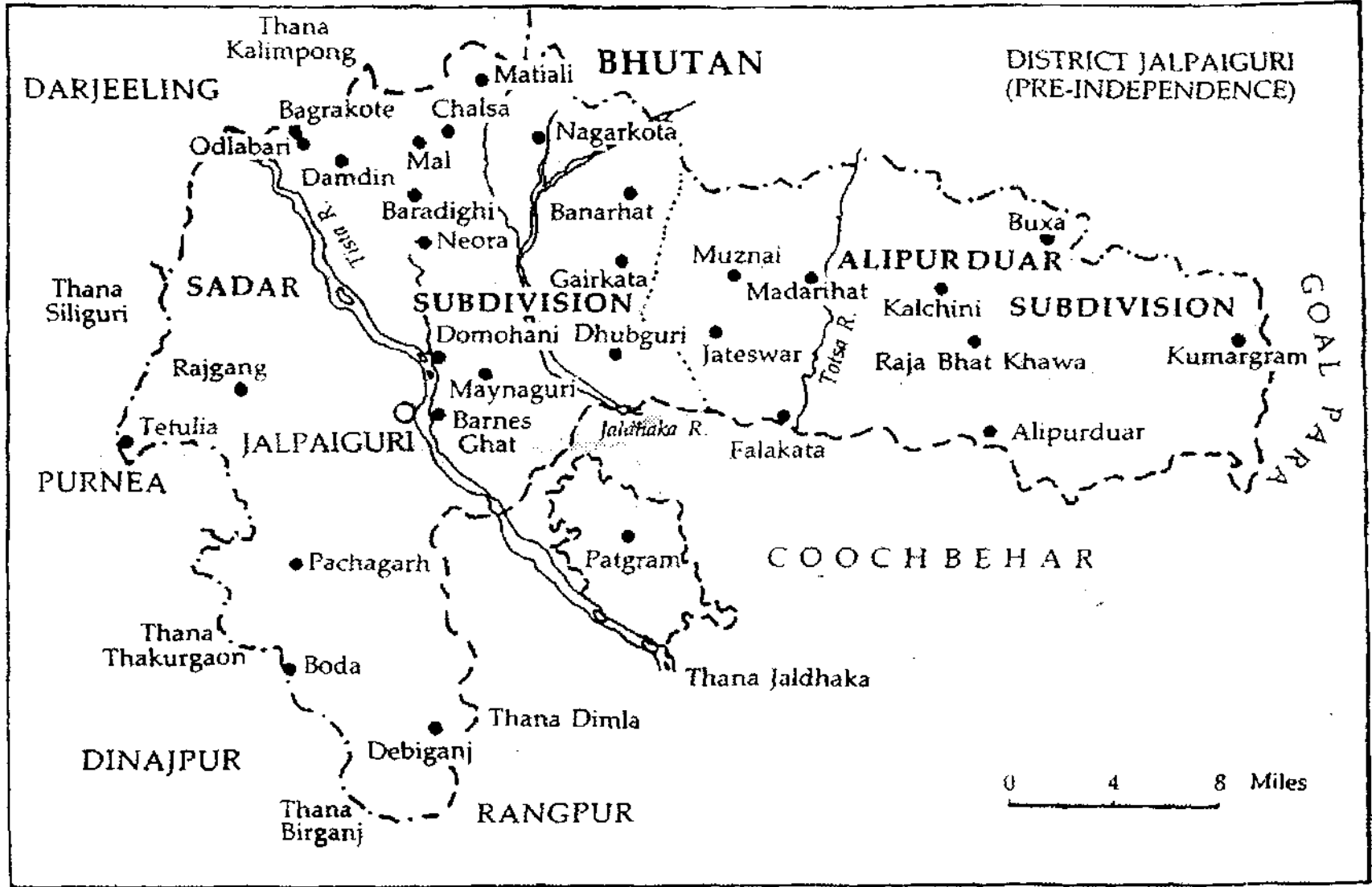


Map of Pre-Partition Jalpaiguri District



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SITUATING THE PROBLEM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE COLONIAL PREDATORY STATE SYSTEM

Till now the major thrust of the academic/intellectual circle, while dealing with the Modern Indian history, is colonialism. But the major error which we often make is in equating Colonial India with a totally non-modern, traditional and a pre-capitalist society. But the characteristic backward features in true sense were not only the hallmark of the *Raj* only it was also the feature of the pre-colonial society, economy and polity; in fact backward aspects of British India's economy and society were rather well structured parts of modern Colonial economy. The failure of indigenous capitalism to industrialise the country did not mean that it was traditional or that it was overwhelmed by tradition, but that this incapacity itself was the product of the same process of Colonialism which gave birth to this capitalism in India. While for European capitalism the preconditions were provided by feudalism and pre-capitalism, for present day India, the basic precondition was provided by the Colonial economy and society which were parts of world capitalism.

It is quite ironical that the forces which were responsible for rapid industrialisation, social and cultural progress in Britain also the forces that maintained economic underdevelopment, social and cultural backwardness in India. In order to get a full grasp of the impact of British colonial policy on our society and economy it is necessary to discuss the different stages of colonisation of the Indian economy.

In order to study the stages of British colonisation in India it is necessary to keep in mind the mode of production, especially the system of extraction of surplus existing in India on the eve of British conquests; the other is the nature of British imperialism, which was subject to change as British economy was transformed under the impact of the Industrial Revolution.

In the pre-colonial period the primary method of surplus extraction throughout India was the levy of land revenue on behalf of or, in the name of the sovereign ruler. The way in which claims to land revenue were assigned, *i.e.*, how this share of the surplus was distributed among members of the ruling class defined the basic elements of polity. The Zamindars, a hereditary or semi-hereditary class of superior right holders over the land also took share in the surplus. Further a good degree of stratification existed within the peasantry. The village was usually the unit of assessment of land revenue and there was the imposition of various rates on the peasants by the upper strata of the peasants in order to fulfill the revenue demands of the state. Further there was a financial pool for "village expenses" and certain customary payments to village artisans and servants formed the basis of village community. This picture helps us to conceive that the pre-colonial Indian village community was a instrument of subsidiary exploitation of the lower segment of the peasantry and the village labourers by the upper strata. The ruling class and perhaps Zamindars found solace in these mechanisms since by authorising an unequal distribution of the revenue burden they ensured its fuller collection.

This was the kind of economy of which the English became masters in Bengal and Southern India during the decade and a half following the middle of the 18th century. The acquisition of *Diwani* in Bengal and *jagirs* in Northern *Circars* and elsewhere provided rationalisation for the main acquisition, the power to levy and collect land revenue and other taxes.

The East India Company was then controlled by the merchant-capitalists of London. These merchants imported Indian piece goods that was financed mainly by the export of treasure. Now, suddenly they found that through this new conquest they could be able to buy without having to pay, yet be able to sell at the full price. This could be possible by treating the entire revenue of the country as gross profits. From these "gross profits" all the expenses necessary for maintaining the government and army, and law and order – the costs of maintenance of the existing system of exploitation – had to

be deducted in order to yield the net profits. These could also be invested for the purchase of Indian commodities, the so-called "investment". The purchase of these commodities in conditions where the buyer had a monopoly, and their sale in markets throughout the world, further enlarged the profits before the "tribute".

Marx saw the tribute from India as a typical form of primitive accumulation in the colonies. The "tribute" in its earliest phase was one of the gross plunder of accumulated treasures and revenue sources of sub-indigenous rulers by the East India Company and its servants. In 1881 this tribute amounted to "more than the total sum of income of 60 million of agriculture and industrial labourers of India". By that time as England had become a capitalist nation it had no scope for primitive accumulation.

In this context the role played by the European Agency Houses should be mentioned. The Agency house was the "Characteristic unit of private British trade with the East". The origin of the Agency houses in Bengal was at the initiative of the British free merchants and the Company's servants. The operators of these Agency houses used to receive fund from their constituents free of interest, which they invested from time to time, as they accumulated in Government securities or remitted to Europe. They also sponsored the export trade by advancing capital from the public, treasury, not always in money but very often in negotiable paper for the China remittance and for the supply of indigo on contract. As a result of these inducements a huge amount of capital came to be invested in indigo factories, saltpeter works and other branches at industries where a huge rate of interest was allowed. Further, the opportunities offered by the Act of 1793 to private speculators, the indigo enterprises, the expanding export trade of Calcutta, favoured the fortunes of these Agency houses and they now could act as bill brokers, ship-owners, insurance agents and purveyors. The Charter Act of 1813 helped the European private traders to indulge in speculations. Now several Agency houses sought permission to send their own ships to England with sugar, cotton, piece-goods and other articles from India.

By the early years of 19th century the initial stage of the Industrial Revolution in England reached completion and the British Colonial relationship with India reached its second or "Opium" phase. As India slowly lost world markets for its craft products, so she could not pay the tribute by the export of its manufactures. So this sudden change brought a crisis in the realisation of tribute. India could not even pay in Indigo and Cotton in the face of West Indies and US competition, a failure marked by the fall of agency houses in 1820s. The ultimate solution was found in the export of opium to China. Two things now happened; one the Indian weavers which Furber was found to be a beneficial gift of the drain in its first phase disappeared and there was rapid extension of the cultivation of opium.

This new opium phase of primitive accumulation continued to rely totally on tax-rent extraction. As the tax-rent extraction intensified (outside the Permanent Settlement areas) certain changes were visible in the relations between the colonial ruler and the ruled. Unlike the previous regimes, where there were allowances for payment in kind, now there was insistence for money rent; thus the old customary community relationships, hitherto sustaining a limited "natural" economy were blown asunder. The occupation of the Western Duars occurred at this stage of matured colonial economy.

In the pre-independence era Jalpaiguri was the northern most district in Bengal presidency. It was bounded on the west by the Purnea district of Bihar and Darjeeling district, on the north by Bhutan and Darjeeling district, on the south by the districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur and the Princely State of Koch Bihar and on the east by Goalpara district of Assam. In 1947, under the Radcliffe Award the five police stations of Patgram, Tetulia, Pachagar, Boda and Debiganj went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

The district is divided into tracts; one tract which lay to the west of Tista river and also Patgram to the east of the river came under the British rule after the East India Company received the Dewani in 1765. The total area of this tract in 1931 was 879 sq. miles. The other tract lying to the east of Tista, known as Western Duars had an area of 2,053 sq. miles.

In the perspective of administrative history of the Bengal Presidency the creation of the district of Jalpaiguri was most recent. It came into existence in January 1869 by the amalgamation of the Tetulia subdivision of Rangpur district with the Duars region which was annexed by the British.

(A) Brief political history till the annexation by the British

Part of the older tract, specifically speaking the *Chaklas* of Boda and Patgram, was under Zamindari estate of the Koch Bihar Raj, who had the status of Zamindars even in the pre-British days. The rest of the older tract was under the Zamindari of Baikunthapur. Baikunthapur in all probability became an independent territory under the rule of the *Raikats*, a Collateral Branch of Koch Bihar Raj; Sishu or Sisyasimha the step brother of Visva, being the first *Raikat*. In the early years the *Raikats* acknowledged the suzerainty of the Koch Bihar Raj. But from about 1588 till 1770s, that is, for nearly two centuries Baikunthapur was in reality an autonomous semi-feudatory Kingdom paying tribute to the Mughal Govt. After the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was conferred in 1765 upon the East Indian Company by Shah Alam, the Company entered into relations with Koch Bihar and Jalpaiguri. In 1774 the Raikat Derpadeva of Batrishazari or Baikunthapur, was confirmed to his possession by the Company but a revenue was assessed on his lands and he was treated as an ordinary Zamindar. After 1793, Baikunthapur was settled in perpetuity.

So far as the Western part of Duars in Jalpaiguri district is concerned it was once controlled by the State of Koch Bihar till the early part of the eighteenth century. Bhutan took possession of this territory later in the wake of internecine quarrels among the members of the Koch Behar Raj family. Many of them in their interest sought the assistance purely on verbal basis and never being authenticated by any treaty or protocol. British occupation of this territory took place in 1865 as a result of the Bhutan wars.

(b) **Brief description of socio-economic conditions before the British annexation**

The pre-British socio-economic state the region and her people under investigation resembles the Asiatic mode typology. The village communities developed the character of an enclave; production and consumption being guided by their own ethos and needs and had developed a culture of self-sustenance which was undisturbed by any demographic change or by the consumerist culture till the eighties of the 19th century.

At the base of the revenue-collecting pyramid stood the bed rock of all social institutions, the village. Each village can itself be called a small pyramid.

The dominant village groups could be regarded from two aspects.

The dominant village groups from the economic perspective were divided into village-land holding class or rich peasant who employed the labour of sharecroppers and the agricultural labourers. From the political point of view the village oligarchy decided the affairs within the village and controlled its relations with the outside world through its headman.

Tweedie the Deputy Commissioner undertook an enquiry on the condition of the tenants of the Western Duars in 1866. He held the view that in the pre-British era there were at least three categories of people involved in the ownership and cultivation of land, *viz.*, *Jotedars*, *Chukanidars* and farm labourers. He also cited the existence of *rayat* whom he intended to distinguish from the *adhiars*.

Dr. Buchanan Hamilton made some critical observations in 1809 about the economic structure in Patgram, Boda and Baikunthapur regions. The Patgram estate which was the property of Cooch Behar, was let to large farmers; some of whom held under leases called *upanchaki* which were granted for a certain specified farm and not according to a particular area so that their rent cannot be increased not their lands measured.

There was the *Kharij Jotedars* who paid their rents directly into the office of the Raja's Collector and the *Dihibandi* group who paid their rents to the village officers.

The large farmers used to let out a part of their land to under-tenants who were capable of paying their rent and cultivated the remainder through *Prajas* on the usual sharing tenure.

In Boda there were about 402 *mauzas*, 27 large *Kharij* farms. Besides this there was the existence of rent free lands which had been given to religious persons and to his servants. There were wealthy farmers called *tahutdars* who were appointed by Raja according to the wishes of other tenants. The lands were not measured when the settlement of the Raja's estates was made. The tenants were averse to such a course, who had paid a small amount of rent. If any tenant had fled away, the others paid the rent until they could procure a new tenant or else they divided the land among themselves. In the year 1788 land measure was first undertaken in Baikunthapur estate which was divided into fifteen *taluks*. In this region there was the absence of large tenants. The rents were low owing probably to the vicinity of Bhutan and Sikkim, 'where there is much waste land and a large proportion of the tenants are constantly removing from one jurisdiction to another'. Originally the farms were let by guess measurement or by *Kaldari* or 'Plough', *i.e.*, a farm was estimated to contain as much as could be cultivated by a certain number of ploughs. There was no subordinate village establishment.

Socially speaking the Rajbansis even in the pre-colonial era constituted the most numerous group among the autochthons of the district. Their accurate origin, status and past history remain obscure. Existing history is largely based on the accounts left by the colonial administration and Colonial ethnographers. They belonged to a semi-tribal community who for a considerable period were settled agriculturists with regional diversities, raising crops mainly using a plough drawn by bullocks, though retaining traces of slash and burn practices or hunting and gathering methods.

The Rajbansi society was somewhat structureless either in forms of *varna* differentiations or in terms of economic definitions of classes. It is true that most of the Rajbansis are Hindus, but actually they were outside the pale of core Hindu culture. The dynamism of the erstwhile Rajbansi society was

sought to be derived from a sense of Kinship and supported by a feeling of each and every member of the society being born to either agnatic or utirine relationship to the other. Therefore, caste or for that matter *varna* categories of core Hindu society had never had much influence in their social structuralisation process. So the concept of untouchability was alien in the Rajbansi culture and the society was more or less egalitarian. Elitism in the old Rajbansi society was largely determined by the Patron-client relationship between the *Jotedars* and the rest of the community. The relationship therefore was vertical, though occasional cases of horizontal relationship among the elites, *i.e.*, *Jotedars*, through marriages, contributed only in the perpetuation of their elitist status.

Apart from the Rajbansis the Mechs were one of the original inhabitants of the Duars and adjacent tracts. Since the 13th century the Mechs experienced a process of both Hinduisation and Islamisation. The society and economy of the Mech community was the same as the Rajbansis; static and totally aloof from the outside world.

(C) Methodological issues:

Since the works is of empirical nature and to be done on the basis of archival materials, the approach to the study will be generally conducted by the analysis of the Universe originating from dependable variables. It is difficult to fit this kind of study into the framework of a paradigm. Because paradigms are generally being done on the tentative grounds. On the contrary, a non-paradigmatic approach assumes that the social constants being not clearly defined the study can proceed only on the basis of variables.

Therefore, on methodological consideration it may be assumed for this study that –

- (i) The economic situation is held under theoretical scrutiny is related to the operation of Colonialism.
- (ii) The Colonial state being predatory the quantum of extractions by the State as revenue should be interpreted for a meaningful

understanding of the issue with reference to percentage of the G.D.P.

- (iii) Colonialism penetrated into different regions with varied civilizational standards and had diverse penetrational strategies.
- (iv) The act of penetration is suspected to destabilise the erstwhile structure of society by releasing new structural forces and resulting in new structure in Colonial interest.

All these postulates are being held as dependable variables amongst many others which generally encumber a social situation and they may help to achieve a result of justifiable grounds. So it is always through formulations of hypothesis with all the logically related auxiliary hypotheses that the work can proceed.

(D)

Since the hypotheses can be examined largely in the context of the economy of the territory the conceptual changes in economic history required deeper attention. Recent decades have seen important changes in the objectives, techniques and methodologies of economic history. As a confluence of two different streams of thought and practice – that of the economic theorists on the one hand and that of general or political historians on the other – economic history often lost its course. Regarding the concept of universal theory, history and economics, these two branches of Social Science reflected the characteristics of its diverse ancestry. The historical methodology while treating theory as the child of empirical data in Social Sciences, prefers to contextualise any 'Unique' event in the background of space and time. The attempt to underrate theory have found expression in Sir John Clapham's article on 'Economic History as a Discipline' in the Encyclopaedia, where he strongly advocated of the possibility of a new kind of economic history with statistical records, while undermining the scope of abstract theory.

In this respect while distancing from the event as well of any universal theory, a historian collects the empirical data and then evolves a hypothesis on a number of variables.

Conversely in spite of its often high descriptive merits, the older type of institutional history was little regarded by economists; which according to them was too loosely constructed to conform to the canons of logical analysis. The study of prices, wages and profits provides an endless series of problems in the social development of early modern society comprising saving, investment, private and public borrowing, and the consequences of all these on production and consumption.

To assess the interaction of such variables we are likely to have to rely on data which an economist would dismiss as flimsy and unreliable. In this respect his primary objective is first to evolve an universal theory and then he selects dependable variables which fit into his theory.

But the most refreshing characteristic of economic historiography in the last quarter century has been a growing degree of integration between history and economic theory. This has been possible because of the flexible stance adopted by these two. The most notable recent change in the relationship between economic history and economic theory may be characterised as a move away from exogenous and towards endogenous theory. Purely exogenous theory was invariably proved either too general or wholly irrelevant to the needs of the working historian. Its logical modes will continue to be a successful source of working hypothesis; but his greater need is for working tools, and it is this which is creating new, empirical, statistical methods which are emerging endogenously from the stuff of history itself.

The new element in demographic and conjunctural history desires partly from its use of material, partly from its use of new techniques. Demographic movements often appear as universal grounds well due to some far distance occurrence or as an undercurrent or at least a continental scale. Their investigations therefore need to work on an international scale. So now even the historians accustomed to deal with 'Conjunctural' situations have admitted that certain tendencies recur and are recognizable to the historian whose vision is broad or long enough to discern the underlying similarities. So they had to subscribe to some of the universal aspect of theory which the economists propounded.

On the other hand the economists have shown much flexibility in selecting the dependable variables.

So the merger of this two diverse schools and practices produced a better scope for the economic history itself.

The core issue in the colonial socio-economic history so far have been whether the Colonial rule actually had been able to transform the erstwhile socio-economic structure of India. In short, whether the rule was predatory or not. While the traditional view postulating a qualitative transformation of the rural society has recently been questioned by the continuity school which views this transformation as a continuation of the pre-British system. But the present work is devoted to explore the mechanics of the process of penetration of the British Colonial authority in the capital market in the northern part of Bengal, and attempts to trace the nature and character of new socio-economic changes in the North Bengal society and polity for which the introduction of the *jotedari* system and the new land policy of the British was responsible. Further the present study attempts to examine the intensity of colonial penetration in the economy through the introduction of tea industry in North Bengal by a process of commercialising cash-crops.

In the socio-economic field it will suggest the socio-economic dislocations and the character and morphology of protest movements in North Bengal.

II

The Western or Bengal Duars were eleven in number extending along the foot of the Himalayas between the Tista and the Manas river. (At present the Bengal Duars have an area of 1,968 sq. miles but were supposed to comprise about a 1,000 sq. miles more in 1865).

The Duars region is a strip to land about 20 miles in breadth from north to south. It is about 180 miles in length from west to east. Beginning from the eastern bank of the Tista river it extends eastward along the entire

southern boundary of Bhutan. It comprises the eastern part of Jalpaiguri district known as the Western Duars and it extends further east covering the northern strips of Goalpara and Kamrup and a north western portion of Darrang district of Assam. The term Duar means passes, gate. It is wrongly applied to the level tract upon which the mountain passes open. Thus a much wider meaning has become attached to the word than that which etymologically belongs to it. From west to east the Duars are named Dalimkote, Mainaguri, Chamurchi, Lucki, Buxa, Balka, Guma, Chirang and Bagh.¹

The contemporary evidences throw insight not only on the history of Assam and Cooch Behar Raj State but also on the pre-colonial political conditions of the Duars region. The chronicles of the Cooch Behar Raj family show that Bishu, the grandson of King Hajo not only became the King of Kamrup in the 1522 but was the founder of Cooch Behar Raj family. His brother Sishu was the founder of Raikat family of Baikunthapur, the Rajas of Jalpaiguri. Sishu and his descendents held the Baikunthapur sub-kingdom originally as vassals under Cooch Behar Raj. Baikunthapur Kingdom of the Raikats included Moynaguri-Jalpesh areas of the Western Duars.

In earlier time the Kingdom of Cooch Behar expanded its empire upto Dalimkot on the east bank of the Tista river. In those days the Kingdom of Cooch Behar Raj included half of Assam and it extended beyond the Karatoya river in the west and upto the foothills of the Himalayas comprising the western sector of the Western Duars.² In this period and for a long time afterwards the Bengal Duars or the Western Duars not a well-defined territory. The Cooch Behar Raj had considerable portion of territory within his dominions in the Maraghat and Chamurchi are. For some tracts he used to receive tribute from the Bhutias. It is said that the Deb Raj of Bhutan paid tribute to the Maharaja Prannarayan of Cooch Behar.

The original inhabitants of Rangpur, Cooch Behar, Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang districts had been predominantly the "Kochs", subsequently known as the Rajbansis. The Rajas of Darrang and Cooch Behar, the Raikats of

Baikunthapur and many other lesser chiefs of this class ruled over the entire region lying on the southern and western side of the Duars including the Western sector of the same.

From the 16th century onwards, there began the repeated invasions of the Bhutias into the Bengal Duars region. As there was no powerful chief to protect the local inhabitants had to purchase peace on payment of taxes demanded by the Bhutias. Later on, the Bhutias made permanent arrangements for regular collection of these taxes as land-revenue and capitation taxes. From these events it is clear that there was a rapid decline of the Cooch Behar Raj over the larger portion of the Duars region. Further the Raja of Baikunthapur who was holding both Jalpesh and Mainaguri became independent ruler.

During the time of the Mughal invasion of Cooch Behar Kingdom in the first decade of the 18th century (1710-11), the attempt of Raja of Baikunthapur to annex a part of the territory of the king of Cooch Behar by joining with the Mughals failed. On the occasion of a treaty between the Mughals and the king of Cooch Behar, the Raja of Baikunthapur made an arrangement for his large number of Muslim subjects in his territories and a good number of them were sent beyond Moynaguri areas of the Duars. But the majority of the settlers there had been the Rajbansis and the reclamation of jungles from the western sector proceeded eastward in a systematic way.

In the western sector, the Rajas of Baikunthapur fought many fierce battles with the Bhutias. Although many villages of the Rajas of Baikunthapur changed hands frequently in course of such conflicts but the Moynaguri and Jalpesh areas could not be annexed by the Bhutias.

In 1765 the East India Company got the right of Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. To drive away the Bhutias, the Cooch Behar Raj made a pact with the Company in 1772 whereby Cooch Behar virtually became a feudatory state of the Company, and the British forces drove away the Bhutias from Cooch Behar.

In the treaty of 1774 concluded between the Company and the Bhutias it was promised by the Bhutias that they would not make any incursion into the territories of the Rajas of Baikunthapur, who in the meantime had become a rent-paying Zamindar under the East India Company.

Even after these events the English could not evict the Bhutias from the Bengal Duars. The Bengal Duars were under the jurisdiction of Paro Penlop, the Governor of the Western division of Bhutan. The Tongsa Penlop's jurisdiction extended from the river Manas eastward and included all the Duars in Kamrup and Darrang in Assam.³ These two chiefs were the key players in the Bhutan political circle. Next in rank to the Paro *Penlop* were Bhutanese officers known as "Soobah" or *Subah*. There were 3 such *Subahs* in the area between the river Tista and Gadadhar, the *Subah* of Dalimkote, Lakhimpur Duar and the Buxa Duar. Below the *Subahs* there were a class of officials known as *Katham*s who exercised immediate control in the management of the Duars.

Though subordinate in rank, the *Katham*s were the pivot of Bhutanese administration in the plains. It seems that the appellation "Katham" was prevalent only to the west of the Gadadhar. Eastward it took the forms of "Luskar, Wuzdar or Mondal".⁴

The demography under Bhutan had this peculiarity. They were not inhabited by the Bhutanese. The slopes of outer hills were inhabited by *Mechis, Garos, Cacharees, Parbatias, the Totos* and other tribes.⁵ the plains were settled by the *Koch, the Rajbansis, Bengalees* and others.

It was during the annexation of Assam (1826), the Government of India realised the potentialities of the Duars region. In 1832 Robertson in his paper on Bhutan⁶ expressed that the Bhutan could be reduced to "Our terms" by merely shutting up the passes and preventing the Bhutanese from coming to the plains or receiving any supplies therefrom. The expenses of retaining possession of the low-lands could be easily made by the establishment of "Hauts or market" on the principle of those in the Goalpara district. They would prove a "most fruitful source of revenue". In 1838 Pemberton in his

report remarked that “the Duars were the most valuable portion of Bhutan territory”.

It was from the Duars region that the Bhutanese obtained “almost every article of consumption or luxury”. Their trade was with the Duars and the priests and higher classes subsisted almost “exclusively upon their produce”. In 1841 Captain Jenkins in his letter to the Government of India expressed that the extensive tracts of the Duars could absorb the “out-pouring” of population from Rangpur and Cooch Behar. Their rich forest wealth could be well-utilised for the restoration of the timber trade of eastern Bengal. Before the outbreak of Duar war Ashley Eden, British Envoy to Bhutan tried to dispel the “mistaken impression” about the Duars. They were neither unhealthy, nor unproductive, “a portion of these under jungle may be unhealthy in the rains, but when the jungle is cleared and a free current of air admitted they will be just as healthy as any other part of the plains or healthier, for the natural drainage of the country is excellent...the soil is a rich black vegetable mould abounding with magnificent timber”. There is some of the “finest” grazing ground in India in the Duars.⁷ From the Ambiok Camp he observed that “under a good Government”, the Duars would present a new panorama with flourishing “Cotton fields and tea fields and timber depots”.⁸ Cecil Beadon the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal observed in his minute⁹ that the Duars would provide a new field for the enterprise of European timber merchants and cotton planters. He stated that “there can be no reasonable doubt that the low lands of the Bengal Duars, being nearly ten times as large as Darjeeling Terai...would yield a revenue of not less than four or five lakhs of rupees while amount to be realised by the sale of waste land would be very considerable”. More information was gathered during the time of the Duars war; lime deposits near Buxa were so abundant that it would end the monopoly of Cherapunji in Assam. The country was rich in “tea soil, lime and timber”.

The *Dharma Raja* had prevented the agriculturists from “Cultivating tea lest the profitable trade with Tibet be affected”. Col. Haughton estimated that

the revenue of the rice tracts alone will yield two lakhs of rupees in a few years.

Slowly there was a visible change of the policy of the Government of India towards Bhutan. This change of policy was closely related to the rapid economic prosperity of Assam due to the extensive cultivation of tea. But Assam's resources could not however be fully utilised so long as Bhutan distracted the attention of the Government.

It is natural that the Governor-General asked Jenkins to submit a specific plan to end all existing disparities with Bhutan.¹⁰ Jenkins expressed the view that the British Government without appealing to her (Bhotan) reason should not embark upon the strong arm policy.

On the occasion of murder of Gambhir, the Kacchari, Duar-Officer by some Bhutanese the relation between the British Government and the Bhotan Government became strained. Jenkins looked upon the incidence with concern. He had administered the Duar efficiently and had been particular about the payment of the British dues. Should the lawlessness in the Duars spread into the British frontier, there was no authority in Bhotan to appeal to.

In January 1839 Jenkins proposed the annexation of the Kalling Duar. He further stressed in favour of annexation on the ground that Bhotan had not paid so far either the arrears of the current year's tribute for the Kamrup Duars.¹¹

The Government of India sent Jenkins a note sounding caution. From the year of Anglo-Nepalese war, whenever the British Government considered the question of adopting a strong policy towards the Himalayan countries, it also pondered the possibility of adverse reactions among the Chinese at Lhasa or of anti-British conspiracies among the Himalayan countries. The Government of India however did not object to a temporary attachment of any Duars "for which a heavy arrear due or from the managers of which atonement may be requirable".¹² The Duars were to remain attached so long as Bhotan was not free from political turmoil. But whenever Bhotan should be in a position to negotiate, the British Government would listen to her claims and adjust them.

Soon the Government of India got involved into a problem in the adjacent Duars region. Char Duar and Kuriapara were on the eastern frontier of Darrang, and at the extreme southern end of Bhutan. A group of chiefs known as *Sat Rajas*, a sort of tribal people of the hills, subject to the Raja of Towang who again was a tributary of Lhasa, blackmailed these Duars people. The Government of India aspired that with the cooperation of the Raja of Towang, they would be able to solve the problems. But contrary to the expectation of the British the Raja of Towang did not show any interest to the letters which Jenkins addressed to him. Therefore the British were forced to take action and in October 1839, the lower Assam Sibandis started operations in Darrang as well as in Charduar and Kuriapara.

However the Government of India wanted Jenkins to hold those Duars only upto the end of 1840.¹³ This was partly due to Lord Auckland's heavy commitments on north-eastern frontier of India and partly due to the absence of an express approval from England. However these expeditions made two aspects clear first Jenkins foresight regarding the problems relating to the north-east frontier was superior to his counterpart Pemberton who had visited Bhutan. Secondly contrary to the British anxiety, the Chinese showed little interest in the recent British invasion in the Bhutanese territories. But it was difficult to predict that in the long run how much the Chinese at Lhasa could keep themselves aloof from these events. On the part of the British this was the first test of a forward policy and now the British were willing to watch and see the results.

The Duars officers however learned nothing from the British resumption of the Darrang Duars. From Sidli there were fresh Bhotanese incursions in the Khuntaghat Pargana of Bijne.¹⁴ In response Jenkins favoured the occupation of the remaining Duars in Assam and even those of in Bengal. However equally he was prepared to offer Bhutan a share of the revenue of the annexed Duars.

Bhotan saw no harm in that proposal because her main interest was in the income from the Duars. So as regular and handsome subsidy from the

Government of India would compensate for the loss of territories which she could never claim as her rightful possessions.¹⁵

In September 1841, the Government of India agreed to the annexation of the five remaining Duars in Assam. On 8 October 1841 Jenkins ordered Lieutenant Scott to complete the annexation of the Darrang Duars and on 11 November, Captain Mathic annexed the Duars in Kamrup. But despite these measures Bhutan did not put any strong resistance to the advancing British.

The next objective of the British was the pacification of Bhotan. In order to maintain a good and cordial relation with Bhutan Lord Ellenborough rejected the requests of the chiefs of Sidli and Bijni who wanted their Duars to be taken under British protection. Even the recommendations on this subject made by Jenkins were not entertained by the Government of India.¹⁶

In 1846 when Bhutan made requests for the subsidy the Governor General's Agent on the North-east frontier released the first instalment of Rs. 10,000 for the year 1845-46. Next year, in addition to the subsidy for 1846-47, he also paid Rs. 30,000 for 1842-43, 1843-44 and 1844-45. The Agent to the Governor-General thought that such a huge disbursement of money to Bhotan would convince her in the honesty of the British and it would also induce her to enter into the agreement which the Government of India so much desired.¹⁷

In the Bengal Duars region soon the Anglo-Bhutanese relation became strained on account of the reconciliation of Hargovind Katham with Bhotan. In the factional fight between the two *Dev-Rajas*, Har Govind Katham sided with the Ex-Dev. In retaliation the existing Dev Raja placed Durga Dev of the Baikunthapur Raikat family against Har Govind Katham. He was the *izaradar* of the Ambari-Falakata region, but he was not contented with these territories. Naturally, after this offer of Dev Raja, Durga Dev became elated at the prospect of grabbing the territories on the east bank of the river Tista, then under the occupation of Har Govind Katham. Soon the whole region between the river Tista and Jaldhaka became a battlefield between Durga Dev Raikat and Har Govind Katham. To keep the British frontier free from troubles, the Government of India sealed the border of Rangpur.¹⁸ Ultimately Durga Dev was able to defeat his rival.

Naturally the British could not turn a blind eye to these incidents as Durga Dev was first a British subject and then an *Ijaradar* under the British. In January 1842, Dr. A. Campbell in charge of civil affairs in Darjeeling, was deputed to enquire into the situation. After going through the whole affair he found Durga Dev Raikat as the sole culprit and the Government of India took strong measures against Durga Dev who was told not to go to Bhutan territory without prior permission from the Rangpur Magistrate.

In the meantime Bhotan became willing to transfer the *izara* of Ambari-Falakata to the Government of India in the hope of the regular receipt of its rent. The Government of India readily accepted to hold Ambari-Falakata in firm. In February 1842, on an annual rent of Rs. 800 – the Government took over the management of the territory that Warren Hastings as a mark of friendship had conferred upon Bhutan.¹⁹

Even after the Katham episode the Anglo-Bhutan border was not peaceful. There were repeated reports about Bhutanese incursions within the British territory. In spite of the desire of the Government to get the boundaries “clearly defined by some distinct and lasting mode of demarcation” nothing was done.

Soon a boundary dispute occurred between the Koch Behar State and Bhotan but the British Government was not bothered about it as long as Bhotan did not commit any act of violence within the British territory. In respect of the Assam Duars, the Government was aware of its sovereign rights; to the Bengal Duars, on the contrary, it accepted long ago the similar rights of Bhutan. As a result of the attitude of the Government the Bhutanese frequently plundered the frontier villages of Cooch Behar Raj. Further the passivity to the frontier incidents in North Bengal emboldened the local Bhutanese officers and their under agents. On the incident of an organised robbery in Kamrup by the chief of Dewangiri, Jenkins advocated immediate occupation of the Bengal Duars. The Government of India also took some strong measures and the measures produced good results. The Government of Bhotan apologised and Jenkins deducted nearly 3,000 rupees from Bhutan's

subsidy, being the estimated value of the property plundered by the chief of Dewangiri. Soon there was a case of abduction of Arun Sing, a hereditary Zamindar of Guma who had settled in Ghurla by some Bhutanese from Bhalka Duar. The people at the Bengal Duars promised to take up arms against Bhutan if the British Government sent reinforcements for fighting on their sides. Jenkins therefore proposed that the Bengal Duars be occupied and the Government of Bhotan given a share of their revenue.²⁰

Both the reports of Jenkins and the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal stated the weak character of the Central Government and the growing power of the *Penlops* of Tongsa and Paro who became virtual rulers of east and west Bhutan. The Lieutenant-Governor therefore advocated in favour of formal warning to the highest authority of the Bhutan Government and should this warning go unheeded by them Ambari-Falakata and Jalpesh "part and parcel of the Bykuntapore Zemindaree of Rangpore" were to be first annexed. If further measures were necessary, portions of the Bengal Duars should be occupied.²¹ Lord Canning accepted the recommendations of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and he (Lieutenant-Governor) was requested to inform the Dharma and Dev Rajas of this decision of the Government. The *Penlops* of Tongsa and Paro also were to be duly informed. But in the meanwhile the Mutiny of 1857 stayed all proceedings.

Naturally then Jenkins advised the Government of India on 12 October 1857 not to embark upon a forward policy relating to the Bhutan Government. For if British relations with Bhutan takes a hostile character, the Government at this juncture of mutiny would find it difficult to spare troops for the Bhutan frontier. So threats unless well supported by armed forces would only exasperate not frighten the Bhotanese. It should be mentioned that in the Revolt when disgruntled feudal princes actively participated in the Mutiny, Bhutan was quiescent. When the Mutiny ended it increased the debt of India by about £38½ millions and the military charges augmented the annual expenditure by about £18 millions. Obviously, there was little scope for an adventurist policy against Bhutan. The Government of India therefore

understood the arguments of Jenkins and abandoned the idea of pressing its demands upon Bhotan. A forward policy suffered defeat before it could be applied at all.

However, soon the Indo-Bhutanese relation was again strained on the occasion of a robbery in Ghurla from the Guma Duar. This incident forced the Government of India to take a strong action. On 31 January 1860, Lord Canning ordered Ambari-Falakata to be occupied; he wanted the Bhutan Government to be informed that this territory would be released only after the British demands were met.²² Till now the British were committed to any policy of retributive coercion.

The Viceroy Canning had realised before the Mutiny that opening of dialogue with Bhutan was one way of ensuring stability on the frontier. In 1861 Henry Hopkinson, Commissioner and Governor-General's Agent, expressed that a mission might succeed in establishing a permanent Agent at the Bhutanese Court. The latter would be the "best instrument for paving the way for friendly intercourse with Lhasa".²³

Before leaving India Canning expressed in a note²⁴ that "it is very expedient that a mission should be sent to explain what our demands are and what we shall do if they are not conceded". He was doubtful "as to placing an Agent in Bhutan" and thought the question could be decided "after the result of the mission is known". In July 1862, a messenger named Mukund Singh was sent to the Court of the Dev Raja. The reply he brought was unsatisfactory and contradictory.

The next mission was of Ashley Eden who was appointed as the British envoy to Bhotan on 11 August 1863. Eden was furnished with a draft treaty, covering nine points, *viz.*, (1) Peace and friendship between the two Governments should continue; (2) the Government of Bhotan within 6 months from the date of the ratification of the treaty should release persons and properties carried off from the British territories, Sikkim and Cooch Behar; (3) after the restitution of those persons and properties, the Government of India would deliver Ambari-Falakata to Bhotan on condition the latter guaranteed

against future depredations. The Government of India, however was willing to pay her an annual subsidy on account of that territory, should Bhotan agreed to transfer it to the Government of India; (4) the Government of India was prepared for full investigation and assure full redress for any outrages committed by British subjects in Bhotan territories; (5) the Government of India also agreed to surrender any Bhotanese found to have taken refuge in British territory after committing any serious offence in his own country; (6) the Government of Bhotan would act likewise if such offenders from British territory took shelter in Bhotan; (7) the Government of Bhotan should abide by the arbitration of the Government of India in all disputes with Sikkim or Cooch Behar; (8) it should receive with due honour British envoys sent from time to time; and (9) there should be free trade between the two Governments and both of them should accord to equal treatment to each other's subjects.²⁵

But the Eden Mission ended in fiasco. Not only Tongsa Penlop objected to certain terms of the draft treaty but Eden was forced to sign a treaty of Penlop's liking. It was natural that for all the humiliations suffered by Eden and his party all the faults should be cast upon Bhutan. Fear and distrust among the Himalayan people shaped their attitude towards the British power no doubt but that Eden failed because of the unfair, unsatisfactory and the aggressive policy of the British Government was also not true. In fact the weakness of the theocratic-monarchisms in Bhotan was the main obstacle to Eden's success. The *Penlop* of Tongsa did not allow any agreement with the British until his own claims were settled. So the chance of success of Eden was a remote possibility.

In the period between a return of Eden's mission and the outbreak of the Duars War (April-November 1864) it was the Bengal Government which decided on the issue of war.

A memorandum dated the 6th May 1864 drawn up Eden at Darjeeling related the initiative of the Bengal Government. He stated that military occupation of Bhutan could be effected "without difficulty" and further he expressed the fear that the Government of India might be unwilling "to go so

far as to give the whole of Bhutan the benefit of British rule" and recommended the permanent annexation of the Bengal Duars.

It seems that as late as the summer of 1864 the Government of India had the idea of a limited retaliation. Financial and political compulsions in the wake of the revolt of 1857 were yet to be solved. The Bhutan Government was told that the "district of Ambari-Falakata heretofore held in rent from the Bhutan Government is permanently annexed to British dominion and all payment of rent from that district and the revenue from the Assam Duars to the Bhutan Government has ceased forever".

The Secretary of State Wood was averse in either annexing Bhutan or to reduce it and to impose terms and withdraw. He clearly stated "...on the whole I am of opinion that the occupation of all the Duars in the first instance is the best course to be adopted".²⁶ Thus the idea of "slow and successive", "punitive" operation of 1857 was given up and the Duars war was not inevitable.

Here was a policy which marked a significant departure from the previous traditional thinking about Bhutan. George Bogle's observation that an invasion of Bhutan was strategically and economically a blunder had given way to the thinking that for the Bengal Duars it was worth undertaking. The possibility of Chinese or Tibetan involvement in case of rupture with Bhutan did not worry the Bengal civilians now. The course of events henceforth leading to the outbreak of the Duar War (November 1864) leaves the impression that the Bengal Government left no option for which Canning had so vigorously advocated.

The Anglo-Bhutanese war did not last long and soon the Bhutanese were compelled to withdraw. Negotiations begun at Sinchula between Col. Bruce and Bhutanese officers. The Bhutan Government was told to tender apology for the insult of the British mission under Eden and surrender the treaty extorted from the envoy, and they must give up the guns abandoned at Dewangiri within 2 months. The final treaty known to the Bhutanese as the "Ten Article Treaty of Rawa Pani" provides for the cession by the Bhutan

Government in permanent sovereignty of the "whole of the tract known as the Eighteen Duars bordering on the district of Rangpur, Cooch Behar and Assam together with the taluks of Ambari-Falakata and the hill territory on the left bank of the Tista upto such points as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose.... (Article II). The Bhutan Government agreed to surrender all British subjects as well as the subjects of the Chiefs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar (Articles III, VI and VII). In lieu of the abstraction of the entire revenue of the Duars the treaty provided for the payment of an annual subsidy of Rs. 25,000.00, the said amount could be enhanced upto Rs. 50,000.00 provided the Bhutan Government behaves like a good neighbour (Article IV). The Bhutan Government agreed to "refer to the arbitration of the British Government in all disputes with or causes of complaint against the Rajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar and to abide by the decision of the British Government" (Article VIII). The article providing for free trade prescribed "no duties shall be levied on Bhutanese goods imported into British territories, nor shall the Bhutan Government levy arms duties on British goods imported into or transported through the Bhutan territories" (Article IX). By an announcement dated 4 July 1866, the Duars ceded by the treaty of Sinchula were attached to the Bengal Division of the Presidency of Fort William and were placed under the immediate control of the Lieutenant Governor.

An official document expressed the view that the rights of the British Government to all the Bhutan Duars including those of Assam and *taluk* Ambari-Falakata and the hill territory of the left bank of the Tista had been recognised. These territories were now ceded unconditionally forever. Thus Bhutanese consent for the "resumption" of the Assam Duars in 1841 in which then "no written agreement had been made²⁸" was obtained after twenty-five years by the treaty of Sinchula. It was now possible to cut off Bhutan from direct contact with Sikkim by a readjustment of boundary. Further this treaty made it possible for trade with Tibet through the Chumbi valley in as much as

it had ensured free trade with and transit facilities through Bhutan. Surgeon Rennie highlighted the importance of the treaty in the following words.

“Though direct communication with Lhasa within a moderate period may not be practicable more extended commerce with Tibet than now exists is not necessarily precluded and it occurs to me that our present relations with Bhutan might be turned to useful account with reference thereto.”²⁹

The Treaty of Sinchula took the first step of controlling Bhutan's relations with foreign countries and the Duar war helped to shape the policy of non-intervention in the internal affairs of Bhutan. Nearly 2,000 sq. miles of land was annexed in the Western Duars by the Treaty of Sinchula which now became the fertile ground for British capitalism.

The British held that before the annexation of the Duars there was practically no well coordinated administration in the region. So after the formation of the district, the main task of the Government was to lay the foundation of administration which would in future become a part and parcel of the British economic exploitative machinery. The first administrative step was to extend by notification in the Calcutta Gazette in 1866 with the following acts of the Western Duars region - Act VIII of 1859 (Civil Procedure Code), Act XXV of 1861 (Criminal Procedure Code), Act X of 1862 (Stamp), Act XIV of 1859 (Limitation). Then followed an attempt to make a land settlement, the disputes in connection there with being tried by the ordinary civil courts according to the provisions of Act VIII. As this procedure delayed the settlement operations, it was resolved to bring the territory more directly under the Lieutenant Governor and Act XVI of 1869 was accordingly passed which removed the Bhutan Duars from the 1874 jurisdiction of the civil courts. The scheduled district Act XIX placed the entire jurisdiction as regards all cases relating to immovable property, revenue and rent in the hand of a special officer, *i.e.*, Deputy Commissioner who came to enjoy and exercise much greater power and authority than the District Magistrates of the non-regulated area.³⁰ In his work of administration Deputy Commissioner was assisted by two divisional officers and Superintendent of Police, the officer in charge of the district police administration. Till early 1940 all these officials

were British and they supervised a large body of Indian assistants and clerks. The Act XVI of 1869 enforced certain rules which had been framed by Lieutenant Governor for the guidance 'of the officer appointed to carry out the settlement of the country'.³¹ These rules constituted the only law under which questions relating to land in the Duars can be settled. These rules did not extend Regulation VII of 1822 to the Duars region but only gave the impression that the Deputy Commissioner was to be guided by the provisions of the said Regulation: "they make the orders of the said special officer appealable to the Commissioner, and provide for the order of the Commissioner being final, subject only to an appeal to the Lieutenant Governor himself".³² As far as the old Regulation portion of Julpigoree was concerned, the Act XV of 1874 made but little change.

To this was added Ambari-Falakata which though not within the Western Duars region was annexed at the same time from Bhutan. This area also was kept under "*Khas*" management. Prior to 1874 Government revenues in these areas were collected by farmers and petty *Tahsildars*, but as this system proved to be causing inconvenience to the people, it was finally abolished and the *Tehsil* officers were transferred to the Government Estates.

The 19th and 20th centuries saw the vigorous penetration of British Colonial authority in these regions (non-regulation tract). The British authorities intervened in the non-regulated areas when situation demanded; they would not tolerate any kind of disturbances in these tracts which could put a great toll on the British economic interests. They introduced important changes in the agrarian system prevailing in the tract annexed from Bhutan (the area separated from Rangpur district was already under the purview of the Permanent Settlement) started periodic measurements of land and reassessment of revenue, vigorously sponsored the expansion of the tea plantation systems. The growing intervention of the Colonial state came to have a deep and far-reaching impact on the economy and society in Jalpaiguri district.

While the administrative set-up represented a crucial component of the power-structure that emerged during British rule, there were several other

important elements, *i.e.*, the European planters and their assistants with their Indian counterparts who exercised power and control, in the regulation tract, the *Zamindars*, their *amlas*, the *jotedars*, the moneylenders, grain dealers and traders. In the Duars region all the latter elements except the *Zamindars* and their *amlas* were present. Under the British rule they consolidated their position.

III

In the first half of the 15th century, *Niladdhaj* a scion of the Khen dynasty established his empire which included Goalpara, Kamrup districts in Assam, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar and part of Dinajpur region. But the invasion of *Hussain Shah*, the Nawab of Bengal, disintegrated the Khen empire and a number of Koch feudal lords made their presence at this stage.³¹ One of these feudal lords was Hajo and his two sons *Chandan* and *Biswa Simha*. *Biswa Simha* in later year became the founder of the Koch Bihar state, while his elder brother *Sishu Simha* got the title '*Raikat*' which signified according to W.W. Hunter both posts of Prime Minister and Military General. Nevertheless, *Sishu Simha* at that time was in charge of warfare and administration. So the title *Raikat* signified only the responsibilities which were associated with the post of Prime Minister or Military General. Under the able guidance of *Sisu Simha* Rangpur and most parts of Jalpaiguri were conquered and thus the foundation stone of the Baikunthapur Estate was laid down. During the time of next *Raikat*, *i.e.*, *Shib Dev Raikat* a battle took place between the Koch Bihar King *Laxmi Narayan* and the Mughals in which the *Raikats* assisted the Koch King.³² The reign of the next two successive *Raikats*, *i.e.*, *Monohar Dev* and *Manikya Dev* are uneventful.

During the time of Koch King *Modnarayan*, the Cooch Behar state was passing through a stage of internecine quarrel. There was a joint attack by *Darpanarayan*, one of the pretenders of the throne, and the *Dev Raja* of Bhutan. But the king was able to repel the invaders with the help of *Mali Dev Raikat*.

After the death of Modnarayan, Darpanarayan again with *Dev Raja* attacked Koch Behar. But the news of arrival of *Bhuj Dev Raikat* and *Yajna Dev Raikat* they fled and *Basu Dev Narayan* was declared as the King of Koch Behar. But soon a fresh bid of incursion took place in which *Jagat Narayan*, the brother of Darpanarayan took a leading role; the other collaborators were *Yagnanarayan* and the *Dev Raja* of Bhutan. As the news of the death of *Basudev Narayan Bhuj dev Raikat* again came and was able to defeat the invading party and *Mohendra Narayan* was declared as the King of Koch Behar. During the tenure of *Bhuj Dev Raikat* and glory and prestige of the *Raikats* reached its apex. Pressure on the state was exerted in past also. During the time of *Bishu Dev Raikat* there was an invasion by the Mughals. At that time, the *Bhutan Dev Raja*, Cooch Behar Maharaja *Mohendra Narayan* and *Bishu Dev Raikat* made an alliance against the Mughals.³³ However, the allied forces did not succeed; the Mughals were able to occupy Boda and Patgram. The *Raikat* family too was not free from succession disputes and political assassinations. *Dharma Dev*, brother of *Bishu Dev*, killed his son *Mukund* and became the *Raikat*. *Dharma Dev* made a treaty with the Mughal representative *Zabardast Khan* and it was agreed upon as terms of the treaty that the Mughals would return the *Baikunthapur* areas in lieu of which the *Raikats* would be empowered to collect and remit the revenue of the said areas to the Mughals. During the reign of the two successive *Raikats*, i.e., *Bhup Dev* and *Bikram Dev* there was a constant conflict with the *Dev Raja* of Bhutan. After the death of *Bikram Dev*, his brother *Darpa Dev* became the next *Raikat*. Taking advantage of the weakness of the *Raikats* due to repeated *Bhutia* incursions the *Rangpur Faujdar* *Muhammad Ali* attacked the Kingdom of *Baikunthapur*. The result of the war was that *Darpa Dev* was defeated in the war and was compelled to sign a treaty. As terms of the treaty *Darpa Dev* agreed to pay enhanced revenue to *Muhammad Ali*.³⁴ In 1773 a tripartite treaty took place between the East India Company, *Nazir Dev* of Cooch Behar and *Dev Raja* of Bhutan by

which Cooch Behar State was freed from the Bhutanese control and *Darpa Dev Raikat* became a Zamindar under the jurisdiction of the East India Company. Since then, *Darpa Dev* ceased to have any supervisory role concerning the Koch Behar State.

Raikat relations with the East India Company opened a new chapter in Jalpaiguri history. Regarding the land revenue assessment of the area different versions are being preferred, obviously on account of the fact that the research on it is incomplete. The permanent settlement document cannot be traced. Depending on the Rangpur papers one version has been constructed by A. Mitra and later noted verbatim in the Jalpaiguri Gazetteer. And the other version has been furnished by Jagadindra Dev Raikat. When Baikunthapur was annexed in 1773, the Zaminder paid an annual tribute of Rs. 10,000, but after an enquiry was made with the resources of the country in 1774 the revenue payable was increased to Rs. 25,000, which was further increased to Rs. 30,000 in the following year. This was maintained in spite of the Raja's energetic remonstrances. In 1779 occurred what Glazier described as the 'fictitious rebellion' of Baikunthapur. Balances had been allowed to accrue for three years, and in 1779 a sezawal was appointed to collect the revenue from the country directly. The sezawal sent in report that the zaminder had employed dacoits to murder him. He retired to Narea in Pargana Boda, but his people were attacked, one bandukbaz was murdered, others were wounded, and some thrown into the river. The settler of Rangpur took vigorous measures and issues a proclamation, threatening the zaminder that if he did not deliver himself up within fifteen days, he would forever be excluded from the pension of his land, which should be made over to his brother. The Raja was caught without any difficulty and brought to Rangpur. Two amins were sent out to enquire in the matter, and they reported that the sezawal himself had sent decoits into Baikunthapur who had plundered the country. The zaminder was released and the sezawal was made over to the fauzdar for trial, with what result is now shown. In 1780 a deduction of Rs. 6,238 was allowed on account of lands made over to the Bhutias and the

revenue paid in that year was Rs. 25,935. On this basis the permanent settlement made.

It is necessary at this stage to mention that the above account given in the 1951 Census Handbook, Jalpaiguri and later summarised in the Bengal District Gazetteer, Jalpaiguri have overlooked a number of important developments that took place during this time. Subsequent to the 1773 treaty with Bhutan the East India Company transferred 77 mauzas to Bhutan, which caused a great deal of ill-feeling between the Rangpur Collector and the *Raikats*. One year after this transfer Darpa forcefully recovered some of the areas from Bhutan, which finally led to British intervention. Mr. Harwood, the President of the Dinajpur Council negotiated a peace settlement and persuaded *Darpadev Raikat* to transfer Ambari-Falakata and Jalpesh to Bhutan in 1780. Besides, with the British contrivance Bhutan spread its tentacles on a large number of *taluks* in Chikliguri, Bhalka and Majherdabri around 1800. And 1815 the East India Company transferred to Bhutan another set of *taluks* namely Parorpar, Tapsikhata, Panch Kholaguri, Kamsinghaon, Chakoakheti, Sonapur and Raichenga. Bhutan also succeeded to secure Falakata in 1784. Though the British initially refused to reduce their revenue demand, however, after Harwood's negotiation the amount referred to above was deducted from the original revenue assessment and the Company took Rs. 28,338 as its share of the revenue, and not Rs. 25,935.00. Incidentally, the revenue assessment was further revised in 1781 after new remonstrances from the *Raikat Darpa Deva*. On account of the territories other than Jalpesh and Ambari-Falakata having being given to Bhutan, in 77 mauzas a sum of Rs. 9,453.00 was again deducted and the revenue was newly fixed at Rs. 18,880.00. The family history claims that remission of Rs. 3239.00 was further granted in 1784. Strangely enough in 1785 the revenue demand was suddenly enhanced by Rs. 6,238.00 and even at the time of ten year settlement this additional burden could not be removed in spite of repeated pleading and finally the revenue fixed at Rs. 25,935.00.

So what has been written in the Census Handbook is far from true. Besides, *Darpa Deva's* nephew *Bhim Kumar* was involved at that time in a

complicity with the Nepali Ganga Ram Thapa trying to usurp his uncle's authority over Baikunthapur. The Sannyasi affair between 1780-1786 was caused by the economic dislocation after the five year settlement was effected. Cooks like Devi Singh ruled the roost on the one hand and the commercial policy of the Company severally hurting the Indian peddlers and weavers. *Darpa Deva's* involvement in the Sannyasi rebellion had been triggered by his frustration with the British on account of their intransigent attitude as discussed above. However, Capt. Stewart's operation against *Darpa Deva* in 1773 was caused by the developments that followed after Anglo-Cooch Behar incident and had nothing to do with subservient political developments in the eighty's and ninety's of the eighteenth century. The Sannyasis and Fakirs often caused disturbances to the East India Company. At the end of 1772 there was a report that a party of Sannyasis were moving towards Cooch Behar to join and reinforce the Sannyasi army raised under *Darpa Dev*, Raja of Baikunthapur. Now the Sannyasis numbering about 5000 took possession of the fort of Santoshgunj commonly known as Rahimganj.³⁵ The *Nazir Deo* of Cooch Behar sought British help who were his old patrons. Some measures were taken by *Warren Hastings* to suppress the activities of the Sannyasis and Fakirs. *Captain Stuart*, commanding the 19th Battalion of the Sepoys, was directed on the 20th January 1773 to proceed to Jalpaiguri and prevent the Sannyasis lived by *Darpa Dev* from escaping westward. *Captain Jones* also marched from Rangpur and the Governor directed another battalion from Baharampore to march immediately to cooperate with *Captain Stuart*.³⁶ Thus a serious military offensive was undertaken to suppress the armed Sannyasis under the control of Raja *Darpa Dev* *Captain Stuart* reached Jalpaiguri on the 3rd February 1773. The party of the Sannyasis could not hold their ground before the disciplined might of the Sepoys of the Company and ultimately after the dispersal of the Sannyasis, *Captain Stuart* transformed. That part of his estate which was affected by the political turmoil at that time is mentioned below.

The revenue calculation given either by the Census Commissioner and updated without scrutiny by the editor of the Jalpaiguri Gazetteer turns to be

as much faulty as the calculation given in the family history written by Jagadindra Dev Raikat. None of them is sure about the original *jama* and therefore all the accounts of remissions calculated by both appear to be incomplete. The amount of Rs. 6238.00 stated in the Census Handbook to have been remitted in 1780 is said to have been added, according to Jagadindra Dev Raikat, to the total East India Company's claim in 1785. Besides, the Census Handbook did not mention remissions amounting to Rs. 9435.00 in 1781 and Rs. 3239.00 in 1785 respectively. After having examined the Baikunthapur Zamindari property in the *Tauzi* Nos. 1, 2, 3, 14/3 of the present Jalpaiguri district and *Tauzi* Nos. 8, 9 of the Rangpore district we came to the conclusion that the total demand fixed in 1793 was approximately Rs. 24,868.09. Phoolbari having being gifted out by the British in 1815 came later and was free from British revenue demand though Sikkim used to earn from the Phoolbari area a sum of Rs. 15,000.00 or so per annum.³⁷ This transaction was induced partly by the fact that in 1815 a number of *taluks* discussed above were transferred to Bhutan from the Baikunthapur Estate.

In the 18th century a tripartite struggle erupted between Nepal, Sikkim and British India over the possession of a small strip of land named *Morang* which is barely 288 square miles and situated at the foothills of the Himalayas on the northern side of West Bengal. Till the 17th century, the Eastern Morang region was a part of Cooch Behar Kingdom and its geographical boundary extended upto Tarhut in the west and approached the slopes of the Himalayas on the north, and was administered by the Baikunthapur Zamindars known as *Raikats*.³⁸

The Company's Government was not at the initial stage interested in the permanent possession of the said region as her Government at that time was preoccupied with the issues concerning Oudh, Marathas etc. But the strategic importance and timber wealth of the Morang region were hardly negligible issues. Slowly in due course the British were involved in the power struggle concerning the Morang region.

Theoretically the Morang region was under the Cooch Behar Kingdom. But on account of the difficulties which the Cooch Kings faced for the

succession issues, and for the aggression of the Mughals, the inhabitants of the Morang region fully utilised this opportunity to ignore the Cooch Behar rule. Subsequently the Baikunthapur *Raikats* also failed to exert their authority on the said region. Taking advantage of the state of affair Sikkim king *Phuntsog Namgyal* annexed the whole Morang region in 1642.³⁹

By annexing this region Sikkim could now exercising control over the trade routes through this region and this issue was responsible for the future occupational struggle. But this annexation proved to be short-lived; for in the wake of Nepali expansion after the Gurkhas came to power, in the middle of the 18th century, all signs of Sikkim administration in the Eastern Morang were wiped out during 1770 to 1786.

But in the meantime East India Company's policy towards Eastern Morang had undergone some changes for a variety of reasons. The Baikunthapur estate was severally affected by the expansion of Nepali power in the Eastern Morang region. After the Dewani Settlement in 1765 the *Raikats* initially refused to accept the Company rule and occasionally they refused to pay the revenues to the Company authorities with the active support of the Sannyasis and Fakirs who revolted against the Company's revenue and business policies. But these activities of the *Raikats* proved to be self-defeating as the Sannyasis and Fakirs often melted in the jungles of Baikunthapur in order to avoid the direct confrontation with the Company's army, leaving the *Raikats* high and dry. In further, the Eastern Morang region, owing to the inefficient administration of Sikkim became a safe heaven for all the rebels in the northern part of Bengal, and the new revenue and commercial policy of the Company seriously destabilised the socio-economic set up of the entire zone and disposed the zamindars and the peasant class alike. This process also endangered the textile and silk industries and ruined the economic interest of the peddlers and itinerant traders.⁴⁰

At last after the realisation of the mistake, the *Raikats* eventually revised their policy and their dispute with the Company regarding the assessment of revenue was settled by Purling, the Collector of Rangpore.⁴¹

The Court of Directors in London became very much interested in the Morang for its timber. In the year 1770 Ducurel, the first English Superintendent of Purnea was in favour of extending the Company's influence over the said region.⁴²

Captain Jones tried to influence Warren Hastings for the annexation of the western bank of the river Mahananda.⁴³ The matter, in fact, was under consideration of the Murshidabad Resident and *Naib Najim* and they were contemplating to bring the 'low countries' under the possession of the Bengal *Subha*.⁴⁴ The urgency to help Sikkim during the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-15) and necessity of a trade route to Tibet further motivated the Company's Government to formulate a definite strategy and policy towards the northern part of the Company's territory.

The Morang issue assumed serious importance in the wake of Nepali design to extend Nepal frontier in the East beyond Western Morang. The effort of *Prithvinarayan Shah* to persuade diplomatically Warren Hastings to let him possession of the Eastern Morang in lieu of payment of annual tribute failed.⁴⁵ After the death of *Prithvinarayan Shah*, the frontier administrators planned to conquer the Eastern Morang and the proposed. Conquest encouraged some dissident Company subjects who took asylum in the Morang, to enter into the north-western part of the Rangpore district in the Company territory. This conspiracy alarmed Purling, the Collector⁴⁶ who informed the Calcutta authorities and sought definite instructions.⁴⁷ In addition to these further there was a clash between Jitpal Mallik, the Chief Jotedar and the Faujdar of Eastern Morang in which the Faujdar was killed. In response Munshiram the son of Faujdar sought the assistance of the Nepali officials. One *Ganga Ram Thapa* a Nepali official seized the opportunity and invaded this area. The warring factions were able to realise the real motives of *Gangaram* and they jointly decided to repulse *Gangaram*. But their attempt failed and now *Gangaram* in reply to *Bogle*, the Collector of Rangpur built a case against the *Raikats* of Baikunthapur for non-payment of some dues, for justification of encroaching the Company's territory.⁴⁸ In response *Bogle* made

an overture for peace and instructed the Subedar of Sannyasi Kata to prevent both Munshiram and Gangaram from using the Baikunthapur for their predatory activities.⁴⁹ But nothing was done to put an end to the predatory activities of the invaders as the British then emphasised more importance on the issues concerning Marathas and the Mysore.

Taking advantage of the indifferent attitude of the Company, Bhim Kumar indulged in intermittent raids into his uncle's territory every year and eventually forced the ruler to take shelter in the forests of Baikunthapur. Further there was report of incursion of *Gangaram* into the Baikunthapur estate. In spite of the mediatory role offered by W. Duncans on the commander of the Rangpore Barkandazi troops, Gangaram was not willing to vacate the place and to release the kidnapped persons, unless the alleged absconding subjects were transferred to him by the British officials. However in the later stage the arrest of *Gangaram* by the Nepali officer of the Western Morang, confirmed the conviction of the British agents that the prior actions of *Gangaram* were not approved by the Nepal Darbar.

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