries to Capt. Johnstone of the *Enterprise Steam Vessel* who then examined the steam vessel *Berhampooter* and reported back to Swinton.⁸⁶ In April of the same year Scott could give the detailed information about the transportation cost of coal per hundred

⁸³ P.S.P.C., 26 Oct., 1827, no. 20, Scott to Swinton, 4 Oct., 1827.

⁸⁴ B.S.P.C., 29 Feb., 1828, no. 12, Scott to Swinton, 14 Feb., 1828.

⁸⁵ B.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 36, Scott to Swinton, 1 Feb., 1828.

⁸⁶ Capt. Johnstone wrote: "I have visited the Steam vessel *Berhampooter* and from the capacity of the vessel and on examination of the engines and boiler I am of opinion that she will consume from six to seven hundred maunds of Burdwan coal per hour; that her coal-boxes will contain coal for from seventy to eighty hours consumption and her speed in still water eleven miles per hour as the maximum...under most unfavourable circumstances may fairly be expected to equal two miles per hour and this would render it necessary to have depots of coal at every one hundred and fifty miles. Should local facilities however render it desirable to have any two depots more separately the vessel might with little inconvenience take one day's fuel of coal on her deck..."

maunds, supplied at different places.⁸⁷ He also mentioned that if the quantity sought was more than ten thousand the price at the depot, and subsequently at other spots, would be less than his estimation.⁸⁸ Assuming that the government would be having no objection in introducing steam on the Brahmaputra, now that coal was found in abundance in Assam, Scott pushed forward the candidature of C. A. Bruce, formerly in Flotilla service and presently employed in the opening of the coalmine, for employment in the Brahmaputra steam vessel—should the services of such a person be required.⁸⁹

Scott's interest in early introduction of steam navigation in Assam thus makes an interesting and illuminating reading when read along with his despatches regarding the improvement of Assam's silk industry. In May, 1831 the government finally succumbed to Scott's continued pressure and agreed to send one steamer to Assam for a trial round.⁹⁰ Scott's dream however was not fulfilled in his lifetime, for in August of the same year he died and officers who succeeded him, immediately, became involved in the revenue mess. The introduction of steam ship lost its immediate relevancy without any commercial urgency.⁹¹ But however abortive

B.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 37, Swinton to Scott, 7 March, 1828.

⁸⁷ Delivered at depots on the Suffri rivers, accessible for large boats, for one hundred maunds	sicca Rs.
Delivered at Dikhowmukh one hundred maunds ..	12
Delivered at Gauhati one hundred maunds ..	15
Delivered at Goalpara one hundred maunds ..	25
Delivered at Jamalpur	30
Delivered at Dhubri	33
Delivered at Bagmah	35
Delivered at Jamalpur	38

See B.P.C., 18 April, 1828, no. 101, Scott to Sterling, 1 Apr., 1828.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ B.P.C., 6 May, 1831, no. 22, Swinton to Scott, 6 May, 1831.

⁹¹ It is interesting to note that the introduction of steam navigation on the Brahmaputra took place only in 1841, at the behest of the 'Assam Company,' when under the new situation export of tea—an expensive local resource—became a problem. See H. A. Antrobus, *A History of the Assam Company*, p. 360 ff.

Scott's projects concerning Assam silk and steam navigation may have been, one cannot but help concluding that under the given circumstances Scott's suggestions for developing and exporting Assam silk, with all possible technical help from the government, were the only panacea for Assam's economic ills of the time.

2. *On Military Defence and Tranquillisation of the North-East Frontier of Assam*

With the fall of Rangpore on 31 January, 1825, the expulsion of the Burmese and the lifting of their threat to Bengal was virtually completed.⁹² From that date onwards it became possible to create first a provisional and then a more settled administration for Lower Assam, now firmly occupied by British forces. To that task Scott was to apply himself, first as joint Commissioner with Lt. Col. Richards, and from 1826, as a sole Commissioner for Assam.

But Scott was not left undisturbed in the task of creating a civil administration, for the expulsion of the Burmese did not of itself bring tranquillity to all Assam. The collapse and overthrow of Ahom administration in Upper Assam had made possible the grasping of power by other tribal groups. The first to challenge Ahom authority, had been the Moamarias.⁹³ They occupied the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from Sadiya to the Burhi Dihing, in the modern district of Dibrugarh, and though they were regarded as true Assamese, they had been distinguished, ever since the Hinduisation* of the Assam tribes, by their devotion to

⁹² For the enemy held no other fortified position in the province.

⁹³ For the early history of the Moamarias see S. O. Hannay, *A short account of the Moe-Morah Sect and of the country occupied by the Bor Senapattee*. India Office Mss. Eur. D. 517.

* Since the reign of Gadadhar Singha in 1681 the Ahoms had been actively patronising Sakataism as opposed to the Vaisnavite form of Hinduism. The reforming zeal of the Vaisnava preachers, who took the lead in the act of conversion, extended only to the inhabitants of

the religious tenets of a Guru who had denounced Brahmanism and taught a form of Vaisnavism.⁹⁴ It was their rebellion in the 1790's against Raja Gaurinath Singh, which had "contributed so largely to the fall of the Ahom power."⁹⁵ But the turmoil they created was promptly used by another tribal group, that of the Singphos, regarded as a western branch of the Kachins of the Hukawng valley, who crossed into the head of the Assam valley and settled between the Patkoi range and the river.⁹⁶ The Singphos, a warlike tribe added their ravages to those of the Burmese, and helped to depopulate Upper Assam.⁹⁷ A second invading people, the Khamtis came from a Shan state beyond the Pakoi range, and though of the same stock as the Ahoms, were distinguished from them by being Buddhists.⁹⁸ They first emigrated from their native hills during the later part of the eighteenth century, when the Ahom ruler gave them permission to settle on the banks of the Tengapani. But during the troubled reign of Raja Gaurinath they made several irruptions into Sadiya district and at length ejected the ruling chieftain, the Sadiya Khowa Gohain, usurping his title and jurisdiction and reducing the Assamese to dependence and slavery. The troubles of the Burmese invasions merely gave them opportunity to extend their plundering.⁹⁹ As a result of all these invasions and usurpations the lands to the east of

the *duars*, and did not reach the hill tribes in the hinterland. See S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 18 and 33.

⁹⁴ B.S.P.C., 17 March 1826, no. 25, Capt. Neufville's *Epitome of the geographical and political information respecting the tract of country in Upper Assam beyond Rungpore*; B.S.P.C., 10 June 1825, no. 26, Neufville to Scott 15 April, 1825; W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, p. 326.

⁹⁵ *Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam*, p. 71.

⁹⁶ See S. F. Hannary, *Sketch of the Singphos or the Kakhyens of Burma*, p. 44.

⁹⁷ *Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam*, pp. 222-3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁹⁹ B.S.P.C., 10 June, 1825, no. 26, Neufville to Scott, 15 April, 1825; W. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

Rangpore, along both banks of the Brahmaputra had been largely laid waste and left to the encroachment of deep jungle¹⁰⁰

All this area had so far remained untouched by British troops, and the reduction of the tribes to peaceful subjection and allegiance to the Company had still to be effected. When in March, 1825 Assamese from Upper Assam approached Scott for help against Singphos and Khamti deprivations, he therefore despatched Captain Neufville, with Col. Richards' concurrence, to occupy Sadiya and oust the Singphos.¹⁰¹ A further extension of the British frontier, with all the complications that must entail, was in the making.

For accurate information about the tribes of Upper Assam Scott relied much on the information supplied by Neufville. Neufville maintained a regular journal recording the geographical and political features of this tract, including also the "barren, desolate and jungle-covered" foothills of the present North-East Frontier Agency. The Miris, one of the tribes of this area, he described as a "nearly barbarous hill race, rudely armed with bows and arrows, and differing altogether in language, appearance and habits from the inhabitants of Assam proper," though "quiet and inoffensive."¹⁰² But even before Neufville's advance, Scott had been considering what British relations with the people of the frontier tract of Assam might be. He was convinced that though hostile to the Burmese they would be incapable of effective resistance to those invaders "without a complete alteration in their intellectual and social condition which it must be a work of time to effect."¹⁰³ On the other hand their history of bloodshed, rapine and political instability would make it too dangerous to the settled lowlanders for the British to put such arms into their hands as would render them really formidable to the Burmese and capable of themselves under-

¹⁰⁰ E.S.P.C., 10 June, 1825, no. 26, Neufville to Scott, 15 April, 1825.

¹⁰¹ B.S.P.C., 15 April, 1825, nos. 13-14, Scott to Richards, 9 March, 1825 and Scott to Swinton, 10 March, 1825.

¹⁰² B.S.P.C., 10 June, 1825, no. 26, Neufville to Scott, 15 April, 1825.

¹⁰³ B.S.P.C., 26 Nov., 1824, no. 11, Scott to Swinton, 9 Nov., 1824.

taking the defence of the border.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, Scott's first thinking was about how to coerce them into order, and for a while he even thought of using Burmese prisoners for control of the frontier tribes: "Upon the conclusion of peace I would propose to settle prisoners as cultivators in the lower part of Assam or in the pergana of Mechpara . . . they might hereafter prove useful as a militia to be employed against the Garos, Daflas*, and other tribes inhabiting almost inaccessible country with whom we are now likely to have dispute."¹⁰⁵

But no breathing space was ever given for the working out with government of such plans, for in March 1825 came news that seven thousand five hundred Singphos, some six hundred and sixty of them armed with muskets, had assembled at the mouth of the Nao-Dihing and formed cantonments. The Assamese who had brought this news also reported the plundering of the districts of Sessi, Dhimaji and Bardolani, the driving off of the cattle and enslavement of the inhabitants.¹⁰⁶

Scott was in no doubt that action was absolutely necessary. The strategic posts at Borhat, Jaypur and Sadiya must be guarded and the Assamese inhabitants of Upper Assam protected. "The abandonment of that part of the country near Sadiya", he wrote, "would necessarily most seriously injure our reputation and character for good faith besides entailing ruin and misery upon thousands whom we are bound to protect . . . and deprive us in the event of there being a necessity for a second campaign against the Burmese of all the local influence and facilities for ulterior operations."¹⁰⁷ The immediate task, as Scott and Neufville both saw, was to

¹⁰⁴ B.S.P.C., 3 Dec., 1824, no. 8, Scott to Swinton, 17 Nov., 1824.

* The Daflas occupy a vast stretch of hills and forest which roughly covers the western half of the Subansari division of the present North East Frontier Agency. See B. K. Shukla, *The Daflas*.

¹⁰⁵ Home Misc., Vol. 673, pp. 729-30, Scott to Swinton, 14 March, 1825.

¹⁰⁶ B.S.P.C., 15 April, 1825, no. 3, Scott to Swinton, 25 March, 1825.

¹⁰⁷ B.S.P.C., 20 May, 1825, no. 24, Scott to Swinton, 30 April, 1825.

liberate the hundreds of Assamese captives. Neufville was asked to give every encouragement to such of the Singpho chiefs who might desire to enter into negotiations upon the basis of releasing all the Assamese captives taken since the date of the capitulation of Rungpore, each chief being asked to provide hostages for fulfilment of his engagements.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile Neufville pressed forward, for if the Singphos, anticipating defeat, emigrated to the hills—after reaping the approaching harvest—all endeavour to free the Assamese would prove fruitless.¹⁰⁹ When it was realised that the sale value of each slave, averaging through all ages and both sexes, was from twenty to eighty rupees, and that each Singpho was probably possessed of forty or sixty captives it was scarcely to be doubted that the Singphos would make every effort to get them away to the markets of their hill neighbours.¹¹⁰

Happily Neufville received the immediate help of the Khamtis and when he reached Sadiya a number of Singpho chiefs also showed a conciliatory attitude.¹¹¹ Some Singphos who had turned plunderers during the Burmese invasions, when the only alternatives were to plunder others or to be plundered, now wished to settle down.¹¹² But Neufville was also aided by a sudden outbreak of hostility between two of the Singpho chiefs, Beesa Gam and Daffa Gam, whom he was able to play off one against the other.¹¹³ After military operations in the territories of both these chiefs, Neufville's superiority in arm and strategy led at the close of 1825 to the submission of a number of leading chiefs, Beesa Gam included, and the liberation of no less than six thousand Assamese captives. Neufville had inspired the Singphos

¹⁰⁸ P.S.P.C., 20 May, 1825, nos. 23-24, Scott to Neufville, 8 April, 1825 and Scott to Swinton, 30 April, 1825; B.S.P.C. 27, May, 1825, no. 63, Scott to Neufville, 2 May, 1825.

¹⁰⁹ B.S.P.C., 10 June, 1825, no. 25, Scott to Swinton, 22 May, 1825.

¹¹⁰ B.S.P.C., 2 Sept., 1825, no. 23, Neufville to Scott, 2 Aug., 1825.

¹¹¹ B.S.P.C., 20 May, 1825, no. 26, Neufville to Capt. Martin, 13 Apr., 1825.

¹¹² B.S.P.C., 10 June, 1825, no. 26, Neufville to Scott, 18 May, 1825.

¹¹³ B.S.P.C., 20 May, 1825, no. 26, Neufville to Scott, 13 Apr., 1825.

with a real dread of British military prowess, and of the capacity of the Company's forces "to overcome the discouraging localities of the country".¹¹⁴

Early in 1826 Scott visited Sadyia and entered into formal engagements with sixteen out of twenty eight Singpho chiefs. The chiefs promised their allegiance to the Company and abjured all connections with the Burmese or any other foreign power; they undertook to act agreeably to the orders of the British government in political matters; promised to supply the British troops with rice and other necessaries, to make roads and *ghats* for them, and to make such resistance as might be required in case of foreign invasion; agreed to release all Assamese captives detained by them, and to arrest and deliver any Singpho who might seek shelter in their territories after committing depredations on the Assamese. They also promised to deliver into the custody of the political agent a son or a nephew or a brother as hostage. In return Scott promised protection and freedom from revenue dues. They would also be left to administer justice in their respective villages, according to former custom, and to settle disputes among their dependents, with the provision that should any quarrel take place between villages they would not take course to arms but refer the matter to the British authorities for a decision.¹¹⁵

To the twelve chiefs who had failed to attend the meeting. Scott issued a proclamation inviting them to come down from the hills within two months and to subscribe to the agreement taken from the rest of the tribe. They were threatened that if they failed to do so their properties would be confiscated and they would be expelled from Assam altogether.¹¹⁶

The execution and strategy of the advance to Sadyia and the reduction of the Singpho strongholds had been Neufville's: it was his energy, ability and intrepidity, aided by the efforts of the Khamti auxiliaries and the Assamese cap-

¹¹⁴ B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 12 June, 1826.

¹¹⁵ B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826 no. 10, Scott to Swinton, 12 June, 1826.

¹¹⁶ B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 12 June, 1826.

tives themselves which had so quickly lifted the Singpho terror. With the restoration of order, however, Scott had to consider under what plan that order should in future be maintained.

While Neufville was subduing the Singphos, Scott in April 1825 had been suggesting to the Calcutta authorities the possibility of granting stipends to some of the more influential chiefs in return for their defending the passes through the mountains to the south-east, and in return for their prevention of any raids upon the lowlands. As an example of what might be done he referred to the similar measures adopted by Cleveland in the Bhagalpur hills.¹¹⁷ Scott also thought of settling various Singpho chiefs in the plains, where whole tracts were lying waste. With such tangible and increasingly valuable possessions he hoped they would reform their predatory habits. Useful employment might be given to the more restless part of the community by establishing a corps upon the same plan as that of the Bhagalpur rangers, or by incorporating a certain number of men furnished by each with the Rungpore Light Infantry.¹¹⁸

In June 1826, after his visit to Sadiya, Scott sent his revised plans to Swinton. Firstly, considering the remoteness of the situation from the British headquarters in Assam, and the incongruous and conflicting interests of the petty chiefs, Scott thought that a European officer ought to be permanently posted in Sadiya with one other European assistant. These officers, who should have both civil and military powers, would organise and gradually increase the military resources of the country to prevent any recurrence of predatory incursions in future. They would also have an opportunity closely to study the problems of the tribes.¹¹⁹ Scott was careful to stress to government that the latter object could not be effected by means of a succession of officers incidentally detached in command of the post. Such

¹¹⁷ B.S.P.C., 20 May, 1825. no. 23, Scott to Neufville, 8 Apr., 1825.

¹¹⁸ B.S.P.C., 20 May, 1825, no. 24, Scott to Swinton, 30 Apr., 1825; B.S.P.C. 27, May, 1825, no. 63, Scott to Neufville, 2 May, 1825.

¹¹⁹ B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 12 June, 1826.

officers would necessarily be unacquainted with local politics and circumstances, and with the language of the interpreters, and consequently be liable to be misled "by the artful misrepresentations of interested persons."¹²⁰ This point was a very important one, wherever sympathetic understanding of tribal peoples had to be achieved. A modern work on the North-West Frontier makes from experiences just the same point: "what was wanted was that British officers should deal directly with the tribes, win their confidence, and inspire respect." But the author comments that even the successful officers "were not exempt from the possibility of a sudden transfer to a remote part . . ."¹²¹ Scott therefore urged long-term appointments, and pressed the qualifications of Captain Neufville and Lieutenant Bedingfield for them. The former had clearly shown his initiative and his peculiar fitness for work with the tribes, while the latter, who had commanded at Sadiya, as well qualified by his knowledge of the Assamese language and his pleasant and conciliatory manner towards the natives.¹²²

The other part of the plan Scott submitted to government was for the establishment at Sadiya of a corps of militia, six hundred strong, to be drawn from the followers of the Barsenapati, the Maomaria chief, and the Sadiya Khowa Gohain, a Khamti chief. These two had early aided Neufville, and by this time had completely allied themselves to the Company by deeds of allegiance and by the Company's counter-recognition of their feudatory status in May, 1826.¹²³ Scott thought them much more suitable than regular troops for the frontier, particularly the Khamtis, a fine, muscular and active race of men, hardy and laborious and much superior in military habits to the rest of the Burmese. He thought that if attached to the British interest by liberal treatment they might prove a very useful description of soldier.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Sir William Barton, *India's North-West Frontier*, p. 61.

¹²² B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 12 June, 1826.

¹²³ *Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam*, p. 71.

¹²⁴ B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 12 June, 1826.

This idea of forming a native militia at once caught the interest and imagination of both Bedingfield and Neufville. In June Bedingfield wrote that he saw no reason why, if armed and disciplined properly, the natives of the country should not become more than a match for any tribes they might be required to contend with. Considering the sad effects of the climate on the Hindustani soldiers, he saw in Scott's proposal the Company's best hope of establishing an effective force on the frontier. Drawing his idea from the old *paik* system¹²⁵ of Assam, Bedingfield suggested that as most of the militia men would be peasants, leave of absence should be granted to a portion of them in rotation so as to allow them to attend to their crops. To prevent them from developing lazy and idle habits in peacetime he proposed that they should be trained in building, stockades, trench-work, making canoes and in the handling of howitzers.¹²⁶

In August, 1826, Neufville followed with his suggestions, based upon a rather broader view of the whole situation. He accepted the usefulness of the militia proposed by Bedingfield on the Ahom model. He also agreed that the Company's regular Indian forces were quite unsuited to frontier conditions. But he argued that some regular force was required, distinct from the local militia, to garrison a fortified post at Sadiya. That force, five or six hundred strong, should be placed solely under the permanent political agent whose appointment Scott had proposed. Such a body, he hoped, would be fully sufficient to keep in check internal disturbance as well as border aggression in all Upper Assam. A regular garrison at Sadiya would also be "productive of the best impression by convincing the people of the country in the permanence of our protective influence (of which they at the moment entertained great doubts) . . . as to extinguish all hope in the minds of the refractory of a return to their former system or rapine and plunder."¹²⁷ He thought that for

¹²⁵ See *Supra*, pp. 89-90.

¹²⁶ B.S.P.C., 21 July, 1826, no. 14, Bedingfield to Scott, 4 June, 1826; B.S.P.C., 21 July, 1826, no. 13, Scott to Swinton, 4 July, 1826.

¹²⁷ B.S.P.C., 10 Nov., 1826, no. 22, Neufville to Scott, 29 Aug., 1826.

the force no men were better fitted than the Gurkhas, recruited for the hill companies of the Champaran and Dinajpur Light Battalions, who were "proverbially brave, active and capable of enduring fatigue both in hills and jungles, and free from those prejudice which the Hindus of the regular troops were invariably accustomed to." He proposed that the permanent force should comprise two hundred Gurkhas, one hundred and fifty Shan musketeers selected from the body at Singamari, and one hundred and fifty Manipuri horsemen.¹²⁸

So far as the Singphos were concerned, Neufville would pursue a conciliatory but guarded policy particularly towards Beesa Gam, whose stronghold command the road to Moon-dong and Hukawng, the only direction from which any attack might be apprehended in future. He anticipated that before long this would prove to be a "route of considerable traffic." He suggested that a party from the permanent force might be stationed there or in Daffa Gam's territory until the road was cleared.¹²⁹

Since the Supreme Government was planning to disband the corps of regulars operating on the Assam frontier and to move military headquarters to Sylhet, Scott thought Neufville's proposals particularly useful. The experience at Bishnath during the monsoon, when seven hundred men of the 13th Regiment were unfit for duty but the Rangpore Local Corps suffered only the normal incidence of sickness, also convinced him of its wisdom.¹³⁰ Scott further hoped that the Shyam musketeers and the Manipuri horsemen might be settled as *jagirdars* so that the only men to whom it would be necessary to give full pay would be companies of Gurkhas.¹³¹

A Sadiya militia was ultimately formed in 1827 four hundred and fifty strong, each man receiving from the government land worth ten rupees a year and *batta* during the time he was being drilled.¹³² Any further stay of the regular

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ B.S.P.C., 10 Nov., 1826, no. 21, Scott to Swinton, 12 Oct., 1826.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² B.S.P.C., 28 Oct., 1827, nos. 54-55, Scott to Swinton, 3 Sept., 1827.

troops in Assam being thought unnecessary, it was decided that the Rangpore Local Corps, with the necessary addition of the Gurkha companies should be entrusted with the regular military duties in Assam¹³³ under Neufville's immediate care and command.¹³⁴ Lt. Rutherford was employed in Sadiya as Neufville's assistant in lieu of Lt. Bedingfield,¹³⁵ as he supervised the constructions of a fort and stockade at Sadiya.¹³⁶

Scott's plans for curbing the Singpho menace did not end with the adoption by the government of these military dispositions. He realised that the Singphos like the Garos needed to be won over to a new way of life, if their predatory raids were to be stopped. Their social organisation was peculiar. The whole of their field work was performed by the women and by Assamese slaves; "the men delight in lounging about the villages and basking in the sun when not engaged in hunting or war."¹³⁷ Proud, vindictive, improvident and hopelessly indolent,¹³⁸ they were unlikely to remain peaceful neighbours unless provided with new outlet for their energies. Scott's idea was to develop British trade routes to upper Burma through the Singpho territory by using the Singphos as middlemen. This he thought would give a profitable avocation, involving little physical exertion, to the hitherto marauding race and their predatory activities would gradually be extinguished.¹³⁹

Though the need to civilize the Singphos gave a new impetus to the idea of trade across the Assam-Burma Frontier

¹³³ B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, nos. 4-8, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb., 1828; Swinton to Scott, 7 March, 1828.

¹³⁴ B.S.P.C., 2 May, 1828, nos. 14-16, Neufville to Scott, 15 Apr., 1828; Sterling to Scott, 2 May, 1828. ..

¹³⁵ B.S.P.C., 17 Oct., 1828, no. 1, Neufville to Scott, 4 Sept., 1828; no. 3, Swinton to Scott, 17 Oct., 1828.

¹³⁶ B.S.P.C., 29 Jan., 1830, no. 2, Rutherford to Neufville, 7 Jan., 1830.

¹³⁷ J. Butler, *A sketch of Assam*, p. 8.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 44, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb., 1828.

the idea itself was not new. In 1822 the select committee at Canton, faced with a closure of trade at that part—over the Topaz affair—had written to Calcutta pointing out how easy it was for the Canton officials to prevent their petitions reaching Peking, and asking that the Calcutta authorities should explore the possibility “of transmitting their representations overland . . . by way of Sylhet and the province of Yunan” in times of crisis.¹⁴⁰ Again in 1824, the surveyor general, Blacker, had written enthusiastically to Amherst about Assam: “Its interesting situation between Hindoostan and China, two names with which the civilised world has been long familiar, whilst itself remains nearly unknown, is a striking fact and leaves nothing to be wished, but the means and opportunity for exploring it.”¹⁴¹ Soon after the British occupation of Assam, Scott had set in motion a number of surveys, carried on under his direct supervision by officers from the surveyor-general’s department. Various routes were studied within and beyond Assam, with an eye to their potential use as trade routes. While Neufville was travelling throughout the Khamti and Singpho territories establishing law and order, other young officers such as Captain Bedford and Lieutenants Wilcox and Burlton were mapping the area watered by the upper branches of the Brahmaputra.¹⁴² Among the routes they studied was one from Assam to Tibet and Yunnan through the country in the extreme north of Burma inhabited by the Khamti and Mishmi tribes.¹⁴³ This route however, could not be followed beyond the borders of the Khamtis as they feared to rouse the jealousy and suspicion of the Burmese.† Another route which received much attention was the Hukawng valley route, by which the

¹⁴⁰ See A. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

¹⁴¹ B.S.P.C., 14 May, 1824, Blacker to Amherst, 22 Apr., 1824.

¹⁴² See Ma Thaug, *British Interests in Trans-Burma Trade routes to China*, London University, Ph. D. thesis, 1955, pp. 20-54.

¹⁴³ See R. Wilcox, ‘Memoir of a Survey of Assam and the neighbouring countries executed in 1825-6-7-8.’ *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. XVII, pp. 314-453, 832.

† M. Thaug, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

Burmese had entered Assam in 1817 and in 1820, and by which they returned in 1825. Part of this route lay in the territories of Beesa Gam* and at the time when Neufville was entering into engagements with him, he was informed that this route had both military and commercial value.¹⁴⁴

It was on this route that Scott placed his greatest hopes of improving trade with Burma, and incidentally of encouraging the Singphos in peaceful pursuits. By April, 1826 messengers from the China-Burmese border area brought information to the effect that there would be a considerable demand for woollen cloth and other European manufactures in their country, in exchange for which they could give horses and silver. Scott gave every encouragement to them to return to Sadiya at the proper season of the year—November or December—when he proposed to establish a fair at the place.¹⁴⁵ This was approved by the government¹⁴⁶ and silk goods of the value of eight hundred rupees were despatched from Calcutta, together with presents for the chiefs. Unhappily on their way the whole of the consignment was plundered. Though Scott at once applied for a fresh investment of goods¹⁴⁷ the smallness of the sum granted, mere two thousand rupees, and the want of any officer to supervise the business led to the venture falling through.¹⁴⁸ In 1830, however, Neufville took up the idea again.¹⁴⁹ He recommended that the merchant adventurer Bruce,¹⁵⁰ who was in charge of the

* The Singphos bordering Assam, at this time, were said to be divided into twelve principal tribes or clans, designed after the names of their chiefs, or Gams. Every chieftain maintained his own separate independence and seldom united with any other. The principal clans were the Beesa Gam, Duffa Gam, Luttao Gam, and Luttora Gam. W. Robinson, *op cit.*, p. 736.

¹⁴⁴ M. Thaung, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁵ B.S.P.C., 19 May, 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 28 Apr., 1826.

¹⁴⁶ B.S.P.C., 19 May, 1826, no. 11, Swinton to Scott, 19 May, 1826.

¹⁴⁷ B.S.P.C., 7 Sept., 1827, no. 17, Scott to Swinton, 18 Aug., 1827.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ B.S.P.C., 14 May 1830, no. 29, Scott to Swinton, 22 Apr., 1830.

¹⁵⁰ This Bruce (Charles Alexander) was the brother of Robert Bruce, merchant and soldier of fortune referred in Ch. III.

gunboats at Sadiya, should be vested with the superintendence of the whole business at a salary of one hundred rupees per month, with a share in the profits. Neufville suggested that a consignment of English and Indian goods should be sent up to be sold at reasonable prices in exchange for ivory, amber, musk, *manjit*, copper, *daus* and spears. Even if the demand at Sadiya was insufficient to take off the whole consignment, he was sure that the goods he specified would find a sale in Assam at fifty to one hundred per cent profit.¹⁵¹ The consignment he suggested for the following cold weather was this:¹⁵²

1000 yds of coarse scarlet broadcloth at two rupees per yard	.. ..	2,000
150 yds of bright yellow broadcloth for the priest at two rupees per yard	..	300
100 yds of red baize at one rupee per yard	..	100
600 yds of chintzes at five annas per yard	..	188
White long cloth	.. ..	200
Book muslins	.. ..	50
Coloured cotton handkerchiefs	.. ..	100
Lascars red caps	.. ..	100
Velvet, black and red (China)	.. ..	200
Kincobs, three pieces at fifty rupees each	.. ..	150
Flints	.. ..	100
Opium, red battan [?] blankets, eria* cloth and produce of Assam	.. ..	1,000
Boat hire from Calcutta and Insurance	.. ..	312
		<hr/>
	Total Sicca	Rs. 5,000
		<hr/>

¹⁵¹ B.P.C., 14 May, 1830, no. 29, Neufville to Scott, 27 Jan., 1830.

¹⁵² B.P.C., 14 May, 1830, no. 29, Neufville to Scott, 27 Jan., 1830.

* The eri or eria cloth is one of the three varieties of silk produced in Assam. The other two are the *muga* and *pat*. The cloth is light, strong, and remarkably durable, and it washes well. Kamrup is the largest eri-producing tract in the province. The Rabhas, Kacharis and Meches are expert in the cultivation of eri worm (*attacus ricini*). See B. C. Allen, *Monograph on the silk cloth of Assam*, pp. 4-14.

Neufville also thought it desirable to allow the principal Singpho chiefs to take merchandise for the first year on credit under engagements of payment at the ensuing fair. He had already lent four hundred rupees to the Beesa Gam upon such conditions, to test his integrity. Neufville hoped that eventually this trade would extend through the Hukawng valley to Mogaung, on the upper Irrawaddy.¹⁵³ The government approved the proposal and Scott and Neufville were allowed to try the experiment.¹⁵⁴

This study of the tranquillization of the eastern frontier cannot be concluded without referring to another of Captain Neufville's projects. Major S. F. Hannay tells us¹⁵⁵ that Capt. Neufville negotiated with Laong, the *Amat Gyee*, or deputy governor of Maing Kwan with a view to bringing a large number of the Shan population of the Maing Kwan province to Assam. Unfortunately, however, the Burmese got intimation of this confidential negotiation and Laong was taken to Ava and executed.

Hannay writes that "as a political measure nothing could have been better for Upper Assam at that time, than the transfer of a large body of the Shan race into the province, as under the able management of that officer, the eventual benefit to be derived from the accession of an energetic population, with knowledge in the useful arts, and habits of industry unknown to the Assamese of the present day, was certain."¹⁵⁶ According to Hannay the benefit to Upper Assam in regard to trade in muga silk alone would have been great, for the Shan population of the middle and lower Chindwin river, together with the large Burmese population situated between the lower Pangam and the Irrawaddy, would have consumed every particle of that article which could have been produced by the Assamese. The Shan dis-

¹⁵³ B.P.C., 14 May, 1830, no. 29, Neufville to Scott, 27 Jan., 1830.

¹⁵⁴ B.P.C., 14 May, 1830, no. 30, Swinton to Scott, 14 May, 1830.

¹⁵⁵ S. F. Hannay, *Notes on the Shans, Part II, Shans of Assam*, pp. 15-16.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ S. F. Hannay, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

tricts of the Upper Chindwin lay only six marches although by a mountainous route from Ranpore. Had Neufville lived, Hannay argues, he would surely have succeeded in opening up a route so full of possibilities for upper Assamese trade, as also links with the Chinese markets of the Yunnan frontier.¹⁵⁷ It is interesting to note that half a century later, the similar idea of bringing 'a large needy and industrious' Shan population from the South West of Yunnan occurred in the minds of those Britishers who were interested in the development of Assam Tea Industry and who in a memorial in 1878 to the Hon. Viscount Canbrook, Secretary of State for India stressed the importance of opening up a practicable route between Assam and the South West of Yunnan for the purpose of making the industrious population of the latter available for work in Assam.¹⁵⁸

The Singpho trade, though it continued during the remaining period of Scott's life, and for four years afterwards,¹⁵⁹ did not serve the purpose of transforming the habits of the Singphos. But the effort to establish a market at Sadiya was more successful, and in July, 1834 the first four Marwari traders, from North India, appeared at Sadiya, under the protective wing of the newly appointed British officer there.¹⁶⁰ Moreover Scott never ceased to be optimistic about the wider possibilities of the Sadiya mart. Three months before his death, on 18 May, 1831, he wrote to the Government: "the evidence lately given before the two Houses of Parliament in regard to the obstructions offered to the introduction of British woollens from Canton into the interior of China by the imposition of high duties seems fully to confirm the expediency of endeavouring to open other direct channels of

¹⁵⁸ *The Assam Association Memorial to the Hon. Viscount Cranbrook, the Secretary of State for India and Report of the Deputation to his Lordship, 31st July, 1878, London.* Signed by Rutherford Alcock, Henny Hopkinson, H. H. Godwin-Austen, William Maitland, James Warren, J. B. Chalmers, Alfred J. Holiday and R. Langford Locke.

¹⁵⁹ See M. Thaung, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

communication with the inland provinces of that empire from some of which Sadiya is distant little more than 200 miles."¹⁶¹

The peace and order brought by Scott to the frontier of Upper Assam continued for many years after his death, except for a rising in 1839 which followed the death of Salan Sadiya Khowa Gohain, the Khamti chief, with whom agreement had been reached on the 15th May, 1826.¹⁶² In that year the Khamtis of Sadiya suddenly rose and murdered the political agent, Col. White and many of his guards. The Singphos, too, joined in the rising. Despite this incident little change was made in the administrative machinery for the frontier for some forty years. As communications were made easier, the raids of the hill tribes became easier to suppress, and a number of hitherto independent tribes were brought under British control and were transformed into revenue-paying ryots. Throughout these years Scott's native militia continued to patrol the roads and passes to the north.¹⁶³

3. *On the question of the employment of the Assamese and the restoration of Ahom monarchy in Upper Assam.*

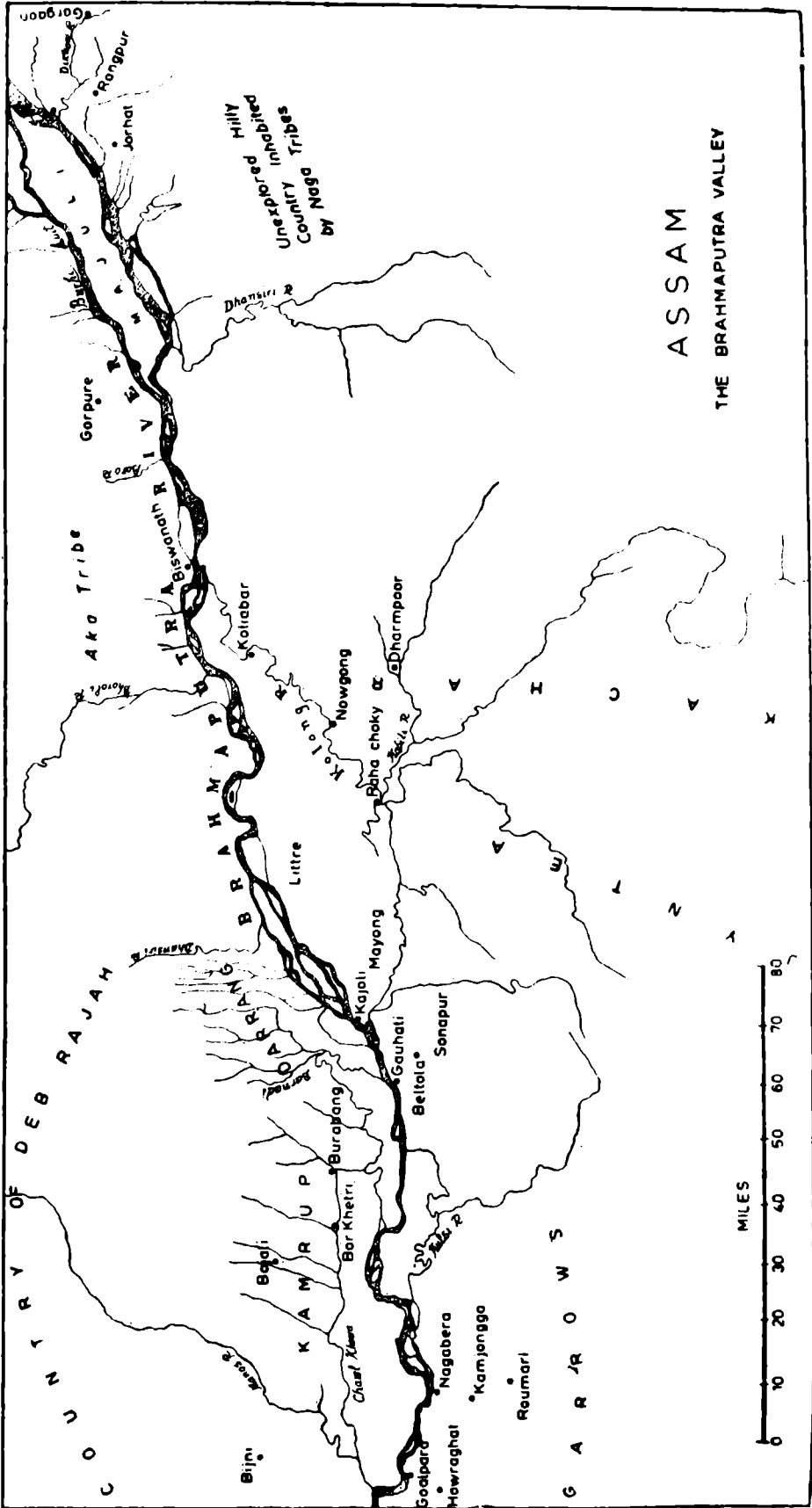
Between 1825 and 1831 the establishment of a secure base at Sadiya for the British guardforce on the Burmese frontier had been one pre-occupation of Scott. Another had been the creation of a new administrative order, revenue and judicial, for Lower Assam. There remained a third problem, which proved the most intractable of all, that of deciding what to do with Upper Assam, the old Ahom heartlands interposed between the British frontier posts at Sadiya and settled Lower Assam. Here Scott found his views running contrary to those of the Supreme Government, and though in

¹⁶¹ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to Swinton, 18 May, 1831.

¹⁶² C. U. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. II, pp. 252-253; *Physical and Political Geography of the Assam*, p. 221.

¹⁶³ *Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam*, p. 221.

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the end his proposals were largely accepted he did not live to see them put into action.

Scott wished to re-establish an Ahom kingdom in Upper Assam, with a constitution designed to eliminate the weakness of the old regime and the need for any detailed British interference. Such a restoration seemed the solution to many problems : it would relieve the Company of the financial burden of administering an impoverished, devastated country; it would lessen tension of the frontier and contribute to its defence; it would establish British good faith, halt the process of annexation and consequent breaking down of Indian society; and above all it would solve the problem of providing suitable employment to the Ahom and other Assamese officials and nobles, thereby removing a major cause for unrest and rebellion. How Scott came to hold and defend these views, and against what opposition, is the subject of this section.

It has been said that most of the problems of Assam today arise out of an historical fact: that "a whole host of clerks and petty officials from Bengal came in the wake of the British rulers, as Assam was not in a position for some three generations to supply English-knowing personnel for taking part in the administration, and at their instance, the British government, partly also to simplify matters, made Bengali the second language of the administration and the school in Assam."¹⁶⁴ The Ahom system of government was so very different from that of other Indian territories that in the preliminary stages of British administration in Assam, the Assamese could not be readily fitted into the regular departments of the Company's administration. Some high-ranking officials from the previous Ahom government were given high posts because of their special knowledge in the revenue and judicial fields, but, apart from these most of the jobs in the Company's service came to be held by outsiders.

The consequences were not limited to the loss of government service and social prestige by the old Ahom service

¹⁶⁴ S. K. Chatterji, *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India*, p. 78.

aristocracy. In Assam, as everywhere else in British India, the establishment of a hierarchy of new officials, operating a new legal and administrative machinery, through a new language opened the way to widespread exploitation, social and economic, of the old society. The appearance of Bruce, the merchant-adventurer who reported the possibilities of tea cultivation in Assam,¹⁶⁵ the penetration of Marwari traders to the new market at Sadiya,¹⁶⁶ the installation of Bengali *tahsildars* in Upper Assam¹⁶⁷ were signs of changes to come in the future.¹⁶⁸

Scott wished to soften the impact of such change, and as will be seen, he did his best to give employment to Ahom officials in the revenue and judicial service. But an examination of the Company's native establishment, set up by Scott

¹⁶⁵ As far back as 1826 Scott sent to the authorities of the Calcutta Botanic Garden, some dried tea leaves from Manipur which were entered in the catalogue of the Company's botanical collection under No. 3668. Bentinck Papers, PwJf 2546 a; For Bruce's enterprise see A. C. Barua, *Aspects of the Economic Development of Assam Valley*, A London University, M. A. Thesis, 1960, p. 79.

¹⁶⁶ See *supra*, p. 129.

¹⁶⁷ See *Infra*, p. 149.

¹⁶⁸ In fact ever since the initial British occupation—the time when many of the Assamese *rajkhawas*, *baruas*, *ḡakatis*, *ḡotokis*, *hazarikas*, *saikias* and *baras* had to make room for the Bengali *tahsildars*, *tahvildars*, *peshḡars*, *poddars*, *nazirs*, *mullakḡuranis* and various sorts of other *amlas*—the Assamese culture and tradition (due to the predominance of the Bengali language and personnel) began to be affected severely by a clash with forces coming from Bengal. The gradual consciousness among the educated Assamese in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the present, of the harm that had already been done to the Assamese language and culture, led them to oppose any move which seemed to them detrimental to the interests of the Assamese. The first of such organized movements in the present century was that against Lord Curzon's decision to amalgamate the eastern part of Bengal with the then constituted (1904) province of Assam.

See *Assam Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1963, for a note by this author on the Assamese-Bengali relationship during the days of Manik Chandra Baruah (1851—1915) under the caption 'Municipal Chairman'.

as political agent on the North-East Frontier, will show how large were the changes introduced by the advent of the British. Scott's establishment was comprised of three *munshis*,¹⁶⁹ writing and interpreting Persian and Hindustani; one *muhafiz-i-daftar*, or keeper of public papers and records; six *muharrirs* or clerks; two *tahvildars* or cashiers; one *dafturee* who prepared the writing materials, and a few *jamadars* and *chuprasis* inferior officers of police, customs or excise and their orderlies. There was also a staff of interpreters: four English writers and interpreters of the Burmese, Manipuri, Khasi and Singpho languages, together with their orderlies. The pay for the whole establishment for the nine months from December, 1823 to August, 1824 came to Rs. 5,823, individual salaries varying from Rs. 43 a month drawn by the *munshis* to less than Rs. 5 a month for the *chuprasis*.¹⁷⁰ Of all these employees, only a certain Durga Thakur was probably Assamese and he was employed in a special capacity as 'Assam *Muharrir*'. His salary, including his travelling allowances was about Rs. 20 per month.¹⁷¹

In May, 1825, Scott and Richards, the joint commissioners submitted the native establishment list¹⁷² which they proposed for the two divisions of Assam. The pattern of offices was closely modelled upon the establishment in the other districts of the Bengal Presidency, and like them still bore the Persian titles taken over by the Company from their Mughal predecessors. In structure, function as well as name the administration proposed was Anglo-Mughal.¹⁷³ The designation of many of the posts—*shumar navis*, or registrar; *khazanachi*,

¹⁶⁹ They were: Rajkishore Sen, Hari Shome and Kishen Kant Bose. The B.S.P.C., 22 Oct., 1824, no. 12, Scott to Swinton, 1 Oct., 1824. *The statement of sums paid to the native officers employed by the Political Agent on the North-East Frontier from Dec., 1823 to 5 Aug., 1824.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² See Appendices A and B at the end of the chapter.

¹⁷³ B.S.P.C., 7 July 1826, no. 32, Scott and Richards to Swinton, 25 May, 1825.

or treasurer; *tahsildar*, or district revenue collector were unfamiliar to the Assamese. Their method of working, especially the mass of forms, returns and other paper work, was totally unlike anything seen under the Ahoms. Ahom officials had never felt it necessary to keep written records of official day-to-day business. For example in judicial matters the Ahom custom was to hear all complaints *viva voce*; afterwards to summon the party complained against; and, if his statement proved unsatisfactory, prompt punishment ensued, without further delay for witnesses.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, White reported that the ex-Raja Purandar Singh asked Scott why on earth he and his officials were always so busy in taking down the complainant's deposition, and that of his witnesses, and then summoning the defendant and taking down his statement and then again calling for his witness. For him it was an unnecessary lengthy process where the judge, who was bound to forget everything about the case in its later stages would be at the mercy of the *amlah*.¹⁷⁵ In justification of the practice of taking written depositions, Scott is recorded as replying, "Swurgo Deo, you are of celestial origin, and can recollect everything. We are earth-born, and when we go to dinner, forget what we have heard in the course of the day; therefore we write down what we hear."¹⁷⁶ It was inevitable that when the system and its officers were so unfamiliar to the Ahom tradition, the posts should be filled by experts, already trained in the Regulation system of Bengal. As a matter of fact, prior to the permanent arrangement of May, 1825, Scott had already appointed provisionally, many people in the native establishment of Commissioner's office in Lower Assam. The long

¹⁷⁴ A. White, *Memoir*, p. 58. This explanation was said to have been given by the ex-Raja Purandar Singh to Scott who when the raja said that the oppression committed by the subordinate native officers in the British administration was greater than it used to be in the native rule, had to admit the truth of the comparison.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59. *Swargo deo* literally means 'Lord of heaven' and the usual title by which the raja of Assam was addressed.

list of the establishment posts was filled with Rais, Ghoses, Sens, Mukherjis, Chakravartis, Nags, Nandis, Bagchis, Duttas, Pals, Ghosals and Guptas who were undoubtedly brought from Bengal to serve in Assam.¹⁷⁷ Compared to these, the numbers of Kakatis and Changkakatis—the Assamese names—were mere drops in the ocean. Their jobs were also in the lower grades, and hence ill-paid.¹⁷⁸ The names of those upon the new establishment lists are not available, but seems very unlikely either that the trained Bengalis previously employed were then dismissed, or that many more suitable Assamese suddenly became available. Indeed, throughout Scott's period there was always a shortage of Assamese who knew the company's system of government. In 1829, Haliram Dhekial Phukan,¹⁷⁹ then the revenue *sarshtadar* of Lower Assam, published a book on Assam called *Assam Buranji*.¹⁸⁰ The book written in Bengali was distributed freely in Bengal and one of its chief purposes, as the author stressed, was to invite people from Bengal to the Company's jobs in Assam.¹⁸¹ Prospects were always better for outsiders, who were well-conversant with the Company's system of administration, than for the Assamese.

The downfall of the Ahom monarchy started in the early

¹⁷⁷ B.S.P.C., 7 Apr. 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 10 March, 1826. *Account of particulars of disbursements for the public service made under Commissioner in Lower Assam for the year 1231 B. S. (1824/25)*.

¹⁷⁸ The one exception was in the revenue administration, for there the help of the Assamese *Qanungos* was essential and so the three top post were given to three Majumdar Baruas—Joigoram, Kashi and Bhudhar, B.S.P.C., 7 Apr., 1826, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 10 March, 1826.

¹⁷⁹ See *Supra*, p. 97.

¹⁸⁰ The second edition of the book is published from Gauhati in June, 1962 and edited by J. M. Bhattacharya. See also *Bangadut*, 7 Nov. 1829, pp. 292-293; *Samachar Chandrika*, 22 Sept. 1831; *Samachar Darpan*, 30 July, 1831, p. 248; Tarachand Chakravarty's review of Haliram's History in the *India Gazette*, appendix C of the present edition.

¹⁸¹ J. M. Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

years of the nineteenth century, and with it had gone, hand in hand, a decline in the influence of the official nobility. During the period of the Burmese invasions the nobles survived only in the name and not in power or influence. With the removal of the central authority of the Ahom monarch, under whose peculiar constitution alone the official nobility had thrived, they received a further blow. At the time of the British take-over of the administration, the influence of the nobility was so reduced that in Assam, unlike other newly conquered territories in India, there was no immediate political need to conciliate or destroy them, for the safety of the British power. The small tributary rajas and other *malguzars* of lower Assam were continued in their role as revenue intermediaries, and were thus satisfied. The officers more directly linked with the Ahom monarchy, the heads of the various *khels* and of the Ahom administrative departments, could be and were over-thrown, the *paik* system came to an end. The regiments of *paiks* which the officers had once led melted back into the villages as peasant cultivators. Thus the British in Assam were not confronted, as they had been in the Deccan after the fall of Peshwa Baji Rao II, with bodies of unemployed soldiers and with political leaders who might oppose the British with force.¹⁸²

In the Deccan, Elphinstone thought it worthwhile to grant considerable pensions to many of the Maratha sardars. He defended the expenditure on political grounds: "if we had deprived the civil and military servants of every means of maintaining themselves we should have forced them to intrigue and raise insurrections against us whereas we now have some hold on them all from their fear of losing the little they have left if not from gratitude for being permitted to enjoy it."¹⁸³ Scott, in Assam, followed Elphinstone's example. Many members of the royal family, and many old Ahom functionaries who had applied to him for help, even for subsistence, were given small pensions, and allowances

¹⁸² See K. Ballhatchet, *Social policy and Social change in Western India, 1817-1830*, pp. 77-103.

¹⁸³ Quoted in K. Ballhatchet, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

in money and *paiks*.¹⁸⁴ In view of the increase in price of many commodities, Scott twice urged, in 1827 and 1828, that the Raja Chandra Kanta's allowance should be increased.¹⁸⁵ He also gave small jagirs to various other members of the royal family who had resided in Bengal during the transitional period, subsisting on the charitable donations of the *zamindars* of Soosung, and the rajas of Cachar and Tipperah. They had returned to Assam without any means of support.¹⁸⁶ Again, there were some individuals who had helped the British in their advance towards Assam after the declaration of war against the Burmese. They, too, were given small jagirs and pensions.¹⁸⁷ As a humanitarian measure, a very nominal amount—Re. 1 per month—was sanctioned to some twenty persons who had been deprived of their eye-sight by the former Ahom government.¹⁸⁸ Presents were also given to several men of position.¹⁸⁹

These were all benevolent measures, but they could hardly compensate the ex-government servants for their loss of wealth, position and power. Scott realised that the employment of considerable numbers of outsiders from Bengal in the administration of Lower Assam had made their situation worse. But he was equally aware of the extreme difficulty of obtaining local officials competent to serve the Company.¹⁹⁰ What, too, was the lot of those who did join the Company's service? Scott himself reported in October, 1829,

¹⁸⁴ B.S.P.C., 7 July, 1826, no. 33, Scott and Richards to Swinton. 25 May, 1826; B.S.P.C. 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

¹⁸⁵ B.S.P.C., 26 Oct., 1827, no. 15, Scott to Swinton, 1 Aug., 1827; B.S.P.C., 2 May, 1828, nos. 17-18, Scott to Swinton, 8 Apr., 1828 and Swinton to Scott, 2 May, 1828.

¹⁸⁶ B.P.C., 4 Nov., 1828, no. 40, Scott to Swinton, 15 Oct., 1826; B.S.P.C., 18 July, 1827, no. 6, Scott to Swinton, 28 Dec., 1827.

¹⁸⁷ B.P.C., 4 Nov., 1826, nos. 71-72, Scott to Swinton, 4 Nov., 1826.

¹⁸⁸ B.S.P.C., 21 July, 1826, nos. 10-11, Scott to Swinton, 14 July, 1826 and Swinton's reply.

¹⁸⁹ B.P.C., 11 Oct., 1828, no. 62, Scott to Swinton, 20 Sept., 1828.

¹⁹⁰ B.S.P.C., 25 Apr., 1828, no. 51, Scott to Swinton, 1 Apr., 1828.

at the time of the massacre of Nongkhlaio, upon the inadequate pay of these officers and of their entire dependence upon it for the subsistence, not only of their immediate, but often of a number of distant relations too. This rendered it impossible for them to make any provision against unforeseen calamities.¹⁹¹ Moreover, the Supreme Government made it plain to Scott that nothing could be done either by way of increasing salaries or posts. In April, 1829, severe retrenchment measures were taken by Lord William Bentinck. The rising debt of the Company in India and the growing public opinion in England against the renewal of the Company's monopoly of the China trade caused concern to both the Court of Directors at home and such reforming administrators as Bentinck and Metcalfe in India.¹⁹² With the expectation of losing the profits of the China trade and the tea monopoly, which Parliament abolished in 1833, the Company had to insist that Indian revenues pay the cost of Indian administration entirely. The Company could qualify for the continued government of India only if the finances of the Company were sound. Bentinck's policy of retrenchment, however, was not designed only to preserve the Company. It came out of the belief that government should be as inexpensive as possible, so that taxes might be lowered and so that money might be available for progressive reforms.¹⁹³ The measures of retrenchment were so severe that we find that even in the minor matter of a trifling boat allowance for Capt. Neufville—an officer of proved ability and integrity—a long discussion had to take place between Lord Bentinck and Swinton, the Secretary to the Governor-General-in-Council.¹⁹⁴ A few months later, when Scott, considering the "heavy

¹⁹¹ B.P.C., 18 June, 1830, no. 47, Scott to Swinton, 5 Oct., 1829.

¹⁹² See Bentinck Papers Pwlf 2479, Extract from Sir Charles Metcalfe's Minute of 11 Oct., 1829 in reply to William Bentinck's letter on the subject of Lord Ellenborough's question.

¹⁹³ G. D. Bearce, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

¹⁹⁴ B.P.C., 8 Jan., 1830, nos. 98-100. Note by the Secretary on Scott's despatches of 19 Nov., 1828 and 9 Mar., 1829; Minute by the Governor-General; Swinton to Scott, 8 Jan., 1830.

duties and responsibilities” imposed upon Capt. White, requested the raising of the latter’s salary, he was gently reminded to cut his coat according to his cloth. Before any such increase could be given, “it will be necessary,” he was told, “that government should have before it, a complete statement of the expenses, civil and military of the whole province of Lower and Upper Assam compared with actual amount of revenue.¹⁹⁵ Under such circumstances the inclusion of inexperienced local people in the native establishment became less practicable and Scott had to think of something else to placate the nobility and provide for the low-rank officials of Assam. He thought he might find a practicable solution in the restoration of the Ahom monarchy in Upper Assam.

Scott looked upon the restoration of the monarchy as a means of satisfying the local people, high and low. He believed that a restoration could also be made to serve the needs of frontier defence—though of this the Calcutta Council were not to be convinced. Scott believed that both could be achieved by the same stroke of policy, and that the restoration of the Ahom monarchy would not be a source of anxiety to the British government provided constitutional restraints were put upon the autocracy of the proposed monarchy.

The idea of preserving, with slight modifications, the traditional form of the Ahom government in Upper Assam led Scott to study the past history of Assam and to find from within the Ahom constitution itself the basis for constitutional checks against a despotic king. It appeared, and rightly so, that the aristocracy in earlier governments in Assam had had the right to depose the king. Scott used this as the basis of his idea of the government which he intended to impose in future.

The most remarkable feature in the government of Assam that Scott found was the great power possessed by the three

¹⁹⁵ B.P.C., 28 May, 1830, no. 80, Swinton to Scott, 28 May, 1830.

¹⁹⁶ They were *Burha Gohain*, *Bor Gohain*, *Barpatra Gohain*, *Barphukan* and *Barbarua*.

Gohains and the ministers,¹⁹⁶ who together formed the *Patra-Mantri*. The offices of the Gohains were hereditary in the same families although not strictly inheritable from father to son. They had claimed and possessed the right of electing a king and also, but in concert with a majority of the nobility, of deposing one. The latter power was no doubt liable to great abuse, of which there were several recorded instances. But, as Scott said, it had at the same time formed a salutary check upon the despotic authority of the king. Taking into consideration the serious evils which had arisen in many of the states which had entered into subsidiary alliance with the British Government due to a lack of any constitutional check upon the ruler's internal administration of affairs, Scott thought that it would be desirable, in the event of the establishment of a native prince in Assam, to recognize and with certain modifications to confirm the powers formerly exercised by the grand council or *Patra Mantri*. He also thought that means should be adopted for preventing collusion between that body and the king by strictly defining the authority of the latter and requiring that he should not take any major decision without the concurrence of at least two members of the *Patra Mantri*—one of them to be a Gohain. In order to prevent the intimidation or improper selection by these officers, Scott further suggested that for the time being at least, they ought not to be appointed or removed without the sanction of the British Government.¹⁹⁷

Besides the *Patra Mantri* or standing council of state, it had been usual in Assam in cases affecting the interests of the people at large, such as the imposition of a new tax, to call together and consult a general assembly of all officers of government as far down as the grade of *saiḳia* or commandant over one hundred *paiks*. Such an assembly was called a *Bar-mel*. The *phukans*, *baruas* and *rajḳhowas* comprising it, were usually connected with the noble families while the *hazarikas* and *saiḳias*, being removable by the *paiks* or peasantry, might be considered to represent the people. Scott was not

¹⁹⁷ B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826, no. 2, Scott to Swinton, 15 Apr., 1826.

able to understand whether there were any very precise rules for conducting the business and collecting votes in this assembly, but he thought the details could easily be arranged at the proper time. He considered it expedient that this institution also should be confirmed and properly organised.¹⁹⁸

The role of the protecting state, Scott suggested, should be to remain as the guardian of the constitution; "to assure and continue to maintain its proper character without on one hand abandoning the interests or people to the mere will of a weak or tyrannical [ruler] or exercising on the other an undue influence and vexatious interference in the administration of the internal government of the dependent sovereign". The latter action, Scott feared, would "deprive him [the sovereign] of respectability in the eyes of his subjects and ultimately alienate him from our interests". With this note on the future restriction on the native ruler Scott suggested, in 1826, that one of the two ex-kings, Chandra Kanta or Purandar should be elevated to actual power.¹⁹⁹

He argued that such a move would also be sensible from the purely financial point of view. The expected collection of revenue in Upper Assam was not such as to justify British administration there. The population of Upper Assam, Scott wrote, would not exceed 300,000 of whom about 40,000 might be *paiks* subjected to the capitation tax—affording a revenue of only one hundred and twenty thousand *rajamohri* rupees, the depreciated currency of the Ahom government.²⁰⁰

By early 1828, the shape of the future Assam had thus formed itself in Scott's mind. A portion of the Assam valley extending from the station of Bishnath (at the eastern end of Lower Assam) to the Dihing river on the north of the Brahmaputra and from Solal *chowky* to the Buri Dihing and Barhath (where the Sadiya frontier tract began) on the south bank was to be assigned to a native prince on the terms just considered. Such an action would satisfy the discontented nobles and also leave no doubt or suspicion among the neighbouring states as to the motives of the British gov-

198 *Ibid.*199 *Ibid.*200 *Ibid.*

ernment.²⁰¹ Though Scott did not expect any organised political move on the part of the disaffected nobles against the British raj, he did think it a political necessity publicly to disavow any British imperialistic designs east of the Bengal frontier. The creation of an Ahom state would also preclude any move by the Ahom royal family and nobility to call in the Burmese or the frontier tribes in a bid to wrest Assam back from the British.²⁰²

Scott communicated these ideas to the Calcutta authorities in a letter of 2 February, 1828. The government replied in March. They made it clear that they did not consider themselves pledged by any engagement or declaration whatever to restore a native prince to the throne of Assam. Neither did they consider such a step desirable or expedient. Scott was also told that the opinion which other states might form of British proceedings in relation to the conquered territory of Assam was a "consideration which might safely be excluded from the present discussion". So long as the policies that the government might adopt were in themselves just and wise, the government should not bother about the objections which neighbouring states might raise.²⁰³

The government then set out its positive reasons for retaining Upper Assam. Their first point was that the revenue of the tract had been rated in Scott's letter of 15 April, 1826,²⁰⁴ at about Rs. 180,000 per annum, exclusive of certain public domains which supplied grain and other articles of consumption for the sovereign's household, and in Scott's letter of 2 February, 1828, at about one lakh per annum. The government argued that this would yield a surplus, even after provid-

²⁰¹ B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 4, Scott to Swinton, 2 Feb. 1828. In this connection it is to be remembered that just after the conquest of Assam the Government proclaimed that it did not intend to annex any part of the conquered territory.

²⁰² The relationship of the Ahoms with the Burmese and the tribes of the frontier tracts were not clearly known to the British, who could not therefore exclude the possibility of such an alliance against them.

²⁰³ B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 8, Swinton to Scott, 7 March, 1828.

²⁰⁴ B.S.P.C., 14 July, 1826, no. 2, Scott to Swinton, 15 Apr., 1826.

ing, on a more liberal scale than at present, for Chandra Kanta or any other aspirant to the royal dignity and after allowing for the necessary administrative establishment. (Since under any plan the British would be responsible for the general defence of Upper Assam, there would be no extra military charges if it were annexed. The Rangpore Local Corps,²⁰⁵ augmented by two companies of Gurkhas and aided by the contingents which Scott himself had proposed to plant on the frontier were considered adequate for all purposes of internal police and ordinary military duties throughout the whole of Assam).

They then went on to argue that the native government which Scott proposed to revive would in all probability fail. It would be poor and have very limited resources; it would be evidently dependent upon the support of a foreign power; its princes in recent ages had shown remarkable incapacity and profligacy : such a government would lack respect and be all too likely to resort to oppression to supply its necessities. Furthermore, there would also be a perpetual hazard of collision and dispute between the wild intractable tribes on the frontier and such an Assamese government. At all events, the interposition of so feeble and probably ill-managed a state, between British territory and the frontier—the tranquillity of which was to be maintained by direct British control—would embarrass and complicate all the British arrangements and relations with the tribes in question and infinitely aggravate the inherent difficulties of the task of preserving order.

As for the objections which the nobles and the hereditary officers of the state and other influential classes of the pure Ahom race were supposed to entertain against the permanent introduction of British Government, these might be greatly softened, if not altogether removed, by acting on the principle of adapting the British system as closely as practicable to their actual wants, prejudices and conditions. This could be done, especially, by continuing to employ the leading men of the country in the discharge of the duties of their heredi-

²⁰⁵ Raised in Rungpur, Scott's Bengal district.

tary office subject to such control by the local European officers as experience might suggest.²⁰⁶

Finally the governor-general-in-council drew attention to the difficulty of selecting the right man from the number of claimants to the throne, and pointed out that none of them had earned support by any aid given to the Company during the war with the Burmese.²⁰⁷

Yet, however justified they felt in keeping the fruit of their conquest, the government did not like to ignore Scott's opinion altogether, and hence the subject was referred to Scott for reconsideration.²⁰⁸

A month later, in April, 1828, Scott related his case more elaborately, in the light of the government's view-points. There was still no insurrection or rebellion on the part of the nobles or any objection raised by the neighbouring states against the British occupation of Assam. Scott, therefore, could not stress the political necessity of preserving a native state on such grounds. Instead he chose to set out in clear and forcible terms the political philosophy which had underlain his proposal to create a native state in Assam. Scott made it plain that he deeply deplored that systematic overthrow of the local Indian officers of rank which had been taking place in all provinces acquired by the British in India. This, he said, was bound to happen when an alien system of administration was super-imposed hurriedly in expectation of quick results. He feared that his own arrangements for native employment in Upper Assam would break down one day by the gradual process of development of British administration. He went on, "The systematic depression of the native of the country and the monopoly of all official situations of emolument by Europeans have so constantly followed the extension of our power that it must be anticipated by

²⁰⁶ The Government maintained that an example had already been shown by Scott when men like the Barbarua, Barphukan, Gam of Bisa, Barsenapati and Sadiya Khowa Gohain were vested with powers to dispense justice to the inhabitants of their divisions.

²⁰⁷ B.S.P.C., 7 March, 1828, no. 8, Swinton to Scott, 7 March, 1828.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

the Assamese as a natural consequence of the annexation of their country to the British territory and whatever government might resolve upon at the commencement of our connexion with Assam, I fear it would be in vain to expect that country should prove a permanent exception to a practice which it is so much the interest of the ruling class to extend and for which grounds are never wanting in the corruption and other misdeeds of individual native functionaries. The reasons which now exist for giving respectable official employment to the Assamese nobles were long ago urged in case of the inhabitants of other parts of our possessions and although their force was there also acknowledged, no principal result followed, but on the contrary the chief revenue appointments then existing have since been abolished and a very general disposition appears now to prevail to substitute European for natives as Saddar Ameens and as Seristadars of large estates".²⁰⁹ Like Malcolm in Central India he sensed that the British rule would always be extraneous to the life of the people of Upper Assam.²¹⁰

Scott once again reminded Calcutta that the probable evils of a tributary government could be eradicated by taking recourse to the ancient constitution of Assam, with the right reserved of British interference in the internal affairs of the government. "I conceive", Scott said, "that we might sufficiently provide for a moderate degree of good government in Upper Assam by stipulating in the first place for an absolute right of interference and by announcing deposal as the penalty to be incurred by the prince who may persist in using his authority to the detriment of his subjects".²¹¹ Scott's other arguments in favour of his measure were as follows :

After this general statement of principle, Scott turned to the particular points raised by the government. They had argued that in any circumstance the military costs to the Company would be the same. Scott denied this, arguing first

²⁰⁹ B.S.P.C., 27 June, 1828, no. 115, Scott to Sterling, 26 Apr., 1828.

²¹⁰ See Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Major-General, Sir John Malcolm*, II, pp. 371-2.

²¹¹ B.S.P.C., 27 June, 1828 no. 115, Scott to Sterling, 26 Apr., 1828.

that it would not be necessary permanently to station a regular regiment in Upper Assam and secondly that, under a native regime, the members of the militia might be cheaply remunerated by lands on the usual service tenure. But were the British authority once established, the militia would probably become discontented unless admitted to the usual advantages of the services under the British government.

Scott also pointed out that the extent and the probable population of Upper Assam was such that the cost of Company administration would be as high as that of any other similarly—situated Bengal—zillah—Sylhet, for example. The officer currently performing civil duties in Assam had been drawing an inconsiderable salary and Scott saw no good reason why this disparity should continue after annexation. Moreover, under a British administration, officials would expect to be paid their allowances in cash, but in Upper Assam there was a great deficiency of coined money, the people were unaccustomed to money payments, and native officers were usually paid with land and *paiks*. The more general consequences of shifting to a monetised economy in Upper Assam was described by Scott thus: “unaccustomed as the Assamese have been to the payment of taxes the lower order would probably look upon any considerable increase in that department as the greatest of all evils while it seems reasonable to suppose that the members of the royal family, the nobility, the public functionaries and the religious orders would view with dislike the introduction of our authority founded as it seems to me, it must ultimately be upon the destruction of their own”.²¹²

Scott next proceeded to discount the government's fear about the development of hostile relations between a native administration in Upper Assam and the peoples of the north-eastern hill tracts. The Nagas of the southern hills appeared to be particularly quiet and well-disposed. The boundary between the districts of the Singphos, the Barsenapati and the Sadiya Khowa Gohain would be so clearly defined that no cause of contention could arise in that

²¹² *Ibid.*

quarter. The only possible trouble might come from the northern mountaineers, but since they generally held some of the lowlands adjoining the hills, the Assam government had in its hand a tangible security for their peaceable demeanour.

For Scott, therefore, the only important point of difficulty in a restoration of the Ahom monarchy was that of the future military defence of the Sadiya frontier. The question was whether the establishment of such a foreign authority between two directly British-administered areas would weaken that military defence. As in 1826, Scott held that the problem of security and the defence of the country would be better provided for under a native administration. Scott had already been introduced to the *paik* or *khel* system of the Ahom administration, under which the most of the adult population, divided in guilds, were to render certain services to the state for a specific period of the year. These services included, among various other things, fighting at the time of war and building roads, fortresses and some other defence mechanisms, both at the war and peace times. Like feudal lords the heads of the *khels* joined in these services along with their contingents of *paiks* or free men. The war emergency demanded fuller participation of the national militia in defence measures. Hence the creation of an Ahom state would, Scott thought, save the government from defence expenditure, such as fortifications, since these would be paid for by that state. Indeed, such a state, whose revenues consisted chiefly of the labour of its subjects, was peculiarly capable of undertaking defensive works. Scott further argued that the climate of Assam was proved by experience to be so hostile to the constitution of the Company's Indian troops and so destructive to the commissariat cattle that it seemed impossible without a very preponderating superiority of force successfully to carry on military operations there against an enemy not subject to the same causes of inefficiency. Scott, therefore, argued that such measures should be adopted as would enable the local people of the country to defend themselves and reduce within the narrowest practicable limits the employment of the Company's up-country Hindustani troops in

Assam. A body of trained local troops and a system of fortifications would help the Assamese greatly in the case of any future rupture with the Burmese. It would place them more upon a par with their opponents and render them at least capable of holding out until a force of a better description could be furnished for their assistance. Considering the miserable equipments of the Burmese soldiers and their total want of artillery, Scott wrote that "it would seem, that in no part of the world would this artificial superiority be given upon easier terms than in Assam".²¹³

Scott wrote his comments in April, and by June the government had reviewed them and prepared its rejoinder. This showed that the government still held that an arrangement interposing "an ill-governed native state between the British frontier detachment and the head-quarters of the British force in Assam would prove very awkward and inconvenient in practice". The problems of a non-monetised economy also did not alarm Calcutta: "in Assam, as elsewhere when tranquillity has been long established, commerce promoted and agricultural industry cherished under a judicious and liberal system of administration capital will accumulate and resources not be found wanting for the payment of a fair and moderate money assessment whatever may be the present deficiency of precious metals in the province".²¹⁴

The rejoinder clearly failed to take account of all the peculiarities of Assam and the Assamese problem with which Scott was so well acquainted. Nevertheless, such was the enormous regard for Scott's judgment and local knowledge that, being unable to convince Scott, the government preferred to follow a policy of procrastination "as a further postponement of its decision will not be attended with any material inconvenience after the delay which had already occurred".²¹⁵

From June 1828 to May 1831, there was no further discussion on the question of restoration but events during this

²¹³ B.S.P.C., 27 June, 1828, no. 115, Scott to Sterling, 26 Apr., 1828.

²¹⁴ B.S.P.C., 27 June, 1828, no. 116, Sterling to Scott, 27 June, 1828.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

period showed how correct Scott had been in his expectation of troubles from the disaffected nobles of Upper Assam.

At the beginning of British administration in Upper Assam, Scott's policy had been to employ more and more Assamese nobles in the Company's service. He was aware of the unfittedness of the nobles for such tasks²¹⁶, yet he thought that, as a restoration of the native monarchy was bound to take place at a near date, at least some purpose might be served by grooming the future monarch and his nobles for their role. Thus, so far as the collection of revenue was concerned, efficiency was considered "a matter of secondary importance, which could not be put in competition with the superior considerations of conciliating the good-will of the most influential classes in society".²¹⁷ But the government's indecision about restoration—which prolonged British supervision of the area—and the coming of a vigorous officer in the person of Capt. J. B. Neufville to handle the affairs of Upper Assam in 1828, brought a change in this policy. Neufville believed that the chances of a restoration were remote, and he therefore wished to reorganise the administration. The indolence and incapacity of the nobility, the impossibility of making them account for the revenues they collected without the use of duress, led Neufville to introduce *tahsildars*, who were all natives of Bengal.²¹⁸ Neufville also removed from office not less than a hundred *kheldars* who were in charge of revenue collection, and in their place employed various foreigners or Assamese clerks of inferior rank who, he thought would be real "men of business".²¹⁹ Neufville declared that he could find no nobleman in the country, capable of conducting the business of a *tahsildar* entrusted with the task of collecting and

²¹⁶ The most important complaints were: their irregularity in the transmission and preparation of their accounts and that they were unused to writing.

²¹⁷ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

²¹⁸ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 58, Neufville to Scott, 29 Apr., 1830 and also no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

regularly accounting for even 30,000 rupees.²²⁰ When Neufville translated his ideas into action, discontent arose among the nobles who waited for the opportunity to come forward in an organised resistance.

The Singpho insurrection of 1830, following a Khasi rebellion in 1829, which we will discuss in a later chapter, created a situation which these disgruntled nobles of Upper Assam utilised to try to restore their former power and position. Their first venture was made after Gomdhar Konwar, a prince of the royal blood, aspiring to become the King of Assam, had arrived in Upper Assam from Burma towards the end of 1828.²²¹ The prince at first appeared as a suitor to the British authorities, and addressed a letter to Captain Neufville, praying that he might be allowed to receive the country as a raj from the Company.²²² But this was a mere artifice on his part, for at the same time he was instigating the Sepoys to rise against the British. A little later Gomdhar declared himself Raja of the country, and excited the people to rebel against the Company's Raj. He also collected a small armed force. The disgruntled nobles thus got an opportunity to exploit the situation created by Gomdhar.²²³ But their hopes were chimerical for the plot was suppressed in no time.²²⁴ No sooner had

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ This pretender claimed to be a nephew of Raja Chandra Kanta and a relative of ex-Raja Jogeshwar Singha and traced his descent from Susengpha, or Buddhi-swarga Narayan who had reigned in Assam from 1603 to 1641. He and his father 'Dhutoowa Gohain' accompanied in 1818, their female relative 'Atan Neengh Timense, Bar Kunwari' who was sent down as a present to the Burmese prince by the then Raja Jogeshwar Singha. See B.S.P.C., 12 March, 1830, no. 12, Neufville to Scott, 14 Dec., 1828.

²²² B.S.P.C., 12 March, 1830, no. 13 (1), Gomdhar's letter of 23 Oct., 1828.

²²³ B.S.P.C., 12 March, 1830, no. 12, Neufville to Scott, 14 Dec., 1828.

²²⁴ Scott to Swinton, 14 March, 1829; Proceedings of the Criminal Court held by the agent to the Governor-General on the N.E.F. and Commissioner in Assam on the 14 March, 1829 at Gauhati; Neufville to Scott, 27 Dec., 1828; and Swinton to Scott, 12 March, 1830. B.S.P.C., 12 March, 1830, nos. 15, 16, 17, 34.

it been suppressed than another was prepared in 1830, under the leadership of a new pretender called Rupchand.²²⁵ Rupchand too was supported by the nobles, many of whom were the remnants of the previous conspiracy.²²⁶ The leaders of this insurrection, the ex-Bar Gohain; the Barphukan, Haranath, Rupchand and Jayram were quickly apprehended. They were tried before a *Sadr Panchayat* which found all of them guilty of high treason and sentenced them to death in conformity with the custom of the country.²²⁷ Capt. Neufville referred this case to Scott for review and the latter confirmed the death sentence at least in two cases.²²⁸

The action taken against the culprits in the second rebellion was severe compared to that taken against the conspirators of the earlier plot. The execution of the sentence was also significantly quick. In fact, Scott did not wait for the final confirmation of the Supreme Government. The reason was this : At this time Capt. Neufville suddenly died and Scott who was far away from the actual scene of insurrection feared that the removal of Neufville's strong hand might encourage the nobility to start a fresh insurrection. He therefore decided to make a public example by directing the immediate execution of the sentence passed on the *Barphukan* and jayram.²²⁹ In his view, the leniency, shown on the earlier occasion,²³⁰ had

The *patra mantri* or the grand panchayat who tried the charges against Gomdhar gave death penalty to him. Capt. Neufville, the presiding officer, recommended a mitigated punishment with banishment from Assam for seven years on the ground that he was a mere tool in the hands of other conspirators among the nobles. Scott approved Neufville's judgment. The other conspirators who were also sentenced to death by the original court received lesser punishments.

²²⁵ B.S.P.C., 30 April, 1830, no. 5A, Neufville to Col. C. Fagan, Adjt. Genl. of the army 30 Mar., 1830; B.R.C., 16 July, 1830, no. 49.

²²⁶ B.P.C., 24 Sept., 1830, no. 76, Scott to Chief Secretary, 7 Aug., 1830.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ B.P.C., 24 Sept., 1830, no. 76, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 7 Aug., 1830.

²³⁰ See *Supra*, p. 150.

had no effect other than to produce another revolt. But although Scott took vigorous action to put down the second rebellion, he never considered severity to be the ultimate solution. Rather the insurrections and rebellions of the period led him to open the question of restoration once again.

The primary cause of the outbreaks had been the systematic removal from offices of the "indolent nobles" by the strong hand of the British. Scott now reported that if the Supreme Government desired to retain that part of the country under its direct authority he believed that more Assamese would have to be removed and more Europeans brought into the administration.²³¹ The time had come when the British government could no longer recede from its responsibility for a proper European administration on the weak ground that the revenue realised from the people were not sufficient. If it was really so, he argued, they should immediately restore that portion of Assam to an Assamese prince for in his opinion "an imperfect British administration must be worse than a native one, which, even if it wants in integrity, at least possesses a perfect knowledge of the laws, customs and prejudices of its subjects and an intimate acquaintance with their peculiar revenue system."²³² The installation of a native prince in Upper Assam would put an end to the frequent plots and intrigues of royal pretenders, and, said Scott, "we should without any loss of net revenue worth mentioning avoid the odium necessarily attached to the exclusion of the royal family, the depression of the nobles, the neglect of the national religion and the disgust that is likely to be occasioned by frequent executions for criminal offences of a popular character".²³³ Scott further remarked that "it would be contrary to reason to expect" that "the members of the late dynasty whose ancestors have reigned for upwards of five hundred years and the noble families which have enjoyed distinction for the same period should at once give up all

²³¹ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*

their hopes of future greatness upon the appearance amongst them of a handful of strangers, ... we must therefore be prepared if we retain the country in our own hands, for a succession of petty conspiracies such as have already occurred and which I do not believe would be prevented by the allowance that it is proposed to make to nobles, of whom many must still remain unprovided for.”²³⁴ Scott also made it clear to the government that if the decision to restore a native monarchy in Upper Assam were taken, the execution of it should be as quick as possible as “the elective nature of the former government has also had the effect of multiplying the number of eventual claimants to the Regal office ...and we have lately witnessed that in little more than a year the party late in rebellion in Upper Assam brought forward two different aspirants to the government”.²³⁵

The chief objection of the Supreme Government against Scott's plan of a restoration had been that the intervention of a tributary territory would make it difficult to move soldiers up river in the event of another Burmese war. Scott, therefore, now put forward a new suggestion that the territories on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra should be retained by the Company and the southern bank only be restored to the king and the nobility.²³⁶ He divided the Brahmaputra valley into four divisions²³⁷ and suggested that the Jorhat division, extending from Barhat to the Dhansiri river, covering an area of 3,500 square miles and containing a population of 2,20,000 souls, with an income of one lakh of rupees, should be handed to a native king. As before,

²³⁴ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Post-script to Scott's letter to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831, B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50.

²³⁷ These divisions were as follows :

1st Division : Station at Sadiya extending from Namrup on the east to the mouth of the Burhi Dihing on the west and from the Naga hills on the south to the northern mountains on the north. Length : about 100 miles; Extreme breadth : 65; Estimated population : 30,000; Revenue : none.

Scott was of the opinion that the power of deposition in the event of gross misgovernment should, however, be retained by an explicit declaration. This time he also stipulated that a certain portion of the revenue should be applied for the military defence of the country under the direction of the British government; that the old criminal law authorising the barbarous system of mutilation should be modified and that the raja should make for gradual emancipation of the *paiks* by the substitution of money payment for personal service.²³⁸

The vice-president-in-council, Sir Charles Metcalfe, was known for his views about the Indian native states and the old aristocracy. He was very pessimistic about any good government being possible under the native ruler and his considered opinion had been to annex the native states whenever any just occasion arose. In fact it was this irreconcilatory attitude of his towards the displaced ruling class that brought about one of the sharpest differences within the Munro School of Paternalists. Others in the group, and particularly Malcolm, considered it to be politic to treat the displaced aristocracy generously.²³⁹ Metcalfe had been, therefore, unable to see any logic in Scott's arguments. But this time he wanted to give serious consideration to Scott's suggestion.

2nd Division : Station at Jorhat extending from Barhat and the mouth of Dibru river to the Dhansiri. Extreme length : about 40 miles; Extreme breadth : 60 miles; Estimated population 250,000; Revenue : 100,000 sicca rupees.

3rd Division : Station at Kaliabar or Barhat extending to Raha *chowky* and Singri hills. Length : 75 miles; Breadth : 35 miles; Estimated population 100,000; Revenue : 50,000.

4th Division : Station at Gauhati with Raha *chowky* on the east, Bengal boundary on the west, Khasi Hills on the south and Bhutan Duars on the north. Length 100 miles. Extreme breadth 60. Estimated population 450,000; Revenue 200,000 sicca rupees.

B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

²³⁸ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

²³⁹ See Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

But the Council, looking at the problem from the economic point of view, could not arrive at an immediate decision. The question for them was why the British government should be spending so much money to protect an unprofitable and isolated portion of land around Sadiya when the more profitable and populous parts of Upper Assam were to be given over to a native monarch.²⁴⁰ They therefore called upon Scott to report whether the defence of the eastern frontier could be safely left in the hands of the Singpho chiefs or even be handed over to Gambhir Singh of Manipur. Their chief objection actually remained the same: the inability to see how a foreign government could be installed in the intervening tract if the eastern frontier was to be retained in British hands.²⁴¹ The matter was again referred to the Agent, but meanwhile Lord Bentinck had expressed his views on the question. Regarding the most controversial point, the retention of the Sadiya frontier, he supported the views held by Scott and declared that though "the maintenance of the Sudeya station would be purely one of expense" it was nevertheless desirable. He feared that once the British control was withdrawn from that tract the province would be overrun by the surrounding wild tribes. So he definitely laid down that Sadiya must be maintained. The Council's suggestion of handing over to Gambhir Singh the defence of the eastern frontier, he turned down as fantastic, contending that the new chief and his adherents would be looked on by all parties with jealousy. Coming to the actual question of restoration, he observed that it was "purely one of policy". As the country had been conquered from the Burmese without the slightest assistance from the expelled rajas or from any other party, there could not be any moral claim for services rendered by anyone. He doubted any good administration resulting out of the miserably defective constitution of the Ahom monarchy but still he did not overlook the fact that "their continuance...for a period of time almost without

²⁴⁰ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 59, Swinton to Scott, 10 June, 1831.

²⁴¹ B.P.C., 2 Sept., 1831, no. 2, H. T. Prinsep to G. Swinton, 2 Sept., 1831.

example in History would seem to indicate something intrinsically good in the original constitution and at all events that it is deeply rooted in the feelings of the people".²⁴² He therefore came to the conclusion "that the native government may be established, aided by the support and advice of a British officer". Scott was therefore directed to furnish a specific plan for the institution of a native monarchy.²⁴³ When Scott wrote his letter of 18 May, 1831 he was in the Khasi hills busy preparing strategies against the rebellious Khasis. Towards the end of May he came down from the hills but immediately fell seriously ill, as he wrote to Lt. Vetch on June 2 : "I can neither breathe, sleep; nor eat; being affected by frequent sickness at stomach". Scott therefore thought of 'going to try the hills once more'.²⁴⁴ He did arrive at Cherrapunji on the 7th or 8th June but with 'the fragile state of his heart' and stomach sickness remaining as it had been.²⁴⁵ Scott's health did not improve and he did not live long enough to see the final restoration in 1833; but, before he died, the restoration was clearly within sight. The securing of this object was thus Scott's final achievement for Assam.

²⁴² B.P.C., 2 Sept., 1831, no. 2, H. T. Prinsep, Secretary to the Governor-General, Simla, to G. Swinton, Chief Secretary to Government, Fort William, 18 July, 1831.

²⁴³ B.P.C., 2 Sept., 1831, no. 2, H. T. Prinsep to G. Swinton, 18 July, 1831.

²⁴⁴ White's, *Memoir*, App. 30, Scott to Lt. Vetch, 2 June, 1831.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, App. 33, Scott to Lamb, Churra Poonjee, 16 July [1831].

V

HIS CONSERVATISM

The Question of Slavery in Assam

IN 1825 there was a famine in Assam. Much distress had been caused by the plundering of the Burmese and their allies, while the pressure on existing food resources was increased by the advance of British forces and the release of several thousand Assamese captives from the hands of the Singphos. To meet this situation Scott adopted the old Ahom expedient of allowing freemen to sell themselves as slaves. In June he issued a proclamation permitting such sales until the next harvest in October.¹ This measure was subsequently sanctioned by the Calcutta Council.²

The Court of Directors, however, voiced their strong disapproval, declaring in a letter of 10 March, 1830, that "slavery in every form was peculiarly revolting to the moral feelings of Englishmen".³ Scott was thereupon asked by the governor-general-in-council to report upon the state of slavery in Assam, and such "practicable and expedient" measures as would permit a gradual abolition of the system of slavery.⁴ This he did in a long letter of 10 October, 1830⁵ wherein he not only explained what the Assamese system of slavery was, and why he thought its abrupt abolition would be unwise, but also set out a justification of his 1825 proclamation.

¹ B.P.C., 3 Apr., 1828, no. 18, Scott to Swinton, 4 March, 1828; P.L.B., Vol. 21, letter of 8 May, 1829.

² B.P.C., 3 Apr., 1828, no. 19, Sterling to Scott, 3 Apr., 1828.

³ Courts letter to Bengal, 10 March, 1830.

⁴ B.S.P.C., 30 Apr., 1830, no. 64, Swinton to Scott, 30 Apr., 1830.

⁵ Appendix VI, No. 5, Report from Indian Law Commissioners relative to Slavery in the East Indies, P.P., Vol. 28, 1841, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 10 Oct., 1830.

Slavery had long been extensive in Assam. Under the Ahoms the chief wealth of all the upper classes had consisted of the labour of the *paiks* allotted to them by government and that of their slaves, upon which they depended for the cultivation of their lands.⁶ Many temples were granted slaves, or *Bohotias*, for their service, by the king or other individuals. Thus one of the temples of Kamakhya held between twenty and twenty five slaves.⁷ In many cases the higher orders had no other property besides the labour of their slaves. Even in 1830 a census which gave the population of Lower Assam as 350,000 estimated that of these 27,000 were slaves.⁸

As in other parts of India, the slave force in Assam was mainly derived from the sale of children by their parents in times of individual distress or general scarcity. Adult women would also sometimes sell themselves to discharge a debt or relieve their parents and relations, while free women who married slaves also became the slaves of their husband's owners. The children born to slaves were themselves slaves, and so usually were the children of slave women born to freemen. Prisoners of war and criminals often had their sentences commuted to slavery after being condemned to death. The king granted such persons—and sometimes even free individuals also—to his nobles and spiritual advisers.⁹

Others became slaves by an abuse of the system of conditional bondage which was common in Assam. Such bondage had two main forms. In the one, the *Bhaktadasa*, as he was called in Hindu law books, voluntarily placed himself under the protection of some great man in return for his food. There were said to be some three or four thousand persons of this class in Lower Assam in 1830, working upon the estates of rich men in return for their bare maintenance. They were at liberty to depart when they pleased. Their numbers had grown during the disturbed years before the

⁶ E. A. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

⁷ P. P., Vol. 28, 1841, p. 96.

⁸ Appendix VI, No. 4, R. I. L. C., Capt. White to Scott, 9 Aug., 1830.

⁹ P. P., Vol. 28, 1841, p. 96.

advent of the British. The other main form of bondage arose when freemen pledged their services to their creditors to clear off a debt. They either mortgaged their services for a specific period—for seven, fourteen or twenty years, or until such time as their services should have cleared off their debt. Such bondsmen easily slipped into the position of true slaves.¹⁰

Again, many Assamese had been enslaved by the hill tribes advancing from the Burmese borders towards the Sadiya frontier after the outbreak of Ahom civil wars in 1814. The Burmese invasion merely enlarged the opportunities for such slaving by the Khamtis and Singphos who accumulated many thousands of slaves.¹¹

Such, in outline, was the historical background to the situation in Assam: how Scott reacted to it was obviously of importance to Assam, but also very revealing of his own personal philosophy. He opened his argument about what the British government's attitude to slavery should be, by pointing out that slavery, being consistent with Hindu and with Muslim law, was necessarily legal everywhere in India. Moreover, the frequent reference to donations of slaves to temples and to pious men showed that the system had been in force among the Hindus from a remote period. Slavery in Assam was thus in harmony both with law and popular custom.¹²

But though slavery was so sanctioned it was not widespread in Assam, certainly less alarmingly so than in other parts of India. Even taking Captain White's figure¹³ of one in twelve as correct this gave only eight per cent of the population of Lower Assam as slaves, compared with twenty per cent in the Muslim dominated district of Sylhet. Moreover Scott believed that White's estimate might well have been inflated by the inclusion of bondsmen who were not slaves in the proper sense of the word. For the probably

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

¹¹ E. A. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 286; *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. 16, pp. 337-9.

¹² Appendix VI, no. 5, R.I.L.C., Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830.

¹³ Appendix VI, no. 4, R.I.L.C., White to Scott, 9 Aug., 1830.

very low proportion of slaves in the Assamese population Scott gave several reasons. The main one was that under the *paik* system the Ahom government had a claim upon the labour of all free men, or upon their industry.¹⁴ Fiscal regulations therefore prohibited the enslavement of freemen (females of course might sell themselves, or be sold by their parents, if the sale was valid in Hindu law). Again, in contrast to other areas, there was no importation of slaves, except for a few Naga women presented by the hill chiefs to the Ahom kings.¹⁵ Moreover, though according to Hindu law a free woman marrying a slave became herself a slave and gave birth to servile progeny, in Assam masters frequently permitted their slaves to marry free women upon a special contract with the girl's father that the progeny should be free. In cases of doubt, the ordinary rule was that the children followed the condition of the parent with whose relations the family resided. Thus the children of a female slave might be free, if she had married a free man and the children lived with him.¹⁶

Slavery was thus legal, but of limited extent in Assam. Scott was also of the opinion that, on the whole, the slaves of Assam were better treated than anywhere else in the Presidency. In poor and middling families, the slaves and bondsmen were treated like the other inmates, the same kitchen serving for the whole household, and both mistress and maid being entirely clothed in home-spun dress. Among the rich they often obtained great influence and ruled their masters' affairs in the capacity of *ghar-giris* or dewans. Scott reported that such persons were even to be seen riding in a sort of palankeen. In such cases the birth of a child entitled the mother to her freedom, and her offspring were also at the same time allowed to share the family property along with the children of their wives.¹⁷ If, as was commonly

¹⁴ B.P.C., 3 Apr., 1828, no. 18, Scott to Swinton, 4 March, 1828; Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830.

¹⁵ Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830, para 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, para 6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, para 9.

held the slaves in Assam were of dissolute and depraved habits compared with the free population, in physical condition they were never worse off than the peasantry of the country. Scott argued that if they could not legally accumulate property—which, however, in practice was not the case—neither could they suffer those evils from the total want of it to which the freeman was subjected. It had not been uncommon to find free Assamese at different periods of Ahom rule seeking to become slaves to avoid the oppressions which the *paiks* or other free people had to undergo.¹⁸ Scott declared that slavery was often more a problem to the owners than to the slaves themselves. When the latter became too numerous and exceedingly idle, the masters were unnecessarily put to expense on their account. They had to feed them and provide for the expenses incidental to their births, marriages, deaths and all other religious ceremonies, which they performed with the same regularity as the free population. To sell their slaves was considered highly discreditable and indicative of the total ruin of the master.¹⁹

This picture of the condition of the slaves given by Scott was not challenged by the later report of the Indian Law Commission on the same subject. "It appears to be the general opinion" they wrote "that the slaves in Assam were on the whole well treated".²⁰ Complaints of oppression were not infrequent immediately after the acquisition of the country by the British, but there were many complaints from the side of masters also.²¹ Adam White, who was Scott's assistant in the administration of Lower Assam, wrote to him that from every enquiry that he had made the condition of the slaves appeared nearly upon a par with that of the agricultural labourers. They were employed in cultivating the lands of

¹⁸ The slaves were not asked to join the armies at the time of war. The king had no control over those belonging to the state affairs and nobles. Such slaves considered themselves lucky in comparison to the *paiks*. See S. K. Bhuyan, *Ahomar Din* (in Assamese), p. 55; E. A. Gait, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-242.

¹⁹ Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830, para 8.

²⁰ P.P., Vol. 28, 1841, p. 98.

²¹ *Ibid.*

their masters and received a fair amount of clothing. If a person possessed many slaves he only required the labour of a few in rotation and allowed the others to engage in the cultivation of lands, for the rent of which he became responsible, reserving to himself what profit there might be after allowing the slave a fair maintenance. The same officer argued that the peculiar geographical position of Assam presented a check on the masters' severity towards their slaves. Being a narrow valley between two ranges of mountains, a day's journey was enough to put a slave beyond the reach of his master. He said that he also found on enquiry amongst the *paiks* that they scarcely considered the condition of the slaves at all inferior to theirs, except that they did not possess their personal liberty, for the field labours of the slaves did not exceed those of the *paiks* and those were light indeed as compared with the agricultural population of Europe.²²

Having thus set out the nature of slavery in Assam, Scott proceeded to give his views about its abolition. In the process he showed himself to be in close agreement with Warren Hastings in believing that "the people of this country do not require our aid to furnish them with a rule for their conduct, or a standard for their property",²³ and with Munro in arguing that "neither the face of the country, its property, nor its society, are things that can be suddenly improved by any contrivance of ours, though they may be greatly injured by what we mean for their good".²⁴ In his report Scott made it clear that he believed it would be morally wrong for the British government, being pledged to administer to the local people their own laws in matters of inheritance, contracts, etc., to infringe that principle by the abrogation of a practice so closely interwoven in the whole fabric of Assamese society. Scott said that it would be unjust on the part of the British government to breach engagements held hitherto so sacred,

²² Appendix VI, no. 4, R.I.L.C., Capt. White to Scott, 9 Aug., 1830.

²³ See G. R. Gleig, *Life of Warren Hastings*, Vol. I, p. 401.

²⁴ Minute of Munro 'On the state of the country', 31 Dec., 1824 : G.R. Cleig, *Life of Sir Thomas Munro*, Vol. III, p. 381.

on the plea that the system was repugnant to humanity and good morals. The condemnation of slavery by a nation professing Christianity seemed inconsistent to Scott, for this institution had been sanctioned by God for the Jews, and since it was humane in India would surely have His sanction there.²⁵

Scott pointed out the difficult social problems which abolition would create, both for the rich and for the poor. In Assam the seclusion of their women by the higher orders of society, and the early marriage of the lower orders which made it impossible to hire unmarried girls as servants, as in European countries, made it necessary for the wealthy to look to female slaves for household attendants—a system quite agreeable to existing usage and custom. Any change would be very unpopular with the higher classes.²⁶ Scott also doubted whether change would even, in reality, be beneficial to the lower orders. He was well aware of the evil consequences of the slavery, and was prepared to admit that perhaps a fourth of all slaves in Assam were of more dissolute and depraved habits than the free population. But then these were the slaves who had sold themselves for debt, persons who in all probability had originally belonged to that imprudent and spendthrift class of society, which had its parallel in England. In England such persons enlisted in the army or navy, or by a criminal career came to be transported to the colonies “as the undisguised slaves of the crown”.²⁷ The problem of the feckless poor could no more easily be dealt with in Assam than in the highly civilized European societies. As he said, “Whether it is possible, even in highly civilized countries, to dispense with the retention of this portion of society in a state of constrained servitude, is still to be proved, the experiment never having been fairly tried by the European states, where the armies, the navies, the galleys and the colonies, furnish receptacles for those who are naturally incompetent to manage their own affairs and to preserve their

²⁵ Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830, para 12.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, para 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

personal independence. The people in this country have none of these resources; and the thriftless poor must consequently either starve or become the dependants of individuals, or in the capacity of criminals and debtors, fill the public goals".²⁸

Stokes has commented, of the paternalists Munro, Malcolm, Metcalfe and Elphinstone, that "they had no hopes of sudden and miraculous changes in the progress of human society and there lingered in their thinking, particularly in Munro's, something of that older tradition, which saw the division of society into rulers and ruled as a natural ordering ..."²⁹ Scott in his arguments reflects much the same sort of attitude. In his boyhood in Scotland the problem of the English poor had been much debated. There had been some, like the Rev. D. Davies who argued that the plight of the poor was not the consequence of defects of the character, but that the defects of character were the consequence of poverty.³⁰ But there were many expressions of the contrary view, ready to argue that "If the poor do not prudently serve themselves none can effectively befriend them...".³¹ Scott was evidently very much of the latter opinion: the depraved or foolish poor would always undergo hardship, whether slave or not.

Scott also drew attention to the problem which abolition would bring upon the government. He doubted whether, while contemplating abolition, the government had given any thought to making compensation to the individuals who would lose a valuable category of private property.³² He believed that the expense of abolition itself would render the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, para 12.

²⁹ See E. Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³⁰ D. Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry* (1795), quoted in A. Briggs, *Age of Improvement*, p. 60.

³¹ Eden's *State of the Poor*, Vol. I, p. 508, quoted in A. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 60 n.

³² Scott evidently showed the belief expressed in 1780, that the blessings and advantages which England enjoyed sprang "above all, from those just and equitable laws which secure property". See A. Briggs, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

plan impracticable, since the slaves and bondsmen in the two districts of Lower Assam and Sylhet could be valued at not less than thirty or forty lakhs of rupees.³³ Moreover, if slavery were done away with, government would have to make provision for maintaining the starving poor in times of scarcity. Such provision would be costly and its administration often open to great abuse, which might well have just as ill an effect upon the character of the people as did the prevalence of slavery in Assam.³⁴

Calculating all these factors, Scott felt that the practical evil arising from the continuance of slavery was not of sufficient magnitude to justify the British governments' seeking a theoretical triumph in achieving its immediate abolition.³⁵ He insisted that government should obtain not only the opinion of its European functionaries but also that of a committee of intelligent natives. According to him these last alone were competent to judge to a matter in which the English had no personal interest and of which they had not even a slight knowledge. Moreover, the subject was so complicated by the delicate questions of marriage and the internal economy of the *zenana*—upon which the local peoples including both Hindus and Muslims were so exceedingly sensitive—that he despaired of any modification of the existing law emanating from European legislators which would be at all palatable to the upper and middling classes of people.³⁶ If anything must be done, then he suggested that the state of servitude of the bondsman entitled to redemption should gradually be substituted for that of the slave absolute. This might be done, particularly in the case of agricultural labourers, by placing a tax of two or three rupees a year upon slaves, but leaving bondsmen exempt from taxation, provided the sum for which they were redeemable did not exceed forty rupees. If a compulsory register of slaves and bondsmen was opened, in which masters might

³³ Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830, para 12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, para 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, para 16.

enter persons either as slaves or bondsmen as they wished, he thought numbers of slaves would be entered as bondsmen to avoid the tax, so ensuring that they enjoyed all the privileges of the latter class.³⁷

If a more rapid solution was required then government should fix a rate at which they would redeem slaves from their masters. This was the only valid way of compensating the higher classes for such an invasion of their private property rights: 'if something must be done at their expense to satisfy the philanthropic feelings of the people of England, I should consider this as the least objectionable measure that could be adopted, and as one which would also seem likely to prove acceptable to the English public, since it would afford to those who are zealous in the cause of emancipation an opportunity for the exercise of their benevolent views, by coming forward with the requisite funds.'³⁸

From these general considerations Scott next turned to a defence of his actions in 1825 against the censure of the Court of Directors. He began by pointing out that he had been incorrectly charged with violating the laws and customs of British India. In the first place Assam had not then come under the formal administration of the British government, which was at that time much more engrossed with the conduct of war on the frontier than with the application of the Bengal Regulations to the society of a little known region. If he had sanctioned the sale of men as slaves, during a period of famine, he could at the most be charged with suspending the operation of the local Ahom regulation enacted to prevent the loss of crown *paiks* from the free population, and the consequent diminution of the state revenues. Moreover the Ahom government itself, during past famines, had granted permission for *paiks* to save their lives by becoming slaves. Finally, it was not the case, as supposed by the Court, that his sanction had conferred legality and validity upon contracts which were not agreeable to the provisions of Hindu and Muslim law. Indeed, in the eyes

³⁷ *Ibid.*, para 14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, para 15.

of the people slavery did not even offend against natural law.³⁹

Next, Scott explained the emergency which had prompted such a measure and the practical aspect of the question. He believed that the lives of the destitute persons, who in 1825 sold themselves in Assam, might have been preserved, without their being reduced to slavery, by supplying them with food on the public account. But he doubted very much whether on application to government for leave to expend twenty to thirty thousand rupees, or even a much larger sum, would have been complied with since the distress had been occasioned by a scanty crop. Anything short of such sums upon the importation of a large quantity of grain would not have afforded material relief.⁴⁰ This importation by government was impracticable at that time, as the whole tonnage on the river was required for troop movement in the war with Burma. He had no other way of mitigating the evil except to secure a reduction of individual consumption, by "making it the interest of those who had grain to divide it with those who had none".⁴¹ It was thought to be a politically prudent act to make use of an existing custom when no alternative was offered.

Scott was of the firm conviction that the opposition of the Court of Directors was the outcome of an Englishman's abhorrence towards the system of slavery as known to the West. Scott believed that the Directors had absolutely no idea of the structure of society in India and the needs of the common people. His measure had been aimed at serving the interest of the greatest number : it was not through an alien idealism that the needs and aspirations of the subject people could be properly grasped.⁴² He wrote : "That slavery" in the usual acceptance of the word, is repugnant to the feelings of Englishmen, I am well aware. But the question in this case to be considered was not whether slavery should, under

³⁹ *Ibid.*, paras 19-20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, paras 19-20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, para 20.

ordinary circumstances, be patronized and encouraged, but whether I should in deference to the speculative opinions of my own countrymen, and in defiance of the wishes and feelings of those who were alone interested in the result, doom to certain death hundreds, if not thousands, of a starving population by refusing them permission to obtain the means of saving their lives upon terms, which, to them at least, seemed advantageous".⁴³

Further, Scott argued that to the people of the East who were familiar with slavery, the novel prejudice of Europeans against that condition of civil life was quite unintelligible. Hence whatever motive he might have assigned for such a piece of cruelty, an order prohibiting the self-sale of the male population would have been interpreted by the Assamese as "a sordid determination on the part of their new masters, not to sacrifice any portion of the capitation tax, let the consequences to their subjects be what they might".⁴⁴

Scott's contemporaries in Assam held much the same views about slavery and its abolition as he did. They believed that any attempt abruptly to abolish the system would be wrong. They were not blind to the evils in the system, but understanding the organic nature of society believed that advance must be slow, and directed to the lessening of the evils without infringing the proprietary rights of individuals.⁴⁵

In his report Scott mentioned with approval Captain White's suggestion that it might be possible to prohibit any future sales into servitude except those subject to redemption, and to limit the period of bondage either to a term of years, or to the lives of the members of the family already in existence at the time of the contract. White believed that any total prohibition of sales into slavery would have ill consequences, but that future sales should be so limited that all progeny born after a contract would be free. Scott proposed that White's suggestions should be given specific form.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Appendix VI, nos. 3 and 4, R.I.L.C., Reports of Capts. J.B. Neufville and A. White, 26 July, 1830 and 9 Aug., 1830.

All adults should be at liberty to sell themselves or their children, under such contracts as were valid under Hindu and Muslim law. They should not be allowed to entail servitude upon the second generation, or even upon members of the first generation born after the parents had become slaves.⁴⁶ Moreover those who were subject to servitude would retain the right of redemption, upon payment. The payment in the case of adults should be of the principal sum advanced, and in that of young children, of that sum, together with a reasonable compensation for the expense of bringing them up. This additional allowance was to be fixed by law, and should be liable to be again gradually remitted according to the age the parties might have attained, and the services they might consequently be presumed to have rendered to their masters.⁴⁷

In Upper Assam, the political agent, Captain Neufville, proposed to make slavery less cruel by making the sale of slaves without their consent illegal. The transfer of a slave should take place before the chief of his khel or village, who would be required to ascertain that the person so sold consented to the sale. No one should be allowed forcibly to separate slave husband and wife, or slave mother and children, upon pain of an immediate grant of freedom to the slave. Cases of great cruelty and oppression of slaves by their owners should be subjected to the investigation of the village heads, and if fully proved, punished by fine, or in atrocious cases by the menumission of the sufferers. In cases where owners were compelled to sell their slaves due to want, scarcity and poverty, the owners would have to satisfy the parish meeting of the good character of the proposed purchaser and in this too, the prohibition against the division of a family would stand.⁴⁸ Neufville also suggested that the slaves belonging to revenue or other public defaulters whose effects were confiscated might be enrolled amongst the

⁴⁶ Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830, paras 21-22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, para 22.

⁴⁸ Appendix VI, no. 3, R.I.L.C., Neufville's Report, 26 July, 1830.

government *paiks* at the *khats* or in a district *khel*, allowing the estimated value to the credit of the owner's account.⁴⁹

In his report of 9 August, 1830,⁵⁰ Capt. White went a stage further in his proposals for curbing slavery. He now suggested that life enslavement should be prohibited and no contract of bondage be held legal for a longer period than seven or fourteen years. At the same time encouragement might be held out to individuals to manumit their slaves, by the hope of obtaining government titles and distinctions for which the Assamese, he alleged, were very ambitious. In addition to this, from a certain date, all children born in a state of slavery should be declared free.⁵¹

White's summing up of the whole problem of slavery is interesting. While admitting "the demoralising effects of slavery in society" he professed the opinion that an immediate abolition of the system "would be apt to fail". He wrote : "From the records of history Jewish, Classical, Asiatic and European it appears that slavery has everywhere prevailed in the less advanced stages of civilization; and I apprehend, Assam, according to European notions, may be considered as a country exhibiting a still ruder state of society. Here, generally speaking, the ryots cultivate only for the supply of their individual wants, and do not calculate upon a certain sale for their surplus produce. What fabrics of manufacture are produced, are generally the workmanship of the females of the family, not the produce of a separate class of men; and as yet the commerce of Assam is still in its infancy, under these circumstances, if a poor man wants a sum of money for a specific purpose, the only valuable article he can give in exchange is his labour; and this the rich men naturally endeavour to secure permanently by demanding a contract of slavery for life. Besides, here as elsewhere, in times of scarcity parents are wont to part with their children from a benevolent wish to preserve their lives. Were the country further advanced in the career of improvement, and capital

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Appendix VI, no. 4, R.I.L.C., White to Scott, 9 Aug., 1830.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

more widely diffused, it appears to me this system of slavery and bondage would gradually diminish of itself as the poor man would obtain a small advance on easier terms".⁵²

In this comment of White's can be seen once again that pragmatic approach to the problem of slavery in Assam and of its mitigation or abolition exhibited by Scott. Scott's sanction of slavery in 1825 did not denote any lack of humanity on his part—it was not a brutal measure such as Warren Hastings' draconian law of 1772 for the enslavement of the families of dacoits⁵³ had been, but sprang from a genuine concern and understanding. Where he felt he could, Scott acted against slavery. Thus immediately after the liberation of Lower Assam he liberated some twelve thousand slaves,⁵⁴ and ordered Neufville to rescue and free the Assamese enslaved by the Singphos.⁵⁵ Again, in 1829, he sought the sanction of government for the confiscation and freeing of the slaves of revenue and judicial defaulters.⁵⁶ It should be noted that on that occasion it was the Calcutta authorities who demurred, asking Scott whether the freeing of such slaves would really be beneficial, or whether they would not in all probability sell themselves again into bondage, and so defeat the benevolent object of the government.⁵⁷ When in 1830, Scott once more proposed that instead of allowing convicted defaulters to sell their slaves at public auction to satisfy their creditor, they should be compelled to sell them at a fixed price to the government, which should thereupon set them free, the Calcutta authorities once more refused to act.⁵⁸ What was achieved in 1830 was as a result of Scott's initiative: he instructed the political Agent in Upper Assam to open a register for a period of six months for the purpose

⁵² Appendix VI, no. 4, R.I.L.C., White to Scott, 9 Aug., 1830.

⁵³ See, L.S.S. O'Malley, *Modern India and the West*, pp. 73-5.

⁵⁴ E. A. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

⁵⁵ See *Supra*, p. 118.

⁵⁶ B.P.C., 26 Feb., 1830, no. 17, Scott to Swinton, 31 Dec., 1829.

⁵⁷ B.P.C., 26 Feb., 1830, no. 18, Swinton to Scott, 26 Feb., 1830.

⁵⁸ B.P.C., 30 Apr., 1830, nos. 63-64, Scott to Swinton, 24 March, 1830, Swinton to Scott, 30 Apr., 1830.

of recording the names of all slaves within his jurisdiction and to issue a proclamation that all persons remaining unregistered on the expiration of that period would be held to be free.⁵⁹

But both Scott and White realised that any sudden abolition of slavery such as the doctrinaire idealism of the home authorities seemed to demand would do serious violence to Assamese society, possibly without any corresponding benefit to the slaves themselves. Other Paternalists also reacted in the same manner in similar circumstances. For example, Sir Charles Metcalfe, who had prohibited the sale and purchase of slaves and also *sati* in Delhi, asked the Bengal Council in 1829, to be cautious on passing a law against *sati* fearing that any sudden action might cause unrest.⁶⁰ In 1825 abolitionist fervour might have caused the death of the starving poor. At any time abolition without compensation would gravely affect the upper classes who depended upon slave labour. Mills' report, on the damaging effects of abolition in 1843, declared in downright terms: "There is no doubt that this measure reduced the only men of substance in Assam to absolute poverty."⁶¹ What was required, as both men saw, was attention to causes not symptoms. Thus, in his report Scott argued that the sale of girls and women, with a view to the discharge of their own or their relatives' debts, would best be prevented by government aid to their parents.⁶² While the need existed, and slavery was agreeable to the law of the land, only some such practical approach could uproot the evil.⁶³

Scott's attempt to provide the slave-raiding Singphos with new employment as traders and carriers between Assam and Burma,⁶⁴ and his efforts to press forward with the instruc-

⁵⁹ Appendix VI, no. 2, R.I.L.C., Scott to Neufville, 4 Feb, 1830.

⁶⁰ K. Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 50; D. Panigrahi, *Charles Metcalfe in India*, p. 15.

⁶¹ A.J.M. Mills, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁶² Scott's Report, 10 Oct., 1830, para 21.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ See *Supra*, pp. 124-128.

tion of the Assamese in the useful arts, "without waiting for their slow introduction by chance or in ordinary progress of events,"⁶⁵ were, as he saw, the only practical approach to the problems of Assam, and once these were solved, the evils of economic bondage would vanish. To Scott then, as to other Paternalists, "politics were experimental in nature, necessarily near-sighted, and essentially limited in their achievement".⁶⁶ So, like a true Paternalist, he rejected a dogmatic path to violent change.

⁶⁵ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to Swinton, 18 May, 1831.

⁶⁶ E. Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

VI

HIS EVANGELISM

A Mission for the Garos

IN THE last chapter, on slavery in Assam, a special instance was considered of Scott's attitude to questions of moral and material progress among the Hindus of Assam. It is intended, in this chapter, to discuss the same question in relation to hill tribes, the Garos particularly. The question is linked with his endeavour to establish a Christian Mission Centre in the hills devoted to the cause of the Garo tribes. Since in the last chapter we have maintained that he was a pragmatist and paternalist, this ardent interest in a Christian Mission, on his part, makes a further explanation of his paternalist philosophy imperative.

After the creation of the North-East Parts of Rangpur and promulgation of Regulation X of 1822 there, the Garos of the frontier became peaceful. The market duties from the Garos were regularly realised year after year and there was even an average annual surplus amounting to five thousand rupees.¹ But just at this time Scott's attention was diverted to Assam proper, where the Burmese were taking an expansionist posture threatening the Company's Bengal territory. After the occupation of Lower Assam he hardly had any time to come back to the Garo frontier to supervise personally any welfare programme there. Scott, therefore, suggested a novel plan to the Calcutta Council asking permission to invite missionaries to start humanitarian activities among the Garos.² While seeking permission to negotiate with Bishop Heber at Calcutta for such missionary assistance, he wrote :

¹ B.C.J.C., 28 June, 1828, no. 10, enclosures A and B of Scott's letters, 10 July, 1827.

² Scott's letter to Bayley, 27 Apr., 1825, See A. Mackenzie, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254 n.

"I am satisfied that nothing permanently good can be obtained by other means, and that if we do not interfere on behalf of the poor Garos they will soon become Hindoos or half Hindoos, retaining and acquiring many of the bad parts of their present and improved creeds". Scott then added, "I would greatly prefer two or more Moravian Missionaries of the old school who along with religion would teach useful arts".³ Indeed, Scott was so certain of the success of the missionary activities among the Garos that he showed readiness to personally support the missionary venture. "If Government would ensure them subsistence only in case of success or my death", Scott wrote, "I would willingly take upon myself the expense in the first instance, and £ 300 per annum would suffice".⁴ Inspired by a vision of the vast field of conversion in the Garo hills, he pleaded: "Of success I have no doubt than that, if allowed, you could make Christian of the Hindoo boys; and the great error of the Missionaries appears to me to be that of directing their attention to polished natives instead of rude tribes who are still in that state of natural childhood which enables the stranger priest to enact the schoolmaster and teach them what he likes. There are many instances of success in cases of the latter description in modern times, but not one by fair means in those of the former since the age of miracle or very near it".⁵

The Government apparently gave Scott the necessary permission to contact missionaries in his private capacity, for he soon negotiated with Bishop Heber and his own 'agent in London' to send missionaries to work amongst the Garos. So far as the second part of his letter—one concerning the expenses to be incurred in teaching the Garos in useful arts—Bayley, the Secretary to the Government eventually replied, demi-officially, with general approval. But he pointed out that "the government could not, however, give salary to the

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.* As mentioned earlier (Ch. 1) owing to a diseased heart Scott at this time was in constant fear of death.

⁵ *Ibid.*

people who might be employed in their capacity of Missionaries, but they might call them schoolmasters, and give assistance in that shape".⁶ The aid thus offered Scott gladly accepted, and the scheme for the education of the Garos which he had proposed with the advice of Bishop Heber was accepted by the Calcutta authorities.⁷ A school was established at Goalpara for the education of forty Garo boys at a monthly expense of 450 rupees,⁸ and one Henley was appointed as the teacher.⁹

Scott, however, never ceased to think in terms of a proper mission with a clergyman as its head. For one reason, Henley failed to acquire the Garo language soon enough to begin his work in right earnest and Scott thought that if a clergyman were appointed Henley could be placed under his control, for he would be still useful for imparting medical knowledge to the Garo youths.¹⁰ Scott therefore proposed to establish a mission with a clergyman, at a place equidistant both from the Company's civil station at Rangpur and military cantonment at Jamalpore and also not far from the Garo *haths* or markets. Scott's idea was to erect a bungalow at such a place for the clergyman, a schoolroom, and accommodation for forty Garo boys whom he intended to place "under the exclusive direction of the clergyman to be fed and clothed by government, and brought up in Christian faith".¹¹

This whole scheme, coupled with his earlier (1825) letter about the prospect of winning the Garos to Christianity might seem an example of Evangelicalism at work, with the Garos seem as souls to be saved from the evils of Hinduism by a missionary effort, directed in the first place to education. The ideas of those Evangelicals who effected the change in the Company's official policy have been set out by Stokes

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 254 n.

⁷ J.L.B., Vol. II, letter of 30 Aug., 1827, para 141.

⁸ *Ibid.*, para 142.

⁹ White's *Memoir*, App. 44, Scott to C.A. Fenwick, 7 Mar., 1827.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Henley had been a Deputy Apothecary before being appointed as Garo school teacher.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

and by Embree.¹² Their basic concept was that the character of man was a product, not of his physical, but of his moral environment, and that salvation could be achieved and the individual could be totally transformed by a direct assault on the mind.¹³ Education followed by personal conversion would change the whole nature of society. This emerged from the essential Protestant belief that Europe's progress was a direct result of the liberation of the individual, the legacy of the Reformation.¹⁴ Their logical conclusion was that for India to progress, her people must undergo a similar liberation, an assimilation on the deepest level. They therefore intended a campaign with education as their instrument to free the Indian mind from the tyranny of evil superstition, a sort of Indian counterpart to European Reformation.¹⁵ The impression that Scott's venture was also of similar nature tend to be firmer when one comes to know about his associations in India both with personalities and institutions and the period of his activities in India. On his arrival in India Scott joined Fort William College in 1802 at the age of sixteen and a half years. As Wellesley had emphasized, one of the purposes of the college was to 'instruct and confirm [the students] in the principles of the Christian religion'.¹⁶ With the provost, David Brown, the Vice-Provost, Claudius Buchanan and William Carey, the Baptist missionary also on the staff the college seemed admirably suited to become the instrument for Evangelization of India.¹⁷ We have already mentioned that with Carey Scott developed a personal friendship and he took a keen interest in the activities of the Serampore Mission.¹⁸ *The Periodical Accounts* of that Mission for 1827 and 1828 show that Scott was one of the

¹² E. Stokes, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-35; A.T. Embree, *Charles Grant And British Rule In India*.

¹³ Stokes, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

¹⁴ M. Edwardes, *Asia in the European Age*, p. 109.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, and see also M. Edwardes, *British India*, p. 53.

¹⁶ See Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

¹⁷ Such was the prediction of David Brown, see *ibid.*

¹⁸ See above Ch. I, pp. 6-7.

highest donors to this mission.¹⁹ Again, in his last few years in Assam he was also in close contact with Colonel Adam White who in 1822 had published a book, *Considerations on the State of British India*, which reveals him as a staunch supporter of missionaries.²⁰ Then again, since Scott had entered the service, there had been a steady change in the Company's avowed policy towards the missionaries from an early indifference or hostility to that of acceptance which received legal expression in the Charter Act of 1813. The Governors-General of the period 1813-1835, Lord Hastings, Lord Amherst and Lord Bentinck all were obsessed with the fear of causing disaffection by interfering in Indian customs but nevertheless, each, on occasion, gave evidence of his personal regard for the missionaries.²¹ To this changing climate of opinion Scott had, of course, been exposed.

But in Scott's appeal for missionary help and his own support of mission work, it is difficult to find that "consuming earnestness and conviction, born of a transfiguring religious experience", which Stokes points out to have been the hall mark of the Evangelical mind.²² Scott certainly made a distinction between the Hindus and Muslims of the plains, having established religions of their own and the hill tribes who had no such religion. Scott was not terribly fond of the Hindu religion and social system but he considered it to be futile to attempt replacing them by Christianity and a Western social system. The missionaries with their main object of evangelization, on the other hand, believed that not only considerations of humanity but the very progress of the Christian gospel demanded that Indian society should be purged and renovated.²³ Scott however thought that the Garo society could be transformed through the Christian religion but even here he wanted to proceed cautiously. While he had been

¹⁹ In these two years Scott and Charles Metcalfe paid an annual subscription of Rs. 200 which was only second to that of one R. Hume who paid Rs. 250. See the *Periodical Accounts of the Serampore Mission*, 1819-1834, pp. 67-72, Account for the year 1828.

²⁰ A. White, *Considerations on the State of British India*, pp. 26-35.

²¹ Ingham, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

²² Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

²³ Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

directly engaged in the settlement of Garo affairs, investigating relations between the hill chiefs and the plain *zamindars*, regulating the cotton markets, applying the necessary measure of coercion to bring the Garo chiefs—some hundred and fifty-five, by 1822—to commit themselves to written agreements and accept a nominal tribute to the permanent British power he had not once called for missionary assistance. Rather when he was first called to attend to the Burmese threat, he had relied upon the appointment of one or two Bengali superintendents with an appropriate staff, working with the neighbouring police *darogahs* over whom they exercised a controlling authority to exercise that administrative authority created by Regulation X of 1822. It was only after he had left the Garo hills for Assam that he appealed for missionary help in settling and civilizing the Garos. But even at this time, although his scheme of 1827 suggested evangelicalism at work, his subsequent correspondence with a private missionary and the government, in which he sketched his ideal mission station, reveal some unexpected and very idiosyncratic ideas.

In his search for a devoted clergyman to head his proposed mission, Scott in 1827 came in contact with one C. A. Fenwick, a Register to the Local Record Committee, Sylhet, who took interest in Scott's venture and was inclined to work among the Garos.²⁵ Scott took care in explaining to him both the advantages and disadvantages of the job so that he did not come with uncontrolled enthusiasm leaving his old job, which was, materially speaking, much better. About the salary Scott said that it would, under no circumstances, be more than 250 rupees per mensem and that too was doubtful. The fact about the unhealthy climate of the area was also not kept hidden from Fenwick: "The disease most common", Scott wrote, "are fever, both jungle and intermittent ... The danger from sickness I must not disguise; it is very

²⁴ B.C.J.C., 17 Feb., 1825, no. 9, Scott to Bayley, 3 Dec., 1824.

²⁵ White's *Memoir*, App. 44. Scott to Fenwick, 7 Mar., 1827. The subsequent quotations are from this same source unless otherwise mentioned.

great. I have myself been twice on the point of death, for fevers caught in these hills, although I never had even an ague fit during a residence of twenty-five years in any other part of the country". Such an information about the hostile climate and meagre salary was enough to deter any ordinary ease loving person even with a dedication to his own profession. But Scott also warned Fenwick that there might be occasional need even to compromise the doctrines of Christianity with those of the paganism. "It was not to testimonials of moral character that I referred", Scott wrote, "but of those other qualities more particularly required in a Missionary, who should devote himself to an undertaking of this kind". Scott then went on to explain what he looked for in an ideal missionary: "Zeal, tempered with prudence, a capacity for the acquisition of languages, a capacity of enduring the hardships and privations that must be looked for in such a country, and some knowledge of agriculture, mechanics, and the more common arts of life, would be desirable qualifications for the Missionary who goes to preach the Gospel to a rude and savage people, amongst whom the introduction of the useful art ought to precede that of a knowledge of letters". Scott then hinted at the means he would like the Missionary to pursue while converting people. He wrote: "Some customs, inconsistent with the doctrines of Christianity, it might be necessary to tolerate, for a time the object in view being rather to improve the rising generation than completely to purify the present. Thus the marriage of two wives might be hereafter prevented; but the repudiation of one, where there are already two, could be not, perhaps, with a fair prospect of success, be insisted upon."

For Scott, then, mere conversion to Christianity was not the aim. In fact Fenwick was considered for the Garo mission not just for his interest in preaching the gospel. "The general knowledge of husbandry and the arts which you possess", Scott wrote to Fenwick, "will be in the highest degree useful, and it is, I have little doubt, quite sufficient for the object in view, which is not to make artisans of the mountaineers, nor even to encourage the fabrication of any article which they can procure on reasonable terms, from the

plains, by the barter of their staple commodity cotton; but merely to point out to them such obvious improvements and simple mechanical inventions as would immediately suggest themselves to a person at all conversant with the agriculture and arts of Europe, America, or the more civilized parts of Asia".²⁶

By July 1827 Scott was able to submit to the Government in the form of a lengthy memorandum, the details of his proposed mission station. For the purpose he had selected the Rangeera mountain, which being detached from the other hills and eighteen hundred feet high, enjoyed a climate moderately cool throughout the year, and a free circulation of the air. The station was planned to be self-supporting. A part of the hill would be cleared, in the first instance, by inducing the neighbouring Garos to cultivate cotton and rice upon it; as they were obliged to abandon their fields after the second year in the existing rude state of agriculture, it would be necessary to adopt measures for preventing the jungles from again springing up after the expiration of that period; at least twenty to thirty rupees would be given in advance for this purpose to each of the fifty Garo families, and they would be allowed to retain the use of the country so long as they continued to cultivate for their own benefit lands pointed out to them in the neighbourhood of the missionary settlement; they would be asked to work two or three days in the week in clearing jungle, and making embankments and other improvements designed to increase the salubrity of the station and the produce of their own lands; a herd of two hundred cows, and the like number of sheep and goats would be purchased and the summit of the hill would thus be stocked with cattle down to a height of about three hundred feet; in the region below, in which springs and rivulets begin to abound and where consequently the system of irrigation practised in China, Bhutan and elsewhere might be successfully introduced; the scholars would be taught in the art of the new system of agriculture and would be ins-

²⁶ White's *Memoir*, App. 45, extract from an undated letter from Scott to Fenwick.

pired to extend it to their own villages, the artificial project for irrigation would be undertaken to agricultural improvement and the cold weather cultivation of wheat, barley, potatoes, turnips etc. would be introduced; plenty of rich arable land fit for the plough to be procured at the bottom; and many of the rivulets towards the lower part of their course would be used in a manner to turn mills for clearing cotton and paddy.²⁷ Of such a mission-agricultural settlement, Scott declared, "no improvement of equal magnitude whether of European or Asiatic origin could be introduced into the hills"—and he pointed out its administrative and political advantages: "from the migratory, it would convert the Garos into a stationary population".²⁸ He then set out the cost of the scheme in detail: six thousand rupees for the initial clearance,²⁹ and eight thousand four hundred rupees in annual charges, easily defrayed from the revenue surplus yielded by the Garo frontier.³⁰

			Rs.
Missionary salary	..	..	250
Mr. Hurly's (of Garo schools)	..	..	200
Native teachers'	..	..	40
40 boys at Rs. 3	..	..	120
Servants etc.	..	..	40
Allowance to Garo priests	..	..	50
			<hr/> 700
Annual charges :		Rs.	8,400

²⁷ B.C.J.C., 26 June, 1828, no. 10, Scott's 'Memorandum of the arrangements for a Missionary station and an experimental farm', 10 July, 1827.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

			Rs.
²⁹ Advances to the Garo cultivators for two years	..	..	500
Advances to 50 families to settle permanently	..	..	1,500
To the purchase of cattle	..	..	1,300
Agricultural Instruments, tools, plough	..	..	700
Buildings	..	..	2,000
			<hr/> 6,000

See B.C.J.C., 26 June, 1828, no. 10, enclosures D of Scott's letter to Shakespear, 10 July, 1827.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, enclosures A, B and C.

Statement exhibiting the proceeds of the Garo market duties since the enactment of Regulation X of 1822

			Rs.
In the year	1822/23	.. ..	33,285
	1823/24	.. ..	50,471
	1824/25	.. ..	54,471
	1825/26	.. ..	22,554
	1826/27	.. ..	36,013
Average of five years	..	39,358	
deduct expenses annually chargeable to the Garo mountaineers in judicial, revenue, and police establishments :		34,210	
Remaining annual surplus :		<hr/>	5,148

Finally, having explained what type of missionary was required—well qualified in “various European improvements in agriculture, mechanics and arts”—he ended with a personal plea, “...adverting to the very precarious state of my own health. I would earnestly solicit that His Lordship-in-Council will be pleased to adopt as soon as convenient such further measures as may be requisite to afford to the Garos instruction in Christian religion as constituting independently of other instructions, by far the most feasible and efficacious means of humanizing that race of people and effecting the objects which Government has all along had in view in regard to them”.³¹

In August 1827 Fenwick was still interested in Scott’s project suggesting many points to him concerning agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation, planting of fruit trees, introducing new livestock and opening of a school for girls.

³¹ B.C.J.C., 26 June 1828, no. 10, Scott to Shakespear, 10 July 1827.

³² White’s *Memoir*, App. 46. Scott to Fenwick, 18 Aug., 1827.

Scott was naturally pleased and replied to Fenwick enthusiastically agreeing to supply plants of mangoes, peaches, the china fruits and pears, etc., without charge from Gauhati. If this sustained enthusiasm of Fenwick pleased Scott the news that came soon afterwards did not. On 10 September, 1827, B. W. Hurly who had been selected as schoolmaster for the Garos under the latest arrangements, submitted his resignation, pleading his inability to cope with the savage and unhealthy surroundings, "destitute of the common necessities of European life", and a like inability either to master the Bengali and Garo languages or to give lessons on husbandry and horticulture to the tribes.³³ This led the aggrieved Scott to make it clear that men of a different quality would be needed. Scott wrote that "An ardent zeal in the cause of religion is of course a *sine-qua-non* and unless that is possessed in a sufficient degree to place a man above the inferior considerations of enjoyment of society and many little comforts to which Europeans are accustomed, ultimate success cannot be expected."³⁴ He pointed out that on the Rangeera station "moderate sized, comfortable homes will be provided, the necessaries or even luxuries of the table, need not be wanting and a constant communication by post may be kept up, but beyond this little can be reasonably expected, and compensation for lost enjoyments and the privation of other advantages can only be sought for with success in the zealous prosecution of the objects of the Mission, and in the cheering prospect of conveying the blessings of civilization and a knowledge of the true faith to thousands of beings at present immersed in ignorance and imbued with the most savage propensities."³⁵ He ended his letter to the government with the noble warning that, "the undertaking must still be considered as one of an arduous nature, and to which a man ought to go forth armed with that religious zeal which warmed the hearts of the Moravian brethren in Greenland

³³ B.C.J.C., 25 Oct. 1827, No. 55, Scott to Shakespear, 4 Oct. 1827.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, no. 54, Scott to Shakespear, 4 Oct., 1827.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

and still actuates the missionaries in the wilds of southern Africa.”³⁶

The above lines of Scott could as well be the epitaph on his dead project, as, his plan for the establishment in the Garo hills a mission-cum-agricultural station did not materialise in his life time. It was not until 1867 that the Christian mission was to come to the Garo hills. In that year Dr. Bronson took interest in establishing a missionary centre for the Garos at Goalpara.³⁷ In 1829 not only the Garo frontier but the whole eastern region was underdeveloped. Tea industry was yet to come to Upper Assam and on the Garo frontier the unexportable commodity, cotton, still remained the most staple product and climate there was as hostile as ever. Economic prospect being negligent, help to the missionary establishments which entailed with it the tricky question of European colonization,³⁸ was safely avoided by the government. Scott therefore remained content in fulfilling a part of his dream for the Garos, through the Gauhati Mission School which was founded in 1829 mainly through his zeal and enterprise.³⁹ In 1830 James Rae, the schoolmaster of the Gauhati School reported that he had under his charge “twelve interesting youths, three Khasis and nine Garos, committed to his charge by Mr. David Scott, Commissioner of Assam.”⁴⁰ So far the services of Fenwick was concerned, Scott thought of employing him in his similar sanatorium-cum-horticultural centre in the Khasi hills.⁴¹

In pointing out the tribal areas as the best place for Christian missionary activities, Scott has proved very far sighted, for it is only in the tribal areas that Christianity in

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ See *The Assam Mission of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Papers and discussions of the Jubilee Conference held in Nowgong Dec. 18-29, 1886*, p. 57.

³⁸ The Charter Act of 1833 allowing Europeans to hold land in long term lease, was yet to come.

³⁹ V. Hugo Sword, *Baptists in Assam*, pp. 36-7.

⁴⁰ Morris, *History of Welsh Methodists*, p. 72, quoted by V. H. Sword, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-7.

⁴¹ See ch. VII. p. 216.

India spreaded most.⁴² The missionaries and government officials in Assam immediately after Scott's period realised that Assam and its hills, inhabited by various tribes marked by their simplicity of manners and void of prejudices which were common among the Hindus of the other parts of India offered the most promising fields for the spread of Christianity.⁴³ What is more, they echoed Scott's voice when they pleaded that the government should make grant of wastelands to Moravian or other Missionaries if the latter took to themselves the task of instructing the native in an improved system of agriculture, horticulture and manufacture. It should be made to them, these officials and missionaries pleaded, "not with reference to their religious opinions, but for developing and improving the resources of the country."⁴⁴

These missionaries, although talked of trade and tribes aired unalloyed Evangelical views. They were obviously inspired by the prospect of tea industry and encouraged by Scott's successor in the Commissioner's post, Captain Jenkins, who laid a new emphasis on colonization as the means to Assam's economic development.⁴⁵ So far the missionaries

⁴² The 1961 Census reports for Assam give the following percentage of tribesmen who are Christians.

Mizo	— 88.1	Khasi-Jaintia	— 48.5
Garó	— 33.1	Mikir-North Cachar	— 13.0

See, *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. II, Assam, part V-A, pp. 334-38.

⁴³ Rev. J. Rae, 'Appeal on behalf of the Lalongs, Mikirs and other hitherto unknown tribes in Assam', *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, Vol. V, Apr. 1836, pp. 155-164; See also *C.C.O.*, Vol. IV, Aug. 1835, pp. 406-8.

⁴⁴ *C.C.O.*, Vol. IV, Aug. 1835, pp. 406-8.

⁴⁵ On January 4, 1835 one Rev. John Mack wrote to the Church Mission Society, London, presenting the commercial possibilities of Assam, particularly mentioning the cultivation of tea. He saw how Assam could become a highway of commerce between China and the East India Company's realm. American Baptists Nathan Brown and O.T. Cutter who arrived at Sadiya in Upper Assam in 1836 also applied to the Board of Trade in 1841 suggesting the possibility of opening an experimental farm at Sadiya. This undertaking was sponsored by Capt. Jenkins. The Board sanctioned this undertaking and desired to send two or more pious and intelligent families of

were concerned the reason for their interest in experimental farming or similar economic ventures was simple. This would, they argued, "serve a two-fold purpose, namely, to relieve the missionaries from embarrassment in providing the common necessities of life and also improve the temporal condition of the natives by teaching them the useful arts and introducing foreign plants."⁴⁶ In fact this was no new policy. Charles Grant, the greatest advocate of the missionaries' cause in India, had declared long before: "In every progressive step of this work, we shall also serve the original design with which we visited India, that design still so important to this country—the extension of our commerce".⁴⁷ There was undoubtedly a difference between Scott's line of approach and that of the missionaries. The latter would have certainly wanted the Company's involvement in the affairs of the Garos as a moral duty for the Company was for them a part of the Christian community.⁴⁸ Scott seemed to be more pragmatic than anything else although he too was quite conscious of the moral and spiritual superiority of the Christian community. At a time when the retrenchment measures of the Company's government made any heavy expenditure on any commercially unprofitable field impossible,⁴⁹ the voluntary services of the missionaries should be encouraged and exploited on humanitarian grounds. The leading missionaries of the time—William Carey for instance—took a great deal of interest in the im-

suitable qualifications whenever such families could be found. This undertaking, however, never materialised due to the insurrection of the Khamtis. See V.H. Sword, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-6 and 52; See also A. Guha, 'Colonization of Assam (1825-40)', *The Indian Econ. and Soc. Hist. Review*, Vol. V, 2 June, 1968, pp. 137-140.

⁴⁶ Sword, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

⁴⁷ Grant, *Observations on the state of Society among the Asiatic Subjects...* (1797) quoted in Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 34; For Grant's venture to start missionary activities at his indigo establishment at Gaumati (Bengal) see Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁴⁸ Grant's argument, see Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

⁴⁹ See Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 121 for the consequences of the Company's cautious financial policy of the 20's on agricultural improvements for example.

provement of Indian agriculture and horticulture⁵⁰ and it was no wonder that Scott, who followed missionary activities keenly, and who was in regular correspondence with Carey, emphasised upon the missionaries and also the government of such needs. Morality was not at all his main concern and in fact he made it clear to Fenwick.

One other odd feature of Scott's plans for the Garo mission, and one which suggests the Paternalist rather than the Evangelist, was his suggestion for medical instruction. He wished for the appointment of a well-trained native doctor to the Rangeera mission, whose task would be to instruct the priests how to cure the simple diseases of the country, such as fever, rheumatism and inflammation of the eyes.⁵¹ Scott argued that the priests were the only persons resorted to by the people in case of disease, and that if the priests' co-operation was won by the grant of small allowances, the way would be opened for the diffusion of an improved practice of medicine, among the Garos.⁵² Such a plan of Scott to use the priests (although the latter's role among the Garos was not as great as that of the Brahmins in the plains) and in fact to strengthen their position suggests further that he scarcely saw them in the light, say, as Charles Grant, who denounced those belonging to the Hindu society as "crafty and imperious" and the source of most ills in that society.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 117-120.

⁵¹ B.C.J.C., 25 Oct. 1827, nos. 54-56, Scott to Shakespear, 4 Oct. 1827. In this connection, it is to be noted that Scott himself had successfully introduced vaccination against small pox, the value of which was so well understood that the Imperial Gazette reports that "small-pox has been almost stamped out in the hills." B.C.J.C. 17 Feb. 1825, no. 9, Scott to Bayley, 3 Dec. 1824; B.C. Allen and others, *Eastern Bengal and Assam*, Imperial Gazetteer of India Series, p. 511.

⁵² J.L.B., Vol. 11, letter of 30 Aug., 1827, para 146.

⁵³ Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

VII

HIS IMPERIALISM

1. *Acquaintance with the Khasi Hills and People*

THE KHASIS are a group of Austro Asiatic people, like the Jaintias and they occupy the tract of country between Jaintia hills on the east and the Garo hills on the west. There is practically no difference between the inhabitants of the Khasi and those of the Jaintia hills. They are both the same physical type, and they speak the same language—Khasi—which is one of the Mon-Khmer family of languages, the only surviving one in India. ¹

The first British contact with the Khasis took place after the acquisition of the district of Sylhet by the East India Company by the grant of the Diwani in Bengal in 1765.² The Khasis thereby became the Company's neighbours to the north; while to the north-east the state of Jaintia, which marched with Sylhet, was also ruled by a chief of Khasi lineage.³ The Khasis possessed quarries which could supply lime for the whole of deltaic Bengal, and were not averse from trade.⁴ In the grand mart at Pandua, on the Sylhet border, they traded in silk, iron, wax, honey and ivory and employed many Bengalis to keep their accounts.⁵ All these business transactions, however, did not offer any opportunity either to the British government or to the inhabitants of Bengal to know much about the Khasis of the interior hills. The Khasis, as a whole, were known to the British as troublesome marau-

¹ Gait, *History of Assam*, 1963 ed., pp. 311 and 353.

² Sir Charles Lyall in P.R.T. Gurdon's *The Khasis*, p. XIV.

³ The chief's capital Jaintiapur, was situated in the plain between the Surma river and the hills.

⁴ P.R.T. Gurdon, *op. cit.*, pp. XIV-XV.

⁵ Letter to William Carey by a missionary from Sylhet, 11 May, 1813, M.C.L.R.M., Vol. VI, 1813, pp. 107-8.

ders, whose raids were a terror to the inhabitants of the plains.⁶

The reason behind the occasional incursions by the Khasis into the plains of Sylhet, however, not far to seek. The advance of the British in Bengal compelled the Khasis to retire to their native fastnesses and to leave the town of Sylhet, the villages of Pandua, Chhatak and many others which were once their possessions, in the hands of their powerful neighbour.⁷ The Khasis were also annoyed with the fraud and deceit of the Bengali traders, especially of those whom they employed as accountants. Eventually, they were driven to exasperation, and started carrying some of them off to their hills, where their victims were threatened with starvation if they refused to refund the embezzled money.⁸

The relation between the Bengali inhabitants of the British territory and the Khasis were thus far from friendly, and it was not easy for the British to learn much about the interior. The earliest British account of the Khasis was perhaps, that of Robert Lindsay⁹ who had been the Resident and Collector of Sylhet about 1778, and had made a large fortune by working the Khasi lime quarries. He described the Khasi as "a fair man in his dealings, and, provided you treat him honourably, he will act with perfect reciprocity towards you". He, however, cautioned the foreigners: "but beware of shewing him the smallest appearance of indignity, for he is jealous in the extreme, cruel and vindictive in his resentments".¹⁰ In the second decade of the nineteenth century, the missionaries of the Serampore Mission began to take an interest in the Khasis. Their account agrees entirely with

⁶ Their ravages between 1780 and 1790 were mentioned as specially severe. *Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam*, p. 86.

⁷ A. B. Lish, 'A brief account of the Khasis,' C.C.O., March 1838, pp. 129-143.

⁸ M.C.L.R.M., Vol. VI, 1813, pp. 107-108.

⁹ See Lord Lindsay, *Lives of the Lindsays, or A Memoir of the Houses of Crawford and Balcarres*, Vol. III, pp. 163, 176-8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-8.

that given by Lindsay some thirty years previously. In May 1813, a missionary from the Sylhet station wrote to Carey thus : "The real Khasis possess two great characteristic virtues viz., truth and honesty. They spurn the little meannesses practised by the Bengalees, whom they despise. They are however very revengeful, and seldom forget injuries".¹¹ However, there was no significant progress in the missionary activities in the Khasi hills until Scott opened up the hills.¹² Dr. Buchanan-Hamilton, who in the early part of the nineteenth century, had been touring on a botanising excursion in the north and on the north-eastern border of Bengal¹³ attempted to give some information about the Khasis. The account which he wrote about the Khasis, while staying at Goalpara in the Brahmaputra valley, was however thoroughly inadequate and in many cases Buchanan confused the Khasis with the Garos.

The importance of a friendly relationship with the Khasis was thus for the first time realised by David Scott at the time of the Burmese war, when the need to establish a *dak* or postal service across the hills from Sylhet to Assam was urgently felt. At this time the land of the Khasis was divided into various petty states presided over by *Syiems* and *Lyngdohs* who were chosen by popular election following a matriarchal method.¹⁴ Some of the more powerful of these chiefs were also referred as rajas in the style of the native states. The territory to the west of Jaintia, extending from Pandua, a border village in the Sylhet district, to Assam was under the *Syiem* of Khyrim. From Pandua, Scott contacted

¹¹ M.C.L.R.M., Vol. VI 1813, p. 107. A missionary's letter to Carey, Sylhet, 11 May, 1813.

¹² The first missionary station in the Khasi hills was opened at Cherrapunji by the Serampore Mission in 1832 with A. Lish in charge of the station. *Periodical Accounts of the Serampore Mission*, 1832, pp. 30-33.

¹³ M.C.L.R.M., Vol. II, 1809, p. 22, W. Robinson to William Carey, 11 April, 1809.

¹⁴ The same system, more or less, exists still today. See Hamlet Bareh, *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, pp. 249-258.

the Khyrim raja¹⁵ who at the time was master of the foothills from which the road was to start. The raja exhibited much less jealousy than Scott had expected and in March 1824 he agreed to Scott's proposal to establish a road across his country from Assam to the plains of Sylhet on being paid for it. He also undertook to improve the road at his expense provided a small lowland estate was restored to him by the British.¹⁶ The land desired by the raja was not considered of much value and Scott therefore advised the conclusion of the bargain.¹⁷

Scott was very impressed with the climate of the Khasi hills and his very first journey to them though "rather fatiguing was on the whole a pleasant trip". Indeed the march proved a voyage of discovery. He found that within six hours journey off Pandua there was a climate probably superior to that of the Cape of Good Hope in point of coldness, and healthiness; the mountains were full of green short grass and the elevation was upwards of five thousand feet. The local people informed him also that "throughout the months of December and January the running streams are fringed with ice; that snow frequently falls; and that it is necessary every morning to break the ice in the water pots standing in the house". "It is a great pity", Scott wrote to the government, "that the Cassya country is not better known, and that we do not avail ourselves of the obvious advantages it offers".¹⁸ Such discovery led Scott to anticipate further advantages to be derived from engagements with other Khasi chiefs, in the line of one already made with the Khyrim raja. He began thinking in terms of getting suitable lands in the hills, for building sanatoria or cantonments, so as to use profitably the cool and salubrious climate of the hills. He thought that grant

¹⁵ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, no. 10, Scott to Swinton, 24 March, 1824.

¹⁶ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, no. 16, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 21 March 1824.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, nos. 16 and 10, Scott to Swinton, 21 and 24 March, 1824.

of plain lands to the hill chiefs, in exchange, would make them ultimately more dependent on and obedient to the Company as they would be having frequent and intimate communication with the British.¹⁹ So from now onwards, Scott's plan of building the road went simultaneously with his project of erecting buildings for sanatoria.

Scott soon found that his method of getting concessions from the hill chiefs was a satisfactory one. The route which Scott proposed to open from Sylhet began with a rugged ascent through territory belonging to the petty chief of Cherrapunji*, known as Duwan Raja. His territory, two days march in length and one in width, was mostly tableland, 5 to 6,000 feet above sea level. The natural beauty and splendid climate of the place moved Scott so much that he early pressed his desire of exchanging "a portion of the bold and sterile highlands for a slice of the fertile plain below".²⁰ He proposed to improve the road to Assam by Cherrapunji at the government's expense, and to conciliate and secure British influence over the chief by conferring upon him in *zamindari* tenure a small estate near Pandua. The chief was very desirous of possessing this land which Scott understood might be purchased for a very trifling sum. The remainder of the road he planned lay through the territories of Myllem chiefs, formerly dependent upon Khyrim but who had lately separated themselves from that petty state.²¹

Scott, however, could not secure engagements with the chiefs quickly enough to use the road on his march towards Assam with the 23rd Native Infantry. Since a cordial under-

¹⁹ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, no. 16, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 21 March, 1824.

* Cherrapunji, celebrated as the place which has the greatest measured rainfall on the globe, long remained a popular station, and the British government's Headquarters till 1864. The discovery of coal there attracted to it many visitors.

²⁰ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, no. 16, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 21 March 1824. Scott explained later on that he was wrong in calling it sterile.

²¹ B.S.P.C., 2 Apr. 1824, no. 10, Scott to Swinton, 24 March 1824.

standing already subsisted with the raja of Jaintia,²² the route through the latter's territory was considered more practicable.²³ Moreover to ensure the steady advancement of his future plans in the hills Scott was cautious enough to avoid any sudden measures that might create distrust or jealousy on the part of the hill people.²⁴

More than two years later when the war with the Burmese was over, Scott resumed his plan. On 30 November, 1826, the

²² The following was the "separate article" of the treaty concluded between the Company and Raja Ram Singh of Jaintia on March 10, 1824: "Raja Ram Singh engages, that to assist in the war commenced in Assam between the Honourable Company's Troops and those of the King of Ava, he will march a force and attack the enemy to the east of Gowhatty; and the Honourable Company agrees, upon the conquest of Assam, to confer upon the Rajah a part of that Territory proportionate to the extent of his exertions in the common cause." C.U. Aitchison, *Treaties Engagements and Sanads*, Vol. II, p. 165.

²³ See map. 2. facing p. 83 for Scott's route from Sylhet to Nowgong in 1824. This road, known as the Jaintia road, was later on developed and perfected. The improvement work was begun under one Mr. Blechynden in September 1825. But the progress of the work under him was not satisfactory. In the early part he was not physically fit and later he was not able to pull on well either with the Jaintia raja or with the Assamese officers and labourers. On Scott's requests the government appointed Lt. Burlton in 1827 to supervise the work. Burlton who in his capacity of executive officer at Bishwanath had already acquired much experience of the Assamese workmen, started the work with full enthusiasm and by January 1828 built 29 wooden bridges, large and small, over the rivulets. The work was completed before the year ended and in March 1829 Scott submitted the bill, some twenty thousand rupees, which was charged on the accounts of Lower Assam. Scott also suggested the erection of a suspension bridge over the Barapani river as ordinary construction was of no use at the time of extraordinary floods. See B.S.P.C. 25 June, 1824, no. 27. Scott to Swinton 4 June, 1824; B.S.P.C. 30 Sept. 1825, no. 18, Swinton to Scott; B.S.P.C. 24 Nov. 1826 no. 2, 1827, Scott to Swinton, 30 Oct. 1826; B.S.P.C., 16 Nov. 1827 nos. 46-47 Scott to Swinton 5 Sept. 1827; Swinton to Scott 16 Nov., 1827; B.S.P.C. 7 Mar., 1828, nos. 11-12 Scott to Burlton 17 Dec. 1827, Swinton to Scott 17 Dec. 1827; B.P.C. 18 Apr., 1829 nos. 51-53, Scott to Swinton 22 Mar. 1829, Swinton to Scott 18 Apr. 1829.

²⁴ B.S.P.C., 25 June 1824, no. 27, Scott to Swinton, 4 June, 1824.

opportunity came to him to extract a major concession from another powerful Khasi chief—the raja of Nongkhlaio.²⁵ It was a disputed succession which gave Scott his chance. Since June and July 1824 when the route to Assam via Jaintia ceased to be available after the reoccupation of the country about Nowgong and Raha *chowky* by the Burmese, Scott had been trying to open a route via Pandua and Barduar.²⁶ But though Chattar Singh, the Nongkhlaio raja, who held the lowlands of Barduar, was ready to agree to this, his relative Tirut Singh, whose power lay in the hills, contested Chattar Singh's authority over Barduar and prevented the use of the road. In 1826, however, on Chattar Singh's death, Scott announced that he would not grant the investiture of the Barduar to any person whose authority was not fully recognised in the hills as well as in the lowlands, and who was not prepared to grant the same facilities of communication through his territory as the Khasis enjoyed in British Assam and Sylhet. It was at this time, when the question of succession brought about continued disputes between the parties of Tirut and the successors of Chattar, that Scott was invited to mediate. Since Scott had also to discuss the settlement of revenue for certain lands which the raja held under the Assam government,²⁷ he accepted the invitation. It was then unanimously agreed that the pretension of Rajjan Singh—a child of only five years and the brother and the direct heir of Chattar Singh—should be set aside on the ground of minority and that Tirut Singh the next heir, should be elected to the raj, to be succeeded at his death by Rajjan Singh.²⁸ In return for Scott's support of his claims, Raja Tirut Singh agreed to become a British protegee and to give a free passage to British troops through his territory. He also agreed to furnish materials for the construction of a road, against payment, and after its completion to keep it in repair. The raja agreed that in the event of the Honourable Company carrying on hostilities with any other power he

²⁵ B.S.P.C., 2 March 1827, no. 20, Scott to Swinton, 30 Nov. 1826.

²⁶ B.S.P.C., 2 March, 1827, no. 20, Scott to Swinton, 13 Jan., 1827.

²⁷ B.S.P.C., 2 March, 1827, no. 20, Scott to Swinton, 13 Jan., 1827.

²⁸ B.S.P.C., 26 June, 1829, no. 2, Scott to Swinton, 30 May, 1829.

would serve with all his followers as far as the eastward of Kaliabar in Assam. The raja also promised to rule his subjects according to the laws of his country, keeping them contented and to seize and deliver any criminal from British territory taking refuge in his country. In return the British government undertook to protect the raja's country from foreign enemies and to support him against any unjust act or violence of any neighbouring chief.²⁹

Scott had achieved his object, but he had also had the chance to observe the toughness of the hill tribes and the distinctive character of their social organization. They had shown themselves very touchy about their independence, and the raja's assembly, customarily "a more genuine power" than the raja himself, as Scott observed, had been extremely reluctant to grant such favours to the English. Scott found that the meeting which he attended was conducted throughout "with a degree of independence, coolness and propriety which could not have been exceeded under similar circumstances by the inhabitants of the most civilized countries".³⁰ It was due to the strict vigilance of the *sardars* and people, and the latter's alarm at what they had heard of the seizure of bazars in Sylhet district to serve the British army in 1825, that the raja refused to bind himself to provide workmen for the road.³¹ He did undertake partially to make the road and to construct the bridges beyond Nongkhlaio as far as his territories extended towards Assam. Scott, realising the raja's difficult situation, urged the Calcutta Council to believe that the concession given by the raja was not an inadequate exchange for British protection.³²

The hopes of advantage through peaceful penetration into the Khasi hills that Scott had cherished in the early part of

²⁹ B.S.P.C., 2 March, 1827, no. 20, Articles of agreement with Tirut Singh, Scott to Swinton, 30 Nov., 1826; C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-186.

³⁰ B.S.P.C., 2 March, 1827, no. 20, Scott to Swinton, 13 Jan., 1827; A. White, *Memoir*, pp. 34-37. White attended this meeting along with Scott.

³¹ B.S.P.C., 2 March, 1827, no. 20, Scott to Swinton, 13 Jan., 1827.

³² *Ibid.*

1824 seemed to be more realisable after the treaty with Nongkhlaio. Scott reported in January, 1827, that by the establishment of British influence in the Khasi hills the petty chiefs, whose raids disturbed the Sylhet frontier, would be completely overawed and that since the remaining independent Khasi territory was split in two by the recently obtained portions of Nongkhlaio, the recurrence of hostilities and feuds between the different chiefs would be necessarily lessened. The improvement of the country itself was also an evident British interest since it would help to promote the prosperity of the districts of Sylhet and Assam, the produce of the hills being traded for the manufactures of the plains. Considering all these advantages Scott urged the government to approve of his agreement with Tirut Singh and give consent to his immediate plan of building a few bungalows for his proposed sanatoria at Nongkhlaio.³³ The government was pleased to approve of Scott's measures, although it commented that the settlement would have been more satisfactory if Tirut had contributed more efficiently to the completion of the road.³⁴ Tirut was honoured with a State palankeen—called *Kekura-dola*—the gift which used to be given to persons of superior rank during the Ahom reign.³⁵ In 1828 the road construction work began in right earnest under the supervision of Lieutenants Bedingfield and Burlton. A Company of sepoy and other labourers from the plains were employed for the purpose and Tirut maintained his friendly disposition by supplying necessary provisions.³⁶

2. *Khasi Opposition*

Despite this seemingly auspicious start, Scott's plans did not go smoothly. Troubles came one after another. Soon after

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ B.S.P.C., 2 March, 1827, no. 22, Swinton to Scott, 2 March, 1827.

³⁵ B.S.P.C., 13 Sept., 1827, no. 16, Scott to Swinton, 8 Aug., 1827.

³⁶ For the course of this road, the marks of which are said to be still traceable, see Hamlet Bareh, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-2.

the Nongkhlaio agreement he found himself involved in the “intriguing tactics” of the hill chiefs. What Scott was pleased to call “intriguing tactics” was really the assertion of claims by the Khasi chiefs over foot-hill villages on the Assam side of the hills. These claims were disputed by the British appointed *malguzars* of Lower Assam. One typical case was the claim by the chiefs of Myllem and Khyrim over certain parts of Dimarua, including all the lowlands up to the river Kallang in Kamrup district. Their claim was resisted by the *sazawal* who was collecting the revenues for the British government, and the chiefs therefore, in August, 1828, sent a body of their dependants to stop the *sazawal's* collection, to extort contributions of grain from the villages and to carry off to the hills those inhabitants who opposed them. Scott who was busy on the plains of Lower Assam at this time, exploring more land revenue possibilities, tried to study this disputed case without being influenced by his recent friendly relationship with the hill chiefs. His study revealed that about thirty years previous to the present dispute, in the same district of Dimarua a pretender to the chieftaincy of Dimarua had been introduced by the Khasis who had been finally expelled by the Assamese after a few weeks, and that since then the latter had been enjoying quiet possession of the land.³⁷ Scott's response to such attacks upon British revenues and British subjects was, therefore, to send a party of Rungpore Light Infantry and Goalpara sibandi sepoy to expel the Khasi gangs from Dimarua district. Messengers were also sent to Barmanik, the chief of Myllem warning him of the consequences of his conduct and requiring him to withdraw his people and state his claims through the proper channels. Scott was secretly informed that this chief of Myllem had also sent messengers to the neighbouring hill rajas requiring their assistance in case of major strife against the British.³⁸

Although Scott had witnessed the political skill and expertise of the Khasis in their tribal assemblies, and had found many of them well disposed, he had the lowest opinion of

³⁷ B.S.P.C., 5 Sept., 1828, no. 11, Scott to Swinton, 8 Aug., 1828.

³⁸ B.S.P.C., 5 Sept., 1828, no. 12, Scott to Swinton, 8 Aug., 1828.

the hill tribes' behaviour towards the plains dwellers. All the hill tribes, he held, were equally cruel and barbarous. Referring to the past history of Assam Scott mentioned that under the Assam government revolutions of the present nature had been common occurrence in the estates bordering on the hills and murders, the putting out of eyes, and other cruelties were ordinarily practised with impunity upon each other by the petty contending factions. The ruling power had seldom possessed sufficient means to vindicate its authority by penetrating into the hills and securing the persons guilty of such offences. The long continuance of this state of things had naturally generated a spirit of intrigue in local officials and chiefs which could not be at once eradicated and which still induced them to look to the old means of regaining their situations when dismissed, by endeavouring to displace the raja and secure the favour of his successor.³⁹

Scott was for bold action. Experience having so frequently shown the impolicy of allowing the border tribes to make any encroachment, since this merely led them to commit still more flagrant misdeeds, he recommended a formal demand upon the chief of Myllem for the amount collected by his people from the *pargana* of Dimarua. If that failed, Scott suggested that it should be followed up by a closure of the markets, and if that too should fail, by the march of a party of troops to his principal village which was situated one long day's journey south of Nongkhlaio. The country of Myllem chief being quite open and the inhabitants numbering only four to six hundred fighting men with no better arms than bows and arrows, Scott thought that a single company would be quite sufficient to bring him to reason. If need be he proposed to call upon the raja of Jaintia and Nongkhlaio to furnish their contingents in support in accordance with the treaties they had entered into with the British government.⁴⁰ The Government believing in his judgement and discretion, on account of his "long experience of the ways and habits of

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ B.S.P.C., 5 Sept., 1828, no. 12, Scott to Swinton, 8 Aug., 1828.

the border tribes", authorised him to carry out his measures.⁴¹

Scott obviously minimised the power of the Khasis and treated the incident of Dimarua as an outcome of the natural evil propensities of "savages".⁴² No sort of organized rebellion was ever expected from the Khasis, and the existing trouble was considered as merely local. In the remaining few months of the year 1828 therefore, Scott busied himself advising his assistants on the various administrative problems which had cropped up in the newly annexed territory of Assam. Capt. Neufville gave him information about the assembly of a body of insurgent ex-nobility in Upper Assam⁴³ and in the autumn of 1828 Capt. White of the troubles given by the Bhutias in the Buriguma duar.⁴⁴ In April 1829, after supervising the construction of buildings at Nongkhlaio,⁴⁵ Scott went in person to Cherrapunji, to make arrangements with Raja Duwan Singh about the grant of land in his territory for the road,⁴⁶

⁴¹ B.S.P.C., 5 Sept., 1828, no. 24, Swinton to Scott, 5 Sept., 1828.

⁴² B.S.P.C., 5 Sept., 1828, no. 12, Scott to Swinton, 8 Aug., 1828.

⁴³ B.S.P.C., 4 Dec., 1828, no. 10, Neufville to Scott, 22 Oct., 1828.

⁴⁴ B.S.P.C., 4 Dec., 1828, no. 12, White to Scott, 28 Oct., 1828.

⁴⁵ On 24 March, 1829, Scott informed Calcutta that a bungalow consisting of six small and one large room, affording accommodation for two families or four bachelors, had been built at the cost of Sa. Rs. 3,923. He also reported that there was an adjoining house of an inferior description, which if necessary, might be fitted up for the reception of an equal number of visitors.

B.S.P.C., 18 Apr., 1829, nos. 55-56, Scott to Swinton, 24 March, 1829.

⁴⁶ The three point arrangement with the raja was thus :

- (1) The raja would receive as much land in the plains near Pandua as might be taken by government in the hills, and that he would be allowed to establish a bazar, which should be under his authority.
- (2) The raja would help in every direction towards the building of the road.
- (3) Natives of Bengal committing offences within the limits of the sanatorium, would be tried by British government; if

and to supervise its construction by prisoners from Assam.⁴⁷ It was while at Cherrapunji that on 7 April the news came of the massacre at Nongkhlaio of two Europeans, Lt. Bedingfield and Lt. Burlton, along with several natives, having killed by the Khasis.⁴⁸

Contemporary Englishmen in Assam described the massacre of Nongkhlaio as an incident arising from a stupid remark made by a Bengali *chaprasi*. In a dispute with the Khasis, prior to Scott's coming up, the man had threatened them with his master's vengeance and had plainly told them that it entered into his master's plans to subject them to taxation.⁴⁹ Scott certainly could not find any more serious reason behind the outbreak, which he declared was "not easy to comprehend"⁵⁰ since he thought Tirut was friendly to the British. However, he admitted that no sooner had he settled the difference between the parties of Chattar and Tirut than "fresh schism broke out", the inhabitants of one of the principal villages, called Lungbri, taking the part of Rajjan Singh, the minor brother and direct heir of Chattar Singh, and seceding altogether from Tirut's authority. The aggrieved party had also gone so far as to stop travellers on the road.⁵¹ Tirut had his own grievances too. Scott reported that on obtaining possession of the lowland estates granted in return for the site for a road and sanatorium, Tirut found "his unreasonable expectations of enjoying a large profit and arbitrary sway over his *ryots*, disappointed". Because of his complete ignorance of the British system of revenue collection,

beyond, by the raja, but severe punishment would be given only after consultation with the Agent of the Governor-General.

B.S.P.C., 1 May, 1828, no. 38, Scott to Swinton, 19 Apr., 1829.

⁴⁷ B.S.P.C., 17 Oct., 1829, nos. 4-5, Scott to Swinton, 22 Sept., 1828.

⁴⁸ B.S.P.C., 25 Apr., 1829, nos. 9-14, White to Swinton, 8 and 25 Apr., 1829. The massacre took place on the 4th and 5th of April, 1829, See White's *Memoir*, App., 22, Scott to Lamb, 10 Apr., 1829.

⁴⁹ A. White, *Memoir*, pp. 41-42; A. B. Lish, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

⁵⁰ B.S.P.C., 26 June, 1829, nos. 2-3, Scott to Swinton, 30 May, 1829.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

and “his obstinacy in refusing the assistance offered to him by an experienced agent”, Tirut failed to raise sufficient money even to pay the government dues.⁵²

Tirut’s own version however, was very different. He complained that at the time of the agreement the understanding was given that he would not be asked for the revenue of the land given to him. But Scott argued that “although no regular annual rent in money was levied under the Assam government from his [Tirut’s] predecessors, they were liable to perform service to the state with the whole of their *paiks*. They had, besides been invariably obliged to pay a fine to the *Barphukan* to obtain the investiture of the estate”. The amount raised in former times under these heads had “exceeded the whole revenue at which *duar* was now assessed”.⁵³

Whatever the truth of Scott’s assertions the chief certainly felt that he had been deceived. He also felt betrayed in another incident. The raja of Rani, a border area in the Kamrup district of Lower Assam, who was in dispute with Tirut, had threatened to retaliate upon Nongkhlaio people passing through his territory to the markets in Assam. Tirut had thereupon turned to his new British ally for help—only to be told none would be given “unless he first made what reparation was in his power for the murders and robbery he had committed on the Rani people”. Moreover, when Tirut decided to take matters into his own hands, and assembled a force apparently to attack the lowlands of Rani, he found that at the request of the Rani raja Captain White had sent a body of sepoy to keep the peace.⁵⁴ No wonder that to Mahindhar Barooah, an honoured prisoner⁵⁵ captured along with Lt. Bedingfield, Tirut indignantly explained: “Booroowah Mr. Scott formerly made friendship with me saying ‘your enemy is Company’s enemy’, and that he would relin-

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ B.S.P.C., 26 June, 1829, nos. 1-2, Scott to Swinton, 30 May, 1829.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; B.S.P.C., 25 Apr., 1829, no. 9, White to Swinton, 8 Apr., 1829.

⁵⁵ From Mahidhar Barooah’s deposition it is clear that Tirut treated this Assamese officer with respect.

quish the Barduar revenue both in money and *paiks*. He has not done it and he has the wish to give troops to my enemy the Rani Raja to assist him against me'." ⁵⁶

Thus it is clear that Scott's plan to exchange portion of "the bold and sterile land in the hills for slices of fertile plain below" was most untactfully handled. The supposed bargain offered to the hill tribes proved not in the least advantageous to them, their newfound ally deserted them in their hour of need, and rumour had it, intended to subjugate and tax them. While Scott was hearing of conspiracies by Myllem chief, White was informed that Tirut had engineered a large-scale plan to drive the English from Assam, and had invited the ex-*raja*, Chandra Kanta to co-operate in the enterprise. ⁵⁷

The massacre of Nongkhlaio was a terrible shock to Scott. He not only lost two very valuable officers, but now also began to fear that the incident might induce the government to suspend proceedings regarding the sanatorium. He also feared that after this terrifying event the wives of the European officers would not fancy visiting the hills. ⁵⁸ He became revengeful when he came to know the details of the cruelties meted out to his friends Bedingfield and Burlton. On 6 May, 1829 he wrote to Lamb from Mairong: "I never could have expected Tirut Sing to act so mad a part; and regret extremely that he did not try it before I and Beadon left the place, as I am perfectly satisfied, from what I have seen of Cassya tactics, that, with our fowling pieces alone, and without the aid of the 15 *sepahees* who accompanied us to Churra, we could have defeated Teerut's gang, and burnt every village in the country". ⁵⁹ Scott, obviously, had a very poor opinion

⁵⁶ B.S.P.C., 26 June, 1829, no. 3, Scott to Swinton, 30 May, 1829. Mahidhar Barooah's deposition taken on the 17th May, 1829, in the Fauzdari Adalat of Gauhati.

⁵⁷ To counteract this design of Tirut, White summoned Raja Chandra Kanta and others to Gauhati. White wrote that on their arrival he would suggest to the *raja* that "as a well-wisher to the Company and to prevent his name being abused, it would be desirable for him to proceed to Goalpara."

B.S.P.C., 8 May 1829, nos. 9-10, White to Swinton, 14 Apr. 1829.

⁵⁸ White's *Memoir*, App. 22, Scott to Lamb, 10 Apr., 1829.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* App. 25, Scott to Lamb, 6 May, 1829.

of the Khasis' fighting power. "More arrant cowards, after all their boastings", Scott wrote, "I never saw, nor a country in which the bow and arrow were so entirely useless, when opposed to fine arms. The only places in which they can fight are holes under the rocks. . . They had a lesson long ago, on the plains, but still had the folly to suppose themselves invincible in the hills; where in reality, as compared with the lowlands, the chances are five to one in our favour".⁶⁰

British retaliation thus began immediately after the massacre of Nongkhlaio Capt. White with forty sepoy of the Rungpore Light Infantry marched for the hills in the early morning of 7 April, 1829. A few days later Scott was planning to fix a strong military post at Nongkhlaio or some other place to teach the "savages" "to feel that the British power, unlike the feeble and distracted government which preceded it in Assam, is both able and determined to maintain its authority and punish with promptitude those who offend against it".⁶¹ He administered "retributive justice"⁶² by capturing and destroying the Khasi villages one after another, at the same time seizing their grain.⁶³ The strongholds of such ring leaders as Barmanik, were burnt down completely.⁶⁴ A force of Garo mountaineers, chosen for their hardiness and ability to withstand the arduousness of a hill campaign were sent in under Mirza Bandula, a part of the Sibandi corps and forty armed shams, and a sum of one thousand rupees was offered for the capture of Tirut.⁶⁵

The vigorous policy of reprisals, including the ruthless destruction of villages, ordered by Scott, received the approval of the Supreme Government. They commented that "what-

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* For Scott's personal encounter with the Khasi rebels and his own superior fighting and strategical skill see App. 5, White's *Memoir*, Lt. Vetch to Col. Watson, 9 Dec., 1831.

⁶¹ B.S.P.C., 25 Apr., 1829, no. 13, Scott to Swinton, 14 Apr., 1829.

⁶² B.S.P.C., 15 May, 1829, no. 11, Swinton to Scott, 15 May, 1829.

⁶³ B.S.P.C., 1 May, 1829, nos. 40-43, Scott to Swinton, 17 Apr., 1829;

B.S.P.C., 15 May, 1829, no. 10, Capt. Lister to Scott, 26 Apr., 1829.

⁶⁴ B.S.P.C., 26 June, 1829, nos. 2-3, Scott to Swinton, 30 May, 1829.

ever the original sources of Raja Tirut's enmity may have been, that attack was not provoked by any act of violence or oppression on the part of the unfortunate sufferers"—and they expressed the righteous hope that "the display of our ability to punish those who have ventured to offend against us to set our power at defiance will have awakened these rude and barbarous tribes to a proper sense of their own weakness and the danger they incur by provoking our just resentment".⁶⁶

The result of Scott's measures was speedy. In the beginning of May Capt. Lister with his detachment succeeded in subduing many villages including such strongholds as Lunggrin, Mairong and Nongkhlaio and Tirut had to move from one hiding place to another.⁶⁷ By September many rebel leaders, including Barmanik of Myllem and Jabbar Singh of Rambrai wished to come to terms,⁶⁸ agreeing to pay to the government a fine of four thousand rupees and to cede the right of quarrying lime stone on any part of the course of the Borapani river.⁶⁹ By April 1830 a vast tract had been subdued, stretching up the Assam valley, which included the whole of Myllem, and its dependencies of Rambrai, Myriaw and Nongkhlaio, except for a pocket lying between Nongkhlaio and Myllem.⁷⁰ They had also occupied certain small areas on the southern or Bengal side of the mountains, Momlu, Lylanchu, Mosmy, Superpunji, and Byrong.⁷¹ For the administration of all these occupied parts of the Khasi hills Scott proposed that the former chiefs should be reinstalled, but under *sanads* granted by the government. The chiefs should be liable to punishment for treason or resistance to

⁶⁵ B.S.P.C., 5 June 1829, nos. 6-7, Scott to Swinton, 21 May 1829.

⁶⁶ B.S.P.C., 15 May, 1829, no. 9, Scott to Swinton, 27 Apr., 1829; B.S.P.C., 26 June, 1829, no. 4, Swinton to Scott, 26 June, 1829.

⁶⁷ B.S.P.C., 22 May, 1829, no. 1, Scott to Swinton, 5 May, 1829.

⁶⁸ B.S.P.C., 28 Aug. 1829, no. 21, Scott to Swinton, 14 Aug., 1829.

⁶⁹ B.S.P.C., 18 Sept., 1829, no. 1, Scott to Swinton, 5 Sept., 1829.

⁷⁰ These lands belonged to twelve different lyndows or confederated chiefs of Sohiong etc. who remained neutral during the last disturbances.

⁷¹ B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 49, Scott to Swinton, 9 Apr., 1830.

British authority and to removal in the case of continued opposition. In such an event the leading persons in the country would be required to assemble and elect new chiefs, subject to the approval of the British government. The restored chiefs were to be entrusted with the administration of justice for all but capital offences. These he proposed, might be tried before an assembly of chiefs to be held twice a year when he went to hold the circuit at Sylhet. He proposed that in the present state of the country they should not be subjugated to the payment of any revenue. Instead he proposed to impose upon them fines equivalent to the expense and trouble they had occasioned, five thousand rupees from Barmanik, three thousand from Jabbar Singh and two thousand from the raja of Myriaw. The Nongkhlaio district was restored to the minor Rajjan Singh upon the same terms. Finally some of the most elevated and fertile spots were set apart, under direct British control, for future use.⁷² Scott's measures were whole-heartedly supported by the government, the greatest reliance being put on his local knowledge and experience in regard to the character, disposition, habits and usages of the hill tribes.⁷³

The complete subjugation of the refractory Khasis was achieved only in 1833,⁷⁴ when the long and harassing war was brought to a close. That, of course, was two years after David Scott's death. But Scott had succeeded during his life time, in bringing peace to almost all the hills.⁷⁵ The outrages, murder and depredations which occurred in the last year of his career (1831) were restricted to the *duars*, such as Pantam, Bogy and Bongaon, where the Khasis were joined by the Garos.⁷⁶ The cause of these late troubles was the strict control now exercised over the *duars* by the British, who thereby deprived the Khasis of the illicit emoluments they

⁷² B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 49, Scott to Swinton, 9 Apr., 1830.

⁷³ B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 50, Swinton to Scott, 7 May, 1830.

⁷⁴ P.R.T., Gurdon, *op. cit.*, p. XVI; *Physical and Political Geography*, p. 87.

⁷⁵ *Bengal: Past and Present*, Vol. XI, 1829, p. 108.

⁷⁶ B.P.C., 11 Feb., 1831, no. 27, Scott to Swinton, 12 Jan., 1831.

had been in the habit of levying under the Assam government in the form of ceremonial and other illegal cesses.⁷⁷

The only course which Scott thought could advantageously be pursued in such cases, was that of reducing to subjugation the tribes bordering on the *duars* who had been perpetrating the outrages and who were at present independent of British authority. Scott proposed the establishment amongst them of the same sort of internal government as had been maintained amongst the Garos of the North-East parts of Rungpur since 1817.⁷⁸ Scott was pretty certain that the *duars* would pay double the existing revenue, about a thousand rupees if they were secured against the aggression of the hill tribes. He therefore employed *sham* musketeers, under the command of the Ensign Brodie who succeeded by April 1831 in subduing the marauding tribes of the *duars*.⁷⁹ The reduction of the whole of the principal chiefs to the westward of Nongkhlaio was thus accomplished after a lightning three weeks campaign⁸⁰ and although death of the man⁸¹ who had

⁷⁷ B.P.C., 11 Feb., 1831, no. 28, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 17 Jan., 1831.

Under the Assam government the estates forming the *duars* had not paid any regular annual revenue but large sums were extracted on the occasion of a new chiefs' accession, raised by levies on the people, while the tribes were bound to furnish *paiks* for the public service. These labour demands were commuted to a money payment, a few working *paiks* only being retained for local purposes. But although the revenue was fixed at a very low rate and reductions made in favour of the chiefs in some cases amounting to nearly fifty percent upon the jama, few of them had been able to fulfil their engagements owing to their total incapacity for business and the roguery of their servants. Their failure led to the temporary attachment of several of their estates, a proceeding which ultimately led to catastrophe.

⁷⁸ B.P.C., 11 Feb., 1831, no. 28, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 17 Jan., 1831.

⁷⁹ B.S.P.C., 20 May, 1831, no. 35, Scott to Swinton, 29 Apr., 1831 and Brodie's report, 6 Apr., 1831.

⁸⁰ B.S.P.C., 20 May, 1831, no. 36, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 29 Apr., 1831.

⁸¹ Brodie died in the last stages of this campaign. About his character, courage and determination Scott wrote thus: "It is a

struck them with such terror might tempt some of them to break their agreements, Scott was sure that in the main they had a sufficient lesson not to repeat the act.⁸² The successful conduct of the campaign by Brodie with a few irregulars convinced Scott of the suitability of his similar measures on the Sadiya frontier. He wrote to Swinton thus: "With a party of forty-two men Ensign Brodie had in fact, nearly accomplished in three weeks, what several companies of Sepahees were unable to attempt in two months; and it appears to me, that the successful result of this small expedition becomes of no trifling consequence, when it is considered that we have on this frontier a boundary line of about one thousand and five hundred miles in extent, the whole of which is subject to similar depredations to those that led to the late military operations in Assam, while owing to the unhealthiness of the climate and other local circumstances it may fairly be considered indefensible by means of our regular troops."⁸³

grievous thing to lose such a noble spirited officer in such a way. But he may be truly said not to have died in vain, since he has clearly indicated the means that we should in future adopt in the petty warfare that may be expected occasionally to take place with the rude tribes encircling a frontier of one thousand and five hundred miles in extent...

...I am inclined to count the high character, that he has established amongst our Cassya friends and foes of European courage, activity and perseverance, qualities which they are naturally led to value very highly and which when conjoined, as in the present instance, with a kind and conciliatory demeanour, would have given this young man a most powerful influence over their minds and rendered him a very efficient instrument for their ultimate reclamation. This loss could not indeed be adequately supplied were the whole Army picked for the purpose since they were united in him in an extraordinary degree of personal activity, a complete contempt for privation of every kind, and an enthusiasm in favour of the mountaineers and high esteem for the bright part of their character, that would have enabled him completely to win their hearts".

B.P.C., 20 May, 1831, no. 36, Scott's private letter to Swinton, 29 Apr., 1831.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

From Scott's military operations in the Khasi hills and his opinions about the Khasi rebels two things emerge with sufficient clarity : that he failed to appreciate the independence of the Khasis and that in a conflict between the strong and the weak he inclined more towards the latter. The first is partly explainable due to the cold-blooded murder of Lts. Bedingfield and Burlton by the Khasis, which he considered to be an act of sheer cowardice. The second can perhaps be taken as yet another aspect of his paternalism. It remained his firm conviction, all through, that the hill tribes were basically very cruel people. But in the case of the Garos when he discovered that the latter had been more wronged by the unscrupulous *zamindars* of the Bengal plains, he was all in sympathy with them. His poor opinion of the *zamindars* and his intense dislike of the permanent settlement itself, might have helped him to be objective in the case of the Garos. In the conflict between the Khasis and the Assam *malguzars* Scott obviously took the side of the latter. He did make enquiries about the validity of the hill chiefs' claim to the border revenue. But the fear of losing some amount from the revenue of Lower Assam and the sufferings of the Assamese border villages at the hands of the Khasis seemed to have influenced him more in taking the steps he took which ultimately created doubts in the minds of the hill chief about the nature of the British friendship.

3. *Plan of European Military Colonies*

The insurrection and rebellions could not suppress Scott's indomitable zeal for developing the Khasi hills. Indeed, he went beyond his original ideas for developing sanatoria for invalid European soldiers in the Khasi hills, to the grandiose imperial vision of planting European military colonies therein.

When Scott had first drawn attention to the cool, healthy climate of the hills, he had thought of them as useful for sana-

toria but otherwise barren.⁸⁴ But by the beginning of 1830 they had been found suitable for growing many European crops, and larger uses began to suggest themselves.⁸⁵ As early as in July 1827 he discovered that comparatively speaking, Cherrapunji was a healthier place than Nongkhlaio and planned to bring about further improvement to that place.⁸⁶ An agreement had already been reached with the Duwan Raja of Cherrapunji in September 1829 by which the raja agreed to cede a portion of his territory, east of Cherrapunji, for building houses by the Company⁸⁷ and meanwhile three houses were built there, capable of being converted, at little expense, into barracks for forty European invalids. The friendliness of the people of Cherrapunji⁸⁸ had much impressed him, and he therefore hoped that he might also be able to canton a company of European troops there, though the land had been given on the understanding that it was for the reception of invalids.⁸⁹

For this rather underhand move Scott gave two reasons—that by the presence of a European company “an impression would be made upon the mountaineers, in regard to further resistance, which could not perhaps be produced by any other means”, and that “it would restore a more complete degree of subordination and discipline amongst the native troops on this frontier than has hitherto prevailed”.⁹⁰ In further explanation of the importance of the latter reason Scott cited the symptoms of disorder among the sepoy in Assam, displayed at various times in the last few years. The conduct of the 46th

⁸⁴ B.P.C., 7 May, 1830, no. 49, Scott to Swinton, 9 Apr., 1830.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ White's *Memoir*, App. 15, Scott to Lamb, 18 July, 1827.

⁸⁷ C. U. Aitchison, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁸⁸ Scott had special respect for the people of Cherra. The Khasis of Cherrapunji saved his life and he was so grateful that he never violated the compact then arrived at that “the independence of the Khasis of Cherra should always be respected”.

G. Bertrand, *Secret Lands Where Women Reign*, p. 157; White's *Memoir*, App. 22.

⁸⁹ B.P.C., 18 June, 1830, no. 52, Scott to Swinton, 4 June, 1830.

⁹⁰ B.S.P.C., 16 Apr., 1830, no. 34, Scott to Swinton, 12 March, 1830.

Regiment at Rangpur in 1825;⁹¹ of the Assam Local Corps in August and September of 1828, and that of the detachment of the 54th under the command of Lt. Comie in May 1829, had made the matter so serious that this second point could not be overlooked.⁹²

More detailed plans soon followed in swift succession, and meanwhile Scott's ideas were strongly advocated by Secretary Swinton to the governor-general-in-council. Stressing Scott's idea of teaching the native soldiers the lessons of discipline and obedience, Swinton observed "our only force in Sylhet is composed of Manipurians. These men have always behaved well and on one occasion in particular gave strong proof of their fidelity when tempered with by a chief of their own tribe. But it may not be prudent to trust too implicitly to this feeling of loyalty".⁹³

Scott had also detailed to Swinton his proposals for a sanatorium. Cattle might economically be purchased in the breeding districts and then driven in large herds up into the hills, "where in addition to the advantages of good pasturage for the cattle the manure produced would render it practicable to raise abundant crops of vegetables for the use of the troops".⁹⁴ To take charge of this operation he recommended Fenwick, who was already accustomed to dealing with the hill peoples.⁹⁵ These measures, too, Swinton pressed upon the

⁹¹ On 15 October, 1825, about 37 men of the Grenadier Company of the 46th Regiment stationed at Rangpur approached the pay havildar and stated that if they were ordered to march towards Assam they would refuse, because of the mortality from sickness there. It was only through Col. Richards' personal influence that the sepoys agreed to march and it was also due to him that the death sentences against the ringleaders were not executed. See A. Barat, *The Bengal Native Infantry*, pp. 221-222.

⁹² B.S.P.C., 16 Apr., 1830, nos. 3-4, Scott to Swinton, 12 March, 1830.

⁹³ B.P.C., 18 June, 1830, no. 57, Swinton's note, 15 June, 1830.

⁹⁴ B.P.C., 25 June, 1830, no. 44, Scott to Swinton, 11 June, 1830.

⁹⁵ This Fenwick was the same Fenwick who had shown keen interest in Scott's mission centre for the Garos. As that venture had fallen through eventually, Scott perhaps wanted to use his agricultural

Council, urging that there should be “no obstacles for a fair trial of the experiment and a steady officer in command of 20 or 30 invalids with an assistant surgeon should be sent up in boats to the foot of the hills from which they would reach the sanatorium in one day’s march”.⁹⁶

A few days later on 24 June, 1830, Swinton placed before the Council all of Scott’s correspondence, public and private, regarding his plans for the hills. Scott had assured him that forty European soldiers could easily be kept supplied at Cherrapunji⁹⁷: provisions could be brought by boat from Sylhet for no more than five annas a maund, while black cattle in excellent condition could be brought on the spot for eight to ten rupees a head, and cattle of an inferior description for much less at the foot of the hills. Scott also reported that potatoes, turnips and beetroot could be produced in such abundance in the higher regions that they could be profitably used for feeding cattle during the winter months. Wheat was found to thrive and judging from the results of some experiments the land was considered probably capable of producing opium at a cheaper rate and of a better quality than in any other part of the Company’s territory.⁹⁸

It would seem that these assertions about the agricultural

and horticultural expertise in this new project. In fact as early as in July, 1827 when Scott was planning to improve the road from Nongkhlaio to Cherra by means of a party of Assamese convicts he was also thinking in terms of putting Fenwick in charge of the improvement works in Cherrapunji. See White’s *Memoir*, App. 15, Scott to Lamb, 18 July, 1827.

⁹⁶ B.P.C., 18 June, 1830, no. 57, Swinton’s note of 15 June, 1830.

⁹⁷ In Scott’s letter of 9 April, 1830 to Swinton he described Myllem as yet another healthy place. The tract comprised about twenty to thirty square miles of the most elevated portion of the country. This he thought would be a most advantageous site for a cantonment for European troops “the ground very tolerably level and the soil apparently capable of producing the European grains, fruits and vegetables as well as of affording good pasturage for the cattle.”

B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 2, Swinton’s note of 24 June, 1830.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

capabilities of the hills were based upon experiment, for Scott had privately established a farm at Mairong, run with government convict labour, to ascertain, upon a larger scale what could be grown. This venture he had begun without government's sanction, for on 4 June, 1830, he applied for the waiving of the restriction upon land holding by British officers and for retrospective approval for this use of convict labour.⁹⁹

Scott also suggested that experiments should be undertaken to discover whether horses suitable for military purposes could be bred in the Khasi hills more cheaply than was practicable elsewhere. In the Nongkhlaio and Myllem districts he saw several hundred square miles of good pasture land, unoccupied and likely to remain so, which although not rich, were quite suitable for breeding black cattle and horses. "The object of the experiment would not be" Scott said, "to breed horses of the best description since such will bear the expense of housing and constant attendance, but to ascertain whether cattle fit for military service could be bred at a much cheaper rate than is elsewhere practicable". He proposed that a stallion and a sufficient number of young brood mares should be sent by water to Sylhet so that they could be kept in the neighbourhood of Mairong where after being acclimatised they could "be turned loose in parks or even without enclosures with a few sheds for shelter during rainy weather".¹⁰⁰ In a private letter to Swinton Scott observed: "The object of being independent of foreign supply for horses is one of such consequence that I should suppose Government would be disposed to try any experiment that holds out a reasonable chance of effecting it, and I must say that of all the countries I have seen in India including the Tirhoot and present stud districts I think this by far the most promising". Scott was so eager for the experiment that he

⁹⁹ B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 2, Scott to Swinton, 4 June, 1830; B.P.C., 13 Aug., 1830, no. 65, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 17 July, 1830. It should be mentioned that along with some other vegetables potato too was first introduced by Scott in the Khasi hills.

¹⁰⁰ B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 2, Scott to Swinton, 4 June, 1830.

even promised to undertake four superintending visits a year to the place if the plan were authorised.¹⁰¹

Before the Government's decision on Scott's proposals a party of experts visited Cherrapunji and inspected the work done by Scott for invalid centres. Scott had not only built accommodation for forty invalids, but had also put up two small cottages, to be hired by officers or by private individuals. He was very hopeful about government's approval and on 20 May, 1829 he wrote to his friend Lamb: "A very favourable report made by Fisher and Tucker on the country about Churra Poonjee, I am in hopes, that Government will now take some decisive steps for the establishment of a Sanatary [*Sic*] and I have written to recommend, that a Surgeon be appointed to take charge, and carry into effect whatever arrangements may be necessary to render it speedily and extensively available to the public".¹⁰² As in the case of the Garo mission Scott was very choosy about the type of person to be appointed as surgeon. "Much will, however depend", he wrote to Lamb, "upon the person who may be appointed to superintendent it, as he must not only be of good medical repute, but also capable of keeping the visitors, or their followers, in order; mediating any differences that may arise between them and the fiery mountaineers; and whatever else may be required to give efficacy to the plan".¹⁰³ Clearly, as in the case of the missionary, here too he needed not just a medicalman but a medicalman-cum-diplomat. Scott was, in fact, inducing Lamb to join him in the venture. "In your hands", Scott wrote, "I know the experiment would have a fair trial, while, to Lady visitors, Mrs. L's presence would prove a powerful means of attraction; and probably soon collect all that seems wanting to render the place a delectable residence, an agreeable society".¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 2, from Swinton's note on Scott's letter, 24 June, 1830.

¹⁰² White's *Memoir*, App. 9, Scott to Lamb, 20 May, [1829].

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Scott's hopes came true. To most of his measures Government approval was granted. Mr. Fenwick was appointed superintendent, surveyor and commissariat agent for the invalid centre, at two hundred rupees a month. The Bengal commissariat was instructed, in conjunction with Fenwick, to provide a supply of rum, tea, sugar and other necessaries for forty European invalids. By a resolution of 29 June, 1830, these were ordered to be selected from the artillery at Dum-dum and sent by water, without delay, to the sanatorium at Cherrapunji. The officer commanding the party was placed entirely under the orders of Scott, who was to guide his conduct towards the chief and people of Cherrapunji. With the party was also sent a medical officer, Assistant-Surgeon Rhodes, who was to keep a regular meteorological journal, and to watch and report on the effects of the climate on the health of the men under his charge.¹⁰⁵

Scott's plans for establishing a European military cantonment were certainly a topic of interest to the Calcutta Council for this was the time when men like Bentinck and Metcalfe were giving serious thought to the task of strengthening the European hold on British India. In October, 1829, Metcalfe thought exactly in the same way as Scott did, when he opined that "the most obvious method of improvement but that hitherto much disputed, is the admission of Europeans to settle and hold property in India. Their settlement has never been entirely prohibited, and latterly has been facilitated and encouraged; but the removal of the remaining restrictions on their lawfully acquiring and holding property is necessary; and for their satisfaction the cessation of the power possessed by the Government of sending them out of the country is indispensable".¹⁰⁶ Lord Bentinck himself was unhappy about "the disproportion between the European and Native army" which, according to him, was "quite un-

¹⁰⁵ B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 1, Minute by the Governor-General, W.C. Bentinck concurred and signed by Dalhousie and W.B. Bayley, 26 June, 1830.

¹⁰⁶ Bentinck Papers, PwJf 2479. Extract from Sir Charles Metcalfe's Minute of 11 Oct., 1829.

intelligible in point of policy".¹⁰⁷ Lord Bentinck approved of Scott's plan to establish a stud farm in the hills, and he also sanctioned the leasing of further houses to private individuals. But though whole-heartedly behind the invalid station, he ignored, for the time being, the question of posting a European force in cantonment at Cherrapunji. Rather he pinned his hope of establishing control and discipline upon the presence of the European invalids and the belief that "unshackled by the prejudices of caste, the Cossya Highlanders may readily amalgamate with the European commanders and their physical temperament may better qualify them to serve in the same ranks".¹⁰⁸

In all this Bentinck was supported by his councillors Bayley and Dalhousie, the C-in-C. But Charles Metcalfe, also of Council, took a diametrically opposite view. He thought most of Scott's proposals were premature, except for his plans to station a native force at Sylhet and to establish a European cantonment in the Khasi hills.¹⁰⁹ Metcalfe, as we have mentioned earlier, had been thinking seriously since 1829 about the fate of the British empire in India. In October of that year he reminded the government of the disparity between the Company's native and European army and its consequences: "Our whole real strength consists in the few European Regiments, speaking comparatively, that are scattered singly over the vast space of subjugated India. That is the only portion of our soldiery whose hearts are with us, and whose constancy can be relied on in the hour of trial. All our native establishments, military or civil are the followers of fortune. They serve us for their livelihood, and generally serve us well...but in their inward feelings they partake more or less of the universal disaffection, which prevails against us, not from bad government, but from natural

¹⁰⁷ W.C. Bentinck's marginal notes on Metcalfe's minute of 11 Oct., 1829, Bentinck Papers, PwJf, 2479.

¹⁰⁸ B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 1, W.C. Bentinck's Minute, 26 June, 1830; Bentinck Papers, PwJf, 2791, 1830.

¹⁰⁹ B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 3, Metcalfe's Minute, 2 July, 1830.

and irresistible antipathy".¹¹⁰ Metcalfe therefore commenting that he would rather see "efficient soldiers sent to that country than invalids", argued that a cantonment would be 'entirely unobjectionable and highly desirable for the purpose of giving confidence to our well affected subjects on that frontier, where considerable alarm prevails apparently from the want of sufficient force". He could think of only one drawback in pushing a European force into the Khasi hills : that "if a force of that description be posted for the purpose of overawing the native inhabitants the withdrawing of it, when required for service elsewhere, might become the signal for insurrection".¹¹¹

Thus, although Scott's proposal in June 1830, for a European cantonment, was not at once accepted, he was asked by Bentinck to submit a separate despatch pointing out what previous arrangements should be made, and what means might be available on the spot for the construction of temporary barracks. Scott was advised to discuss such matters with Lt. Fisher of the Quarter-Master-General's Department, whose long employment on the Sylhet frontier would enable him to supply much useful information.¹¹²

At the time when Scott was making arrangements for the sanatorium he was also envisaging much bigger things in the hills. The demonstration of such practical details in his earlier despatches soon seemed nothing but preliminaries to the unfolding by him of views of "a more general and extended nature". What Scott set out next was nothing less than a review of the essential basis of British power in India, a review of "the peculiar circumstances, military, political and financial, of the Indian empire".¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Bentinck Papers PwJf 2479. Extract from Sir Charles Metcalfe's Minute of 11 Oct., 1829 in reply to W.B.'s letter on the subject of Lord Ellenborough's questions.

¹¹¹ B.P.C., 2 July, 1830, no. 3, Metcalfe's Minute, 2 July, 1830.

¹¹² Bentinck Papers, PwJf 2791, 1830, Swinton to Scott, 29 June, 1830.

¹¹³ B.P.C., 13 Aug., 1830, no. 72, Scott to Chief Secretary, 21 July, 1830.

Scott began from the basic position that the British had so weak a hold on their Indian possessions that its strengthening should at all times be receiving serious consideration. In particular, serious consideration should always be given to their double edged weapon the native sepoy army, at once their main strength and weakness. About the sepoy army, he argued, there were two opinions current. One was that the sepoy army was a match for any enemy, capable of making a competent defence even against a major western power: those who held such a view based it upon parade performance and the brilliant success of the Indian army in the past. The second view was that the sepoys were unfitted for such a task and incapable of withstanding the rough treatment they would receive at a western power's hands: to this attitude the evident disorganisation into which much of the native army had fallen contributed, and the evidence provided by the Burmese campaign that neither the Bengal nor the Madras sepoy could be depended on to carry an entrenchment in face of any show of resistance.¹¹⁴

Whichever attitude was correct, the situation was full of danger. If the sepoys could meet Europeans on equal terms then they were, in fact, masters of the country and government. They would soon come to know their power from the liberal press and other instruments adopted to enlighten the people. If those who believed the sepoys to be a broken reed were right, then they could not be relied upon for defence against foreign attack, and even for ordinary service they must in reality be less efficient and more expensive than European troops. The remedy for either situation was an expansion of the European portion of the army until it was more equal in number to the native force.¹¹⁵

The stumbling block in the way of such a plan was, as Scott saw, the financial cost. It was as a means of surmounting the financial obstacle therefore that Scott put forward his plan for European settlement in the Khasi hills. He asked whether "it might not be practicable to substitute for

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

regular troops, European military colonies which after a comparatively trifling outlay of not exceeding 100 rupees per man would be able to maintain themselves".¹¹⁶ Considering the existing state of the population of Great Britain and Ireland Scott felt that the means of procuring men lay ready to hand : many would come willingly if offered easy terms. The colonies could be promised an ample supply of all the necessaries of life, and even luxuries, in return for working three hours a day for the state. They would be provided with land and stock, which would remain the property of the state, but from the produce of which they would support themselves and provide in part at least for the maintenance and payment of their officers. During the period of their engagement they would be subject to strict military discipline, but after the expiration of this period they might be enabled to receive a certain portion of land and a small stock of cattle. Further hints on the organisations of the colonies might be drawn, Scott suggested, from the practice of the Russian government.¹¹⁷

The colonies, he made clear, should be of a purely military character and ordinary settlers should not be admitted unless they became subject to military law. The sole object in view should be "to provide at a small expense a large body of European troops for the defence of the British Indian Empire and no inferior considerations should be allowed to interfere in any way with its accomplishment in the most certain and perfect manner".¹¹⁸ Were one such colony provided in the Khasi and another in the Nilgiri hills, places where five to ten thousand men might readily be located, it would be quite possible, he believed, to dispense with the whole of the regular European force then posted in the Bombay and Madras presidencies, and in Bengal and Bihar.¹¹⁹

Stokes has commented upon the authoritarian strain in utilitarianism revealed by its advocates in India. The philosophy expressed by Scott reveals a most intriguing blend of authoritarianism and imperialism. Writing about the ultimate

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

political consequences of establishing such colonies, he said: "If a government strictly military were maintained, the children would be brought up with those notions of obedience to authority which it is desirable that with reference to the object of the establishment they should always continue to retain and if at any future period they should from their increasing numbers and military training become formidable their energies might always be conveniently directed to the eastward where the foundation of a fourth presidency would afford them employment for which it is not likely that with such neighbour as the Burmese and Siamese justifiable ground would ever be wanting".¹²⁰

Scott was not content with posing major problems of the British presence in India, and with enunciating a philosophy; he backed up his proposals with a detailed examination of the mechanics of his plan. He set out the way in which the Khasi hills might be made productive enough, within four or five years, to maintain any number of European troops which it might be thought desirable to settle there. He had already mentioned the ease with which supplies, especially of animal food, might be conveyed by boat from Bengal to the foothills. He now sought to show that the hills might be made independent of the lowlands for every description of produce not purely of tropical growth.¹²¹

The first step in his plan would be to stock the country with twenty thousand black cattle. These could be easily and cheaply acquired in the Bengal presidency and could be transported to the hills, in the course of a couple of years, at trifling expense. If so many were not at once obtainable then a start could be made with half that number of cattle, which should be branded and distributed among the natives of the Khasi hills, in herds of one or two hundreds.¹²² These native

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Scott proposed such a distribution so that "the government officers should not be embarrassed with the details of a large establishment".

herdsmen should be rewarded for their services by giving them all the bull calves, government retaining all the heifers. Inspectors would be placed over every ten to twenty such herds, charged with branding the calves and preventing any gross negligence or fraud by their keepers. Soil and climate being very favourable the cattle would increase and multiply, so that the government's part of the stock, the females, might be expected to increase at the rate of one quarter of the whole number per annum. At that rate, even supposing one eighth to be killed annually for the use of the troops there would still be a progressive increase of another eighth upon the whole existing stock which would consequently be doubled every sixth year. The annual slaughter of one eighth of the stock, as the cows ceased to be productive, would provide regular supplies for the troops at no further expense to the government. Scott told the government that they should not consider his reasoning to be based on vague grounds but rather on past experience. Even better results had been repeatedly obtained in less favourable conditions in New South Wales and other colonies.¹²³

Scott then developed his theme of agriculture, which would simultaneously flourish. The large quantity of manure produced by each herd of cattle would naturally be applied to arable farming, and in a country so thinly populated a great comparative addition would thus be made to the produce of the soil if not at first in the shape of the European roots and grains, at least in that most productive of all corn crops, maize, already grown abundantly even without the use of manure. The speedy extension of this and other crops without any proportionate increase of the native population would make it possible to use some for the feeding of pigs and poultry, for which a ready market would be found, first in the preliminary cantonment and then in the colony. Scott elaborated in detail how this would help to solve the food problem. His plan was by the gratuitous distribution to the best native cultivators of two or three thousand swine to

¹²³ B.P.C., 13 Aug., 1830, no. 72, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 21 July, 1830.

increase this species of stock so as to provide for the supply of a very considerable portion of the food required for even a large body of troupes. At the expiration of the fourth year—when the first batch of oxen become fit for the market—this body might be increased to two thousand men. For these men there would then be available annually, produced in the country itself, a supply of two thousand cows, twenty five hundred oxen and any number of hogs, progressively increasing. The oxen and the hogs would be the property of the natives and the meat would of course be purchased. But as there would be no effective demand for them except on the part of the government the price would necessarily be low, and the whole cost of beef and pork would not in all probability amount to one half of what for the time being was paid below.¹²⁴

All these plans and calculations were then set out in a table, showing the estimated cost and return involved in preparing a site in the Khasi hills for two thousand European troops or colonists.

Purchase of 10,000 cows ..	Sicca Rs.	70,000
-do- 200 bulls ..		1,600
-do- 30 English bulls to improve the breed—at Rs. 300 ..		9,000
Commission and charges of conveying them to the hills		12,900
Building for the cattle 100 sheds at Rs. 100 each ..		10,000
-do- for the Superintendent		5,000
Charges for superintendence for 4 years ..		28,800
Purchase of swine etc. to be distributed to the cultivators		4,000
Seeds etc. ..		3,000
<hr/>		
Total outlay Sicca Rs.		144,300

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

Add interest on 120,000 rupees for 4 years ..	Sicca Rs. 144,300 28,800
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Sicca Rs. 173,100

Deduct the value of 4,000 cows killed for the use of the troops ..	32,000
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Remaining net charge at the end of the 4th year ..	Sicca Rs. 141,100
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Subsequent charges

Interest on Rs. 150,000 at 6 per cent ..	Sicca Rs. 9,000
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Superintendence after the arri- val of the troops at Rs. 1,000 per month ..	12,000
---	--------

Buildings and contingencies ..	7,200
--------------------------------	-------

Total annual charges after the 4th year ..	Sicca Rs. 28,200
---	------------------

Savings to be effected by the arrangement after the 4th year

Extra insurance on the lives of 2,000 men valued at £ 100 each at 4 per cent ..	Sicca Rs. 80,000
---	------------------

Savings on the rations of 2,000 men at Re. 1 per man ..	24,000
--	--------

Annual increase of stock esti- mated at 1/8 progressively increasing but in this year would be about at 7 rupees	10,500
---	--------

Total annual saving	Sicca Rs. 114,500
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Deduct preceding charge	28,200
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Remaining net savings annu- ally ..	Sicca Rs. 86,300
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The above included only the stock farming but Scott said that it would of course be desirable to have also a brewery and distillery and four mills to be worked by water. The estimated charge for the erection of these would be about sixty thousand Sicca rupees which would be repaid by a further net annual saving of about twenty per cent on the current outlay. However, he thought these would not be absolutely necessary for a force of only twenty thousand men.¹²⁵

This plan for the improvement of the resources of the Khasi hills and their greater suitability for a European cantonment was found satisfactory by the government,¹²⁶ but before they could give a final shape to his plan and carry it out, Scott's attention was diverted to the troubles of Upper Assam. His death, soon after in August, 1831, put an end to the whole concept of European military colonies in the Khasi hills.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century there had been many Europeans who not only regarded that colonization was possible but also urged it as a valuable way of strengthening British connection with India.¹²⁷ A paternalist administrator like Metcalfe had also been advancing since 1815 such suggestions of admitting British nationals to settle down in India for a speedier economic development. In 1827 and 1829, he also expressed his belief that the tenure of British rule in India being precarious European colonization would ensure the stability of British rule by creating a class of people in India, with common interest with the British government.¹²⁸ In 1830, governor-general Bentinck also accepted that "the diffusion of useful knowledge, and

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Bentinck Papers, PwJf 2791, 1830, Swinton to Scott, 5 Nov., 1830.

¹²⁷ In 1804, a writer in the *Edinburgh Review* (ER IV, 1804, p. 305) declared that there could be no better way of ensuring the continuance of British power in India than to have a large number of Englishmen settled there who would keep the natives in subjection. See Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

¹²⁸ See D. N. Panigrahi, *op. cit.*, p. 102, and pp. 103-4n, 111-112.

its application to the arts and business of life, must be comparatively tardy unless we add to precept the example of Europeans mingling familiarly with the natives."¹²⁹ It is no wonder therefore that Scott's concrete proposals for the European military cantonments in 1830 were of interest to both Metcalfe and Bentinck. It was only around that period that the question of ultimate defence of the Indian empire came under serious study and Metcalfe, who among the four paternalist stalwarts was the last to leave India in 1838, was naturally exposed to the changing time. Even Malcolm, who was still in India in 1830, was not free from the fear of the British losing the Indian empire due to its defence weaknesses. India when he left was, as he put it, "as quiet as gunpowder".¹³⁰ The imperial sentiment, seen among the reformers of the Bentinck period, was actually the outcome of their liberal and humanitarian attitudes. In their task of introducing reforms, the reformers did not and could not advocate an immediate end of Britain's connexion with India.¹³¹ The Munro School Paternalists who were not averse to reforms, and who did bring about many reforms themselves, were naturally not wishing to see the end of the British dominion before they completed their tasks.

The establishment of military colonies for the ultimate defence of India, actually remained a subject of serious discussion throughout the nineteenth century. In 1832, when the parliamentary discussion on the renewal of the Company's charter took place we find the Company's tenure of India compared to a "gigantic tree, its trunk and branches of vast strength, but resting merely by pressure of its superincumbent weight instead of having shot its roots into the earth".¹³²

¹²⁹ Bentinck's Minute, 30 May, 1829, see Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Maj.-Gen., D.J.F. Newall, 'Military Colonization as a Reserve for India' in *The Highlands of India: Strategically considered with special reference to their colonization as Reserve Circles*, p. 2.

¹³¹ G.D. Bearce, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

¹³² Lt. Col., D.J.F. Newall, 'On Military Colonization of the Mountain Ranges of India', *United Service Institution India Proceedings*, Vol. II, no. 12, pp. 1-35.

In 1844, Sir Henry Lawrence in his essay on 'The Military Defence of Our Indian Empire' advocated partial colonization especially for military settlers. The hackneyed simile of the 'inverted pyramid' had often been applied throughout the nineteenth century and in the last quarter of that century even the military personnel of position joined the debate with concrete proposals as to how to set about the question. On October 30, 1872, Lt. Col. (Later Major-Genl.) D. J. F. Newall delivered a lecture '*On Military Colonization of the Mountain Ranges of India*' at the United Service Institute for India at Darjeeling where he pleaded for the establishment of military villages in the mountain ranges of India. After giving the political aspects of the military establishment in the Himalayan ranges, of sanatoria and military colonies, Newall said in the voice almost similar to that of Scott some forty years before: "Whether Providence has willed our occupation of this foreign soil to be lasting, who can say? At present, we have no permanent grasp on it; and regarding our future from the standpoint of historic study, it seems possible, that the day may eventually arrive . . . when the great British nation, strong and firm as it may believe itself to be, perhaps at present is, may have to relinquish its grand Asiatic Dependency and retire within the limits of its own Ocean Island Home". "In such a contingency", Newall concluded, "what better source to fall back on than military colonies in Himalayan and other mountain ranges of India from which to form a Reserve Force".¹³³

In suggesting the use of the hills for European military colonies, Scott certainly was one of the pioneers and being a frontier officer of extensive military knowledge and diplomatic skill, the zeal of an expansionist was also not lacking in him. However, judging from his policies and pronouncements on matters concerning the valley—for one does not know what would have been his policy towards the Khasis in the post-rebellion period—his difference with the imperialists of the later period¹³⁴ is distinct. In spite of he too being

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

¹³⁴ For the sources of the revival of imperial sentiment in British attitudes after 1828, see G.D. Bearce, *op. cit.*, Ch. VII.

conscious of European superiority, it was not this mainly which goaded him to find out ways and means to maintain the empire. A paternalistic humanitarian ground was also present. But one thing is however clear—at least in the case of his scheme in the Khasi hills—that like other reformers he too seems to have accepted that prerogative of imperialism—“that of determining the future of a foreign people without that people really participating in or consenting to this proposed future”.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

VIII

THE PATERNALIST DISSECTED

DAVID SCOTT'S career for long stretches was filled with multifarious military, diplomatic and administrative tasks, following in quick succession, which constantly took him to new headquarters. He had little time for elaborate theoretical discussions of the problems of British rule in India. Nevertheless from the measures he took and the manner of their application, and from his letters and reports, it is possible to see the main features of his philosophy of government.

When Scott first came out to India the glow of Wellesley's expansive imperialism still coloured the scene and Scott himself was early involved in Lord Hastings' continuation of that policy of subjecting the whole Indian peninsula to British power. Scott, in his frontier field, proved as ready as Malcolm or Metcalfe to think in large imperial terms. He came into prominence while opening diplomatic relations with Bhutan and Tibet. He played a leading part in advocating a forward policy in the Assam valley, Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur. In October, 1823, he not only urged that offence would be the best means of defence against Burmese encroachments, but strongly recommended that even if the existing differences with the Burmese government were settled amicably, certain parts of their newly acquired territories towards the Company's Bengal frontier should be demanded from them. Scott must share responsibility therefore, for Amherst's ill-conducted¹ war against Burma, though his own part in it went reasonably well. It was Scott's hope that Lower Assam would yield a substantial revenue, and that the internal

¹ "The 'Arracan fever' (a particularly virulent malaria) and other disease claimed the real victory for in five months alone 259 Europeans out of 1,599 and 900 out of 1,000 Indian died and in the month of September, 1825, 400 Europeans and 3,600 Indians were in hospital." See M. Edwardes, *The Necessary Hell*, p. 47; see also G. D. Bearce, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.

divisions in an area never fully subjected to Ahom administration would make the assimilation of the Kamrup district easy, that led him to press upon the Supreme Government the inadvisability of an Ahom restoration in the lower Brahmaputra valley. Once retention had been decided upon Scott was led by the difficulties of river communication from Bengal, to advocate a land link from Sylhet to Gauhati through Jaintia and the Khasi hills. This in turn led to the vision of European military colonies in the hills, which would assure British dominance in India, and perhaps in Burma, making Assam the centre of a fourth Presidency.² With this imperial concept also went that of trade through Assam to Burma and to China, for this was a period when the new needs of British industry were giving a new purpose to imperialism.

In these imperialistic attitudes, Scott was at one with such other great figures as Munro, Malcolm, Metcalfe and Elphinstone. Though he never served under any one of these four, and though the records provide no evidence of any close association with them, he also shared other ideas and opinions with them. Like them he was conservative and paternalist, opposed to the attempt to assimilate and anglicise everything traditionally Indian. He shared with them a distrust of the Cornwallis system, revolting in particular against the elevation of the *zamindar* class occasioned by the Permanent Settlement. By making them a part of the nobility, disrespect had been shown to the original institutions of Indian society and the peasantry had been harmed: "The only nobility acknowledged under the Mohamedan dynasty", Scott said, "was that of office; and I believe no part of our system has given more general discontent than the undue elevation which the class of zamindars had attained from their great wealth, the officers of government of inferior ranks such as seristadars, tehsildars, dewans, etc. having formerly been considered superiors".³ This passage can be compared with that of Metcalfe's who wrote on the same

² See *supra*, p. 222.

³ *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 7, 1832, p. 137.

subject thus "...we destroyed all the existing property in land, by creating a class of proprietors to whom we recklessly made over the property of others".⁴ And if the introduction of English notions of the landowners had damaged Indian society, so would the introduction of English law. Scott foresaw that it would be the common people of India who would suffer. "There can be no greater mistake" he said "than to suppose that the lower classes are better protected in England than in India. The fact is, that in the former country they are entirely destitute of any rights or possessions of which they can be deprived, so as to give them any cause for complaint. Whoever hears of a day labourer wanting the protection of the law? He receives his daily hire, and pays for his hut or quits it, if he be ill-used, and has no concern with courts of law or occasion for their protection. I fancy the people in this country, if they ever obtain what it is the fashion to call the benefits of the English law, will find themselves in the situation of the frogs who prayed for a king, and at length got a stork set over them".⁵ Alike in the Directors' attack upon slavery, and in the application of the Cornwallis system, Scott saw—just as the Munro school did—"the ignorant application of *a priori* political ideas without regard to the history and circumstances of Indian society".⁶

Scott was also at one with Elphinstone, Malcolm, Metcalfe and Munro in wishing to conserve native institutions. He was as full of admiration for the popular political institutions of the Khasis, as ever Metcalfe was for his "village republics", or Elphinstone for those Maratha communities which "contain in miniature all the materials of a state within themselves..."⁷ In Assam he not only sought to use native juries and native judges for both civil and criminal cases, but even supported a system of popular election of revenue collectors.⁸ All this was possible

⁴ See R. Muir, *The Making of British India*, 1756-1858, pp. 191-192.

⁵ *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 7, 1832, p. 137.

⁶ E. Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁷ See R. Muir, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

⁸ B.P.C., 30 May, 1833, nos. 89 and 93.

because of his liberal conservatism which not only enabled him to understand the indigenous institutions but also modify them when required. In the era of 'Peace, Retrenchment and Reform'—when came most of his administrative measures for the newly conquered Assam—such understanding and adjustability helped the government enormously. A description of the judicial administration of Lower Assam immediately after its occupation of the British troupe will prove the point :

In 1826 due to a considerable backlog of civil suits at Gauhati, Scott established three native courts mainly for the civil suits under five hundred rupees. These courts were to be presided over by a judge, an Assamese official with judicial experience under the old regime. One of these was to exercise the powers vested in a *munsif* in the Bengal province, another to exercise the powers vested in a *sadr amin* for the original suits and deciding appeals from the *munsif* and a third, with similar powers to the second, to decide in criminal cases of minor consequences and to hear appeals from the rajas, *chauthuries* and other *malguzars* all of whom in accordance with the custom of the country exercised judicial powers in their respective *parganas*. Scott also decided to adopt the original Assamese custom—as he put it—of appointing assessors, three to each court, with the idea of putting a check on the chief judge and also speeding up the business.⁹ These courts were

⁹ The composition of and the monthly expenditure on these courts were as follows :

<i>Court no. 1 :</i>	<i>A rajkhowa</i>	..	Narayani	Rs.	60
	Three assessors	..		Rs.	102
	establishment and contingencies			Rs.	72
					<hr/>
				Rs.	234
<i>Court no. 2 :</i>	<i>A barphukan</i>			Rs.	150
	Three assessors	..		Rs.	102
	establishment and contingencies			Rs.	72
					<hr/>
				Rs.	324

of great success and Scott therefore suggested to the government in 1828 that capital cases might also be referred to his newly formed civil courts at Gauhati since the Government had not arrived at any decision about extending the authority of *Nizamāt Adalat* to Assam.¹⁰ It was Scott's intention from the very beginning of the British occupation of Lower Assam to annex it permanently to British Indian territory. He therefore wanted that that part of Assam should be under the jurisdiction of the *Nizamāt Adalat* so as to solve the problem of deciding the ever-increasing criminal cases. But the government's indecisiveness about the retention or restoration of Assam, its inability to recruit any European officials for judicial business in Assam, and the gravity of the situation caused by the piled up cases—all combined to make Scott suggest to the government to transfer the criminal cases also to his newly built native courts. He had no doubts that the native courts would prove equal to such an added responsibility and status. He pointed out that in his experience it was generally easier to come to a decision in cases of murder than in less serious cases, in which

<i>Court no. 3 : A barphukan</i>	Rs.	150
Three assessors	Rs.	102
establishment and contingencies }	Rs.	72
	<hr/>	Rs. 324
A Bengali <i>muharrir</i> two <i>sarishtadars</i> for preparing monthly reports }	Rs.	72
A Nazir and Peons	Rs.	25
Total	<hr/>	Narayani Rs. 979
or Sicca	Rs.	616
	<hr/>	

B.S.P.C., 16 Feb., 1827, nos. 2-3, Scott to Swinton, 30 Dec., 1826. The *barphukans* and *rajkhawas* were ordinarily governors of particular territories and they also administered justice in their allotted districts. See, Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 10.

¹⁰ B.S.P.C., 2 May, 1828, no. 11, Scott to Sterling, 29 Mar., 1828.

the parties might have stronger reasons for attempting to conceal the truth.¹¹

The acting governor-general at this time (1827-28) was Butterworth Bayley, who throughout his Indian career had been known for his liberal views, views which dominated the judicial reforms of William Bentinck¹². Under his influence the government in 1828, had already come to believe that "the administration of Civil Justice will be promoted and improved by enlarging the powers at present exercised by the native judicial officers".¹³ The government however thought that in augmenting the powers of the native functionaries, a gradual extension would be a better procedure than any "violent innovation on the established system which might suddenly elevate the native judge to the possession to the full extent of jurisdiction which before had only been entrusted to European officers".¹⁴ It was a government already moving in Scott's direction which now agreed to Scott's plan to use the native civil courts at Gauhati for the trial of capital offences, but with the following 'essential' provision: that the sentences of the native courts should be submitted for Scott's revision and sanction.¹⁵ Before determining, however, whether the jurisdiction of the *Nizamat Adalat* should be extended to Western Assam, under Regulation X, 1822, the Government desired to give a full and fair trial to Scott's own plan which they considered "novel and interesting".¹⁶ In May, 1828, the government came to a more downright decision, announcing that, after the fullest consideration the governor-general-in-council had concluded that in the present state of the country, it would be premature and inexpedient to introduce the authority of the *Nizamat Adalat* into Lower Assam under

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² B. B. Misra, *The Central Administration of the East India Company*, p. 83.

¹³ Bentinck papers, PwJf 2736, memorandum on changes in the administration of civil justice.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ B.S.P.C., 7 March 1828, no. 8, Swinton to Scott, 7 March 1828.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

provisions analogous to those of Regulation X, 1822. An efficient system for the dispensation of criminal justice in Assam, generally, would be best provided for by using to the full those tribunals and institutions which Scott had "very judiciously revived and put in action, subject to the central revision and superintendence of the British officers vested with the course pursued in other lately conquered territories. The government reminded Scott that neither Arakan, the Tenasserim provinces nor the older possessions of Delhi and the Narbadda territory were subject to the jurisdiction of the *Nizam Adalat*.¹⁷

It was therefore in Scott's scheme of administration to share power and authority with the natives of India. He might well have penned Malcolm's letter to Wynne, quoted by Stokes, saying: "With respect to raising natives both in the fiscal and judicial line, I am of the same sentiments as Sir Thomas Munro. . . I desire to share the Aristocracy of Office with the natives of India."¹⁸ Scott's wish to preserve an Ahom State in Upper Assam was another aspect of the same basic policy. He saw that in Kamrup, under British rule, a new class of officials must necessarily be introduced: an Ahom state in Upper Assam would make that provision for the native aristocracy which could not be made in Lower Assam. As has been seen in Chapter V, Scott believed that the native states had their strengths as well as their weaknesses, and that their traditional institutions, properly supported, could be made to work very well.¹⁹ What was perhaps novel, was Scott's dislike of the system of subsidiary alliances with such states, by which the Company committed itself to non-interference in the States' internal affairs. In Upper Assam he was very anxious to strengthen the native safeguards against autocratic misrule, and to make British government the guardian of the constitution.

¹⁷ B.S.P.C., 2 May 1828, no 13, Sterling to Scott, 2 May 1828.

¹⁸ Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 16, no. 2; See also R. Muir, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

¹⁹ Stokes points out that this was the attitude of Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone—though not of Metcalfe. See Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

In Assam, Scott was in favour of a paternal, non-regulation administration. One reason for relinquishing Upper Assam was the desire to keep the Company's possessions in Assam within his own personal compass. Scott believed, like John Lawrence, for instance, that the officer must know his division intimately.²⁰ In Rangpur, in the Garo or Khasi hills, in Assam Scott was indefatigable in personally touring his charge, and he expected his officers to do likewise. He also believed that the laws and procedure used should be of the simplest kind, based as far as possible on native customs and institutions. With this went Scott's stress upon personal accessibility and the maintenance of easy communications between officials and private individuals: White's *Memoir* makes clear how very fully Scott practised what he preached in this regard.

Such a system placed great strain upon the officials who had to work it, yet perhaps the most notable and consistent factor in all Scott's career was the scantiness of the European agency with which he had to work. Much of the criticism of Scott's measures might properly be laid at the door of a parsimonious government, which left Scott to manage vast areas with a mere handful of assistants. A quite typical situation was that of February, 1830. The ravages of the river Bornadi, which had devastated a tract of land yielding a revenue of some twelve thousand rupees, compelled Scott to go to the Darrang district to revise the settlement. This meant abandoning the sessions being held in Sylhet, for the only European official to whom Scott could have transferred his duties was the Collector of Lower Assam, and he was already deeply involved in the overwhelming criminal business of his office.²¹ Later that year both White in Lower Assam²² and Neufville in Upper Assam²³ stressed their need for English assistants—but the Supreme Government not only failed to provide them, but

²⁰ M. Edwardes, *The Necessary Hell: John and Henry Lawrence and the Indian Empire*, p. 131.

²¹ B.P.C., 5 March, 1830, no. 61, Scott to Swinton, 9 Feb., 1830.

²² B.P.C., 7 May 1830, no. 54, Scott to Swinton, 21 Apr. 1830.

²³ B.P.C., 28 May 1830, no. 82, Neufville to Scott, 17 Apr. 1830.

showed itself reluctant even to grant Neufville a boat allowance.²⁴

An anonymous author in the *Calcutta Review* commented upon another difficulty facing administrators like Scott, White and Neufville—that of their isolation. The writer pointed out that “having quitted home when almost boys, with no superiors to look up to, no equals to associate with, no public opinion to regard”, such men had only the facility of “measuring themselves among themselves and comparing themselves among themselves”.²⁵ The only factor in Scott’s favour was that he had at his command a band of carefully selected and very devoted subordinates. He commanded their respect and affection²⁶ and in return did all he could to secure recognition and reward for their merits. If John Lawrence offered the tempting prospect of early promotion to his subordinates,²⁷ Scott constantly pressed their achievements upon the attention of the Supreme Government and their claims for increased allowances. Thus in 1821 he is found pressing Kishen Kant Bose’s claim to an increase after his successful journey to Bhutan and extolling the value of his “Account of Bhutan”, and grammar and vocabulary of the Bhutan language.²⁸ In 1824, while acknowledging his own liberal treatment as political agent, he points out that Captain Davidson has at times “in my absence to officiate in that Department” adding “and I need not say that his pay

²⁴ See *supra*, p. 138

²⁵ *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 19, 1853, p. 423. ‘Assam since the expulsion of the Burmese’.

²⁶ This can be gathered from some of the correspondence between Scott and his friends appended at the end of White’s *Memoir*. Scott’s lasting friendship with his associates in Assam administration can also be discerned from the following fact: In December, 1831, the friends of the late Lts. Bedingfield and Burlton of Bengal Artillery and Beadon, assistant surgeon, Bengal establishment, sought permission to inscribe a tablet on the tomb which was to be erected by the government, to the memory of David Scott. See B.P.C. 23 July 1832, no. 116, White to Swinton, 22 Dec. 1831.

²⁷ See M. Edwardes, *The Necessary Hell*, pp. 131-132.

²⁸ B.C. Vol. 810/21724, pp. 12-13, Scott to Swinton, 21 Sept. 1821.

—military and civil—is quite inadequate”.²⁹ And in 1831 he stresses under what difficult circumstances his officials have to act, in a backward country like Assam.³⁰ Unhappily most of Scott’s earlier associates in the conquest and administration of Assam were lost to him. Bedingfield and Burlton, who were engaged in the survey of the Khasi hills and were in charge of the building of the road and the sanatoria, Beadon, the assistant surgeon who had been looking after his health since his illness turned serious in February 1827,³¹ Brodie, the young officer conducting so gallantly the military operations against the rebellious Khasis,³² and Neufville in whose safe hands he could leave the whole administrative burden of Upper Assam for no less than four years³³—all fell a victim either to the hostile climate or situation of the frontier.

A second aspect of Scott’s administration and one which might seem rather at variance with his wish to conserve Indian institutions, was his interest in Christian missions. Stokes has contrasted the “expansive and aggressive attitude” towards Indian society displayed by the Utilitarians and

²⁹ B.S.P.C., 22 Oct., 1824, no. 12, Scott to Swinton, 1 Oct., 1824.

³⁰ B.P.C., 10 June 1831, no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

³¹ B.P.C., 16 March 1827, no. 57, Scott to Swinton, 14 Feb. 1827.

³² See *supra*, p. 209, n. 81.

³³ The following extract from one of Scott’s despatches written towards the end of his life extolls Neufville’s qualities as an administrative officer and his deeds in Upper Assam.

“With an officer in charge possessed of Capt. Neufville’s experience and talents the state of things was not of such material consequence, since complete reliance might be placed upon his local knowledge and discretion while his zeal to carry into effect the instructions of his superiors even when he himself doubted the propriety of the measures directed, formed one of the most striking features of his official character. The whole of these valuable qualities cannot however be looked for in his successors, some of them being unattainable for at least a considerable time after appointment...”

B.P.C., 10 June 1831, no. 50, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

Evangelicals and the paternalist conservatism of the Munro school. With that school Scott obviously had much in common, yet in 1825 he appealed to the Supreme Government to bring missionaries to the Garo hills, which he presented as a most promising field for conversion. Scott's early and long maintained relationship with William Carey has already been noticed; in his last few years he had also been in close contact with Colonel Adam White, his colleague in the administration of Assam, who was a staunch supporter of missionaries. Again, since Scott had entered the service, there had been a steady change in the Company's avowed policy towards the missionaries from an early hostility to that of acceptance. To that changing climate of opinion Scott had, of course, been exposed.

However, we have seen that his evangelism was not that of an authoritarian type. He associated the Garo priests in his projects. He proved equally ready to make use of the Brahmins in Assam, for in 1826 he requested the Supreme Government to sanction considerable land grants to the pandits, whom he wished to use to revive education in Assam. He had found education at a very low ebb, the old Ahom system having been nobody's business since the Burmese invasion and the younger generation having consequently received little or no education. If the government was to find capable men for its service the situations required immediate attention.³⁴ Scott therefore proposed that

³⁴.The language taught in Scott's newly-established schools was Bengali. He believed that it differed very little from Assamese; it was obviously well suited to the administrative needs; it was already the language of the Assamese intelligentsia (B.P.C. 25 Oct. 1826, nos. 21-22, Scott to Swinton, 9 Oct. 1826, Swinton to Scott, 25 Oct. 1826). Another probable reason for introducing Bengali was that the intelligentsia of the Assam of his time having had their higher education in Bengal, were already well versed in Bengali. Jugyuram Phookan's translations of English prose and poetry into Bengali had already caught the eye of the intelligentsia of Bengal, and the 'literary exertions' of Haliram Dhekial Phookan, who had written a history of Assam in Bengali had already been highly acclaimed by the Bengali press. (see *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 7, 1832, p. 84, *Progress of the Arts in Assam*; M.C.L.R.M., Vol. 12, 1819, pp. 19-20, *Eighth Memoir*

six hundred *puras* (1,800 bighas) should be assigned for the support of pandits or schoolmasters, in Lower Assam. Under the recently introduced system these lands would pay some six hundred rupees revenue a year : this he proposed to remit in return for service as schoolmasters. The custom of the country had been to make such grants to individuals, resumable on the death of the grantee or upon his ceasing to perform the duty.³⁵ Scott proposed to allot from twenty to fifty *puras* of land, in twelve or more convenient situations, to pandits who would then be required to teach a specified number of pupils, upon pain of resumption of the grant. Such payment in land rather than cash would be "much less onerous to the government and would prevent a good deal of trouble in the transmission to distant parts of the country of the schoolmasters' salaries, while it would be more congenial to the habits of the people and past customs of the country".³⁶

Since government had already showed its interests in his educational plans,³⁷ Scott went on to propose that these schoolmasters should be put under the superintendence of the *chaudhuries* and other officials of the different *parganas*, who would report whether the proper number of pupils were being taught. As overall superintendent he wanted a pandit of more than ordinary acquirements who would visit the different schools in rotation and report periodically the progress made by them. It was also arranged to send down an intelligent Assamese to Serampore with a view to getting him instructed in the mode of teaching lately introduced in the neighbourhood of Calcutta.³⁸

It is true that Scott also sought missionary assistance, and through the veteran William Carey in 1829 he secured the

Respecting the Translations and Editions of the Sacred Scriptures, by the Serampore Missionaries, no. 17 (The Assamese).

³⁵ B.P.C., 25 Sept. 1826, no. 19, Scott to Swinton, 25 July 1826.

³⁶ B.P.C., 25 Oct. 1826, no. 21, Scott to Swinton, 9 Oct. 1826.

³⁷ B.P.C., 15 Sept. 1826, no. 20, Swinton to Scott, 15 Sept. 1826.

³⁸ B.P.C., 25 Oct. 1826, nos. 21-22, Scott to Swinton, 9 Oct. 1826, Swinton to Scott, 25 Oct. 1826.

aid of James Rae, ordained at Serampore.³⁹ Scott was anxious to establish a school for native girls at Gauhati, and this work he placed in the hands of Rae and his wife.⁴⁰ But his appeal for missionary help seems to have sprung quite as much from his appreciation of the educational problem, as from desire to see the Gospel taught. It was in no Evangelical frame of mind that he called upon Serampore to supplement the work of his Assamese pandits.

By subsidising the Nilachal temple of Kamrup, Scott further showed how little affected his own religious beliefs were by the Evangelical spirit. One of the chief objects of the Evangelical missionaries was to secure from the government the disconnexion of the British power from the support of temples and Hindu and Muslim religious festivals.⁴¹ Scott took a very different line, for when a tax upon pilgrims to the temple proved unproductive, he pressed upon government, in July, 1827, the appropriateness of a government grant.⁴² This the authorities seemed reluctant to allow,⁴³ but in September Scott wrote again pointing out that grants for Durga Puja had always been made by the Ahoms, and had been increased by the Burmese. He continued to disburse Rs. 1,121 a year for the purpose.⁴⁴ In 1831 to meet government objections, he proposed an alternative, "If Government had however any objection to the charge for the expenses of the temple appearing in the public accounts", he wrote, "this might be carried by relinquishing, and appropriating to that purpose the revenue, levied at present on the temple *paiks* and lands which amounts to Rs. 1,002 per annum".⁴⁵

³⁹ V.H. Sword, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

⁴⁰ *Calcutta Review*. 1853, Vol. 19, pp. 427-430.

⁴¹ Ingham, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Embree, *op. cit.*, p. 249; Stokes, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁴² B.S.P.C., 17 Aug. 1827, no. 44, Scott to Swinton, 28 July 1827.

⁴³ B.S.P.C., 17 Aug. 1827, no. 45, Swinton to Scott, 17 Aug. 1827.

⁴⁴ B.S.P.C., 26 Oct. 1827, no. 17, Scott to Swinton, 12 Sept. 1827.

⁴⁵ B.P.C., 29 Apr. 1831, nos. 36-37, Scott to the Chief Secretary, 16 Apr. 1831.

The third marked feature of Scott's attitude to the whole question of moral and material progress is his interest in very practical improvements in the agriculture⁴⁶ and handicrafts of the frontier peoples. Scott being the nephew of Director David Scott it might be thought that if he was not very close to the Evangelicals he was perhaps to be identified with those free-trade interests⁴⁷ who in the early nineteenth century became increasingly interested in opening Indian markets to British manufactures and in educating and reshaping Indian society so as to raise the purchasing power of the Indian population. But there is little more evidence that Scott wished to refashion and anglicise Indian society for commercial than for religious ends. His was a paternalist concern for those under his charge, and a keen personal interest in the mechanic and scientific arts.

Thus in dealing with the Garos one of Scott's earliest concerns was with the orderly marketing of hill cotton, and at a later date he is found recommending that money be spent upon clearing obstructions from the beds of the small rivers leading from the Garo hills into Rangpur, and upon the making of a track way along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra. (Government granted up to fifteen hundred rupees for the former and five thousand for the latter).⁴⁸ His very detailed plans for the introduction of European crops, and the establishment of herds of cattle and pigs in

⁴⁶ Scott's interest in agriculture may have been due to a tradition of agricultural pursuits in his mother's family for in *Epitaphs and Inscriptions from Burial Grounds and Old Buildings in the North East of Scotland* the following sentences, about Scott's maternal grandfather, Dr. Chalmers, are very significant: "He was passionately fond of agricultural pursuits, and he is said to have devoted quite as much time and attention to the cultivation of his farm at Selattie as to the discharge of his Accademical duties. In Kaye's curious print of "The Sapien Septemviri" he is represented in the act of addressing his colleagues in these words: 'Agriculture is the noblest of sciences, mind your globes—the Emperor of China is a farmer.'" See A. Jervise, *op. cit.*, pp. 393-395.

⁴⁷ See Stokes, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-47.

⁴⁸ J.L.B., 26 July, 1826, Vol. 9, paras 167-169.

the Khasi hills have been noted in Chapter VII. His hopes of trade from Assam into Burma, and his diplomatic and financial efforts to foster it have also been reviewed,⁴⁹ as have the practical aspects of his proposals for a mission station in the Garo hills. We have also seen how in 1830, a year before his death, he was passionately pleading for government's assistance in developing Assam's silk industry.⁵⁰ The improvement of Assam's agricultural and commercial resources, in fact, engaged his mind completely during the last few years of his life. The letter in which he mentioned the development of Assam silk was written on 17 April, 1830. A year later, on 18 May, 1831, he warned the government that unless some such measure was sanctioned immediately, it would continue to hold Assam in future 'on no very secure tenure'. He said that such an eventuality would be unfortunate for he strongly believed that at no great expense Assam could be "made capable of rivalling the richest parts of Asia in the value of its agricultural produce".⁵¹ According to Scott the attainment of commercial prosperity should be the main concern of the government here, and he therefore, emphasised the need of imparting technical education. Although he was pleased that the government agreed to his earlier proposal of reviving the traditional education of Assam, Scott's considered opinion, however, was that the interests of the inhabitants of Assam would be best served "by instructing them in useful arts, such as carpentry, husbandry and the like". Assam in his time was "a country where boats continue to be made from the trunks of trees, where the use of saw, a wheel carriage, or even a beast of burden is unknown, where the natives cannot make marketable butter, sugar or oil and where half [the] surface of a rich soil, capable of producing every article of tropical growth lies waste, and is considered absolutely worthless from ignorance of the means of

⁴⁹ See *supra*, pp. 124-128.

⁵⁰ See *supra*, pp. 104-111.

⁵¹ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, no. 50, Scott to Chief Secretary, 18 May, 1831.

making use of it".⁵² How to break through such stagnation then? Scott said that "in the ordinary state of political societies these matters would be naturally regulated by the wants of individuals" and the arts there would be progressively improved along with "an increase of national wealth and intelligence". But "when a government is placed so very far in advance of its subjects in point of information as in our case in Assam", Scott argued, that introduction of improvements there should not be left to "chance" or to "ordinary progress of events" and should be brought about by the government "with certainty and at once".⁵³

Scott's whole career, from the early days when he attracted attention by the ability and zeal displayed in opening communications with Bhutan and Tibet, till his death as first sole Commissioner of Assam, had been spent in the north-east frontier of India. For three decades the Indian government had placed ever increasing reliance upon his ability and judgment and had continuously laid larger and heavier burdens upon his shoulders. Scott, on his part, had showed an increasing understanding and affection of the people he was called upon to administer. He noted and accepted the good in Indian society, he was unwilling needlessly to change, though, as over the prospects for Assam silk, he could be passionate in pursuing improvement. He ended, as many of the great administrators did, by identifying himself with the interests and the good of the people under him, by being truly paternalist.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

APPENDIX C

Statistics on the Land Revenue of Upper Assam from 1825/26 to 1830/31 in Sicca rupees¹

Year	Demand			Proposed deduction*	Balance of the demand to the treasury			Actual receipts			Total disbursements**									
	A	G	C		A	G	C	A	G	C	A	G	C							
1825/26	139616	10	-6	-2	52695	1	-6	-0	85921	9	0	-2	28057	11	14	3	27834	7	9	3
1826/27	145832	11	16	1	58911	2	15	3	86921	9	0	2	46072	14	12	2	40731	6	10	7
1827/28	143267	11	15	0	56343	5	16	2	86924	5	0	0	38835	14	11	0	61695	6	9	1
1828/29	153835	14	4	0	49822	—	—	—	104013	14	1	—	78452	10	11	—	36166	5	9	1
1829/30	155232	13	6	0	49372	6	—	—	105860	7	6	—	100000	—	—	—	52943	7	1	+
1830/31	159000	—	—	—	49687	8	—	—	109312	8	—	—	estimated receipts 109312	8	—	—	expected disbursement 48496	—	—	—

¹ B.P.C., 10 June, 1831, nos. 51-57, enclosure to Scott's letter of 18 May, 1831.

* The deductions were as follows :

¹ 27% of *paik* revenue allowed by Scott to the *Kheldars* collecting revenues.

² Amount allowed for the maintenance of indigent noble, brahmins and others not holding *Khels*.

** The disbursements were as under the following heads :

¹ Adawlat Fauzdari and Dewani.

² Jail establishment and diet of prisoners.

⁵ Post office expenses.

⁸ Commissioners and Surgeons salary. (appeared in 1826/27 and 1827/28 only).

⁹ Pol. Agent and Asstt. Pol. Agents Salary (appeared in 1828/29, 1829/30 and 1830/31).

³ Thannah establishment.

⁶ Contingent expenses.

⁴ Revenue establishment.

⁷ Inefficient balance.

APPENDIX D

Extracts from Scott's report on the Garos, 20 August, 1816¹

Having just received an extract from Doctor Buchanan's Journal from which I perceive that that gentleman has already submitted to Government a more full account of the extent, general appearance and natural productions of the Garrow Country and of the manners, customs and religious opinions of the inhabitants than I am prepared to give, I shall limit my observations on these heads to points which have either not been noticed by him or in which the information we received may differ materially.

The whole tract inhabited by the Garrows is well-known to be mountainous, and naturally covered with thick forests; but a considerable proportion of the land amounting perhaps to one-third part of the whole, has been cultivated even on our frontier and I am informed that the country in the interior is much more populous and in a still higher state of improvement. The principal rivers which flow in to this District from the Garrow Hills are the Doodnyee, the Kistnyee and Jynaree and the Kalloo Nuddee and of these the Kystnyee and Jynaree are navigable for canoes for about forty miles above their junction with the Burhumpootur and twenty beyond the boundary of our territories.

Although this country for a mountainous one, is rather of easy access than otherwise the jealous habits of the Garrows of the interior and their ferocious treatment of strangers of every description renders it so dangerous to attempt visiting their villages that little is certainly known respecting them, but to the whole are said to be divided into various Tribes of which the principal appear to be the following. The Nooneas who live in the Assam frontier, and are governed by Rajahs. The Hannahs who inhabit the country south of Habraghaut. The Abings bordering on Mechparrah Kaloomaloparah and Kurreebarree and the Koch who are said to inhabit the country east of the latter pergunnah.

¹ Paras 8-28, B.C.J.C., 27 Sept., 1816, no. 47.

Besides the divisions of their society occasioned by the localities of the country which naturally separate the inhabitants of the different valleys, the above-mentioned tribes are divided into clans, each supposed to be descended from a common ancestor and these again are subdivided into branches of the family, still more closely connected together, who usually inhabit the same parah or hamlet some of which are also occupied by the descendants of strangers who at various times have settled with the consent of the clan upon their lands.

The possessions of a clan seldom exceed three or four coss in length and breadth and are nominally the property of the lineal descendants in the female line of the first occupant or settler on the land who according to the ideas the Garrow entertain relative to real property must also have been a female.

The name of this first settler has in most cases been given to the stream upon the banks of which the original hamlet was built and with the addition of the affix Gurree is used to denote the whole of the possessions of the clan. Her representative is called the Muharee and her husband the Muhurry Lushcur and to the southward the Bhoohurjaum and in right of his wife the person is considered as the chief of the clan, but the privileges attached to this dignity have been modified by circumstances in so many ways in different parts of the country that it is almost impossible to say generally in what they at present consist.

By the laws of succession, established amongst all the Garrow tribes bordering on our territories, the daughters inherit the whole of their parents' property, the sons being sent to live with their wives upon whose relations they become entirely dependent for a provision.

Of the daughters if they are more than one, the favourite is selected by her parents to succeed to their property after the death of her mother and is married to one of the sons of her father's sister who is supposed to be chosen on account of his superior fitness to maintain the rights of the Muharree and to inform the resources of the family. The other daughters receiving small marriage portions are either settled near the paternal dwelling and remain dependent upon the

heiress and her husband or from separate establishment for themselves in which cases new hamlets gradually arise around their abodes each of which bears in future the name of the female first settling in it with the affix parah.

The laws of succession operating during the course of many centuries on an agricultural people of simple and frugal habits exempted their situation from the ravages of foreign invaders and annually exporting a considerable quantity of the surplus produce of their country have necessarily produced a great accumulation of wealth, chiefly in the families of the Maharies and in an inferior degree amongst the representatives of such members of the community as could once obtain a considerable establishment at the same time that the singular custom which limits the succession to the female line has had the effect of greatly weakening the personal influence of the chiefs of clans and has greatly counteracted the natural tendency of the Government in such a society to assume first the patriarchal and finally the despotic form and I conceive that it is principally to this cause and by no means to their want of the degree of civilization necessary to induce them to submit to the restraints of law that we are to ascribe the democratic principles of the Garrows and the general want of any established government amongst that people.

From the operation of causes which I am unable to trace it has happened that wealth which chiefly consists in the number of their slaves has accumulated in their families of the chiefs in the interior of the Garrow country and to the southward in much greater degree than on their northern frontier, and the influence arising from this source has notwithstanding the democratic tendency of their institutions enabled the husbands of the muharees in those parts to exercise to a certain extent a right of property in the soil and to maintain a tolerably well established authority on the inhabitants of their respective muharees but these effects have not taken place in the northern and western parts of the country where so great a degree of equality prevails amongst the principal husbandmen or surdars of small hamlets, whether members of the clan or descended from foreigners,

that each of those persons considers himself totally independent of his nominal superior the muharee and even of the clan at large, no individual or body of individuals in which appear to claim any sort of legal power over the free part of their brethren although they all exercise a despotic authority amongst their slaves who form no inconsiderable portion of the community.

A numerous class of persons called Lushcurs pretend indeed to certain honary [*sic*] distinctions chiefly consisting in the use of the above title and the privileges of wearing certain rings on the arms and a cap or other head dress of a red colour. The rank of Lushcur may either be inherited, or it may be obtained by selection by them who already possess the dignity. The ceremony of admission is expensive in proportion to the number of Lushcurs in the clan as each must receive a present for himself and for his wife. These Lushcurs I am informed intermarry only amongst the members of their own order and on great occasions they refuse to eat with the rest of the society, but as I have already observed, I cannot possess [profess?] that they possess in virtue of their title any extraordinary political rights or any power beyond what they may derive individually from their wealth, character or connexions.

My enquiries on the subject of the administration of justice in the northern and western part of the Garrow country confirm the account of this matter given by Doctor Buchanan and quoted in Mr. Sissions report of date the 15th February, 1815, viz. that the submission of the Garrows in that quarter to the decisions of the Councils occasionally assembled to settle their differences is entirely optional and totally independent of any power exercised or claimed by those bodies or by the clan at large, or any member of it to enforce their decrees; the only inducements to conform to which appear to be the solicitations of the friends of the parties, respect for the public opinion and dread of the resentment of their adversaries whose opportunities of revenge are not a little augmented by the difficulty of criminals experience in obtaining a favourable settlement in any other part of the country in consequence of its being an established practice for the muharee and principal

husbandmen in every clan to seize and sell or detain as slaves, all persons of the above description taking refuge in their territories.

The Garrows even in the northern and least improved part of their country seem to be fully as far advanced in the art of agriculture as their neighbours on the plains. From the nature of the country the land must in general be tilled by manual labour but the use of the plough is not unknown in favourable situations and in such when the Garrows themselves cannot manage this instrument they frequently settle Rabbhas and other ryots from the low country and employ them in the cultivation of rice on the plan followed in Bengal on the hills. They cultivate cotton, rice, pulse, maize, teel, ginger, turmeric, pepper and yarns and roots of various kinds and in addition to these articles they raise garden produce in sufficient abundance to enable them to supply the inhabitants of the low country with several of the more common vegetables and fruits of Bengal and with others peculiar to their own hills. They are supposed to raise a sufficient stock of rice for their own consumption of that article as food, but vast quantities of it are used in the preparation of a fermented liquor that constitutes their common beverage and it is for the latter purpose they principally require Bengal rice which is thought to be of inferior quality to that produced in their own country.

The manufactures of the Garrows are confined to the preparation of a coarse kind of cloth, working in iron (and this only in particular clans) to the extent of making some common impliments of husbandry and their swords or longhurrus [?] and casting rings and other ornaments in brass.

Their villages are laid out with great regularity and neatness. The houses are thatched and composed of bamboo lattice work on a frame of substantial saul timbers. Those of the superior classes are of great size and common with the habitations of the lower orders they display an attention to durability and convenience in the construction and to neatness in the workmanship of which no example is to be found in any part of the Company's provinces that I have ever visited while the abundant stores of grain and other necessaries to be

found in the interior and the plentiful stock of hogs, goats and poultry with which they are everywhere surrounded bespeak a general diffusion of wealth amongst this people, greatly exceeding what is to be found amongst our own subjects and which seem to evince that imperfect as the political and judicial institutions of the Garrows may appear to be, they are capable of affording no inconsiderable degree of practical security both to persons and property.

The only peculiar custom of the garrows which it appears necessary to notice in a report of this nature is that of collecting and settling a value on the heads of the slain, and as this practice is fully reported to Government by Mr. Sission and on various other occasions, it is only for the purpose of stating that my enquiries tend to remove the doubts which Mr. Sission stated that he considered to attach to the story of heads being burnt along with the bodies of persons of distinction that [I] again touch upon it.

A person named Gaijam Rabha has positively sworn before me that he himself saw the ceremony performed at the death of the uncle and father-in-law of Dattimah Lushkur a Garrow chief on the Habraghaut frontier on which occasion a slave whose son is still alive in Dogoong was manumitted on consideration of his having brought the head of a boy from [—?—] for the purpose of being burnt with the corpse of his master. The practice is also mentioned by Mr. Eliot in the account of Garrows of the Shreepoor frontier inserted in the 3rd Volume of the Asiatic Researches,* as well authenticated there and as that gentleman observes, it is

*While describing the funeral ceremony to a common Garo Eliot mentions nothing about sacrifice. He however adds: "If it be a person of rank, the pile is decorated with cloth and flowers, and a bullock sacrificed on the occasion, and the head of the bullock is also burnt with the corps: if it be an upper hill *Booneah*, of common rank, the head of one of his slaves would be cut-off, and burnt with him: and if it happens to be one of the first rank *Booneahs*, a large body of his slaves sally out of the hills, and seize a *Hindu*, whose head they cut off, and burn with their chief."

See, J. Eliot, 'Observations on the Inhabitants of the Garrow Hills made during a public deputation in the years 1788 and 1789,' *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. III, 1799, p. 28.

nothing more than the celebration in what the Garrow consider a more dignified scale of sacrificing animals, at the time of burning the bodies of the dead, which as far as I can learn, is an invariable practice amongst all the clans bordering on this district.

Imperfect as the foregoing view of the present state of the independent Garrows must be considered, it is yet perhaps sufficient to shew that their situation differs most essentially from that of the inhabitants of the Bhaugulpore Hills at the time they became subject to the British Government, and that no conclusions are to be drawn from the voluntary submission of the latter people in favour of the practicability of introducing amongst the Garrows a similar system by similar means.

At the time of the introduction of the authority of Government into the Bhaugulpore Hills the inhabitants appear to have been governed by a regular gradation of Chiefs whose authority was undisputed. These persons had learnt to respect the British Government, having been repeatedly and severely chastized for the inroads they were in the habits of making into the plains, and being in common with the whole race, needy in the extreme and unable (as they themselves stated to Mr. Cleveland) to subsist without plunder [or] pensions they voluntarily agreed to relinquish their predatory habits and to resign their independence for an adequate pecuniary consideration and forthright became ready-made, and willing instruments in the hands of the British Government for the management of the rest of their countrymen.

The Garrows on the contrary are rich and individually free to such an extent that they excitingly compare their country to a crab which they affirm has no head. The leading men amongst them are in leading circumstances and consequently far above those temptations which had such weight with the Bhaugulpore chiefs, and were it even deemed politic and found practicable to gain them over to our interest, it seems doubtful whether their goodwill would be of much avail for whatever may be the force of that influence which some of the Garrow chiefs have acquired, either from

their character and personal qualities or from their superior wealth and extensive family connexions, however efficient it may prove in enabling a popular member of that body to command the services of a numerous train of followers on occasion of external warfare, or even to proceed at particular junctures to the partial exercise of arbitrary power at home, it is still far from being consolidated into any system of acknowledged legal authority and being founded principally if not solely, upon public opinion, is evidently incapable of being rendered instrumental to any purpose abnoxious or even not strictly consonant to the general sentiments and national spirit of the people at large, which I am fully persuaded will be found to be decidedly hostile to everything connected with foreign interference.

Under these circumstances, I conceive that the introduction in any degree of the authority of this Government amongst the Garrows, merely by conciliatory means is quite impracticable and I shall therefore confine myself in my succeeding proposals regarding this people to that portion of them whom it will probably be deemed justifiable to coerce if necessary in consequence of their being long ago become, more or less, dependent upon the Zemindars to whom however previously to the late occurrences in Mechparah and to the sale of Karreebarree and Kaloomllooparah, they seem to have stood rather in the relation of tributaries than that of mere ryuts.

APPENDIX E

*Translation of an Agreement executed in the Year 1829
by Dewan Singh, Rajah of Cherrapunji.¹*

(The Rajah having lost his eyesight, Soobha Singh Rajah has put his mark hereto on the part of the Dewan Singh Rajah).

To David Scott,
Agent to the Governor-General.

Some land having been required of me for erecting Government edifices and for gentlemen to build houses on, I voluntarily cede this land, and enter into the following agreement :

1st : For the erection of these buildings, etc., I have given up some land on a place to the East of Cherra Poonjee, bounded on one side by the dell or below the rest of the valley, and on the other by the Seit Oodoi river, where bam-

¹ The post-rebellion agreements extracted from the various chiefs of the Khasi and Jaintia hills brought the latter's territorial possessions under three categories : (i) semi-independent, (ii) dependent and (iii) ceded and conquered. The agreements made during Scott's own time with the rajas of Cherrapunji, Khyrim (both semi-independent), Cheylapunji, Rambrai, Murriow (all dependent), Sooperunji and Byrangpunji (both conquered) set the type of agreements that were to follow with the rest of the chiefs of these three types of possessions. There was however one difference in the case of the agreements executed between the British Government and the Cherra Raja. On the same day (10th Sept., 1829) when the agreement reproduced here was signed, another agreement was also executed between Dewan Singh, Rajah of Cherrapunji and his ministerial officers and others and David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General, North-East Frontier, in which the latter promised on the part of his Government that if the Raja faithfully fulfilled the conditions of that agreement, his territory would be "properly protected" by the Government and if any quarrels arose between him and other chiefs, the Government would undertake the settlement of the disputes.

See, W.J. Allen, *Report on the Administration of the Cossyah and Jyanteah Territory*, 1857-58, p. 27 and Apps. 4 and 4A. See also Apps. 4B to 4X for other agreements between the British Government and the Khasi and Jaintia chiefs.

boos have been put up on the part of the Government; and if more land is required, it will be furnished to the East of that spot; but in exchange for as much land I may give up altogether in my territory, I am to receive an equal quantity of land in the vicinity of Punduah and Company-Gunje within the boundary of Zillah Sylhet.

2nd : I am to establish a Haut in Mouzah Burryaile, in a spot of ground that I have purchased, pertaining to the aforesaid Zillah, and I am always to manage the Haut and to make investigations there according to the customs of my country; and in such matters I am to have nothing to do with the Honourable Company's Courts. This place is moreover to be transferred from the aforesaid Zillah, and made over, as a rent free grant, to my Cossyah territory, and if any person who has committed a wrongful act in the Government territories should come and stay on this land belonging to me, I will apprehend him and deliver him up on demand.

3rd : Wherever limestone may be found on the Cherra Poonjee Hills, in my territory, I will allow the Government to take it gratis when required for their own use.

4th : If any quarrels and disturbances should take place between Bengalees themselves, it will be necessary for you to investigate them and I am to investigate disputes occurring between Cossyhs. Besides which, if any disputes should occur between a Bengalee and a Cossyah, it is to be tried in concert by me and a gentleman on the part of the Honourable Company. To which purport, I have executed this agreement. Dated the 10th September, corresponding with the 26 of Bhadro 1236 B.S.

APPENDIX F

*Epitaph on the government-built tomb of David Scott
at Cherrapunji.¹*

In memory of David Scott, Agent to the Governor-General on the North-East Frontier of Bengal, and Commissioner of Revenue and Circuit in the Districts of Assam, North-Eastern part of Rangpur, Sheerpore and Sylhet, died on 20th August, 1831, aged 45 years and 3 months. This monument is erected by order of the Supreme Government, as a public and lasting record of its consideration for the personal character of the deceased, and of its estimation of the eminent services rendered by him in the administration of the extensive territory committed to his charge. By his demise the Government has been deprived of a most zealous, able and intelligent servant, whose loss it deeply laments, while his name will long be held in grateful remembrance and veneration by the native population, to whom he was justly endeared by his impartial dispensation of justice, his kind and conciliatory manners and his constant unwearied endeavours to promote their happiness and welfare.

¹ This tomb still exists near the Government Dak Bungalow at Cherrapunji. See also Holmes and Co., *The Bengal Obituary or A record to perpetuate the memory of the Departed Worth*, p. 369; *Bengal Past and Present*, Vol. V; *Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 7, 1832, for the photograph of the monument and other obituary notes.

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