

Territoriality and State Making Practices in the Northeast Frontier of British India

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This article explores the relationship between territoriality and state making practices in the Northeast Frontier of British India in the nineteenth century. It examines the complex ways in which colonial territorial strategies were framed and enacted in a variety of spatial settings. Territoriality formed an important strategy of the British raj in its attempt to “control actions, interactions [and] access” of people, things and relationships over the frontier geographies. By establishing symbols of state institutions in the “wild” frontier spaces, colonial officials sought to institute and put in place a semblance of order and control over the imperial margins. These undertakings were in turn closely entangled with the colonial efforts to transform the “ill-defined” frontier landscape into clearly defined state spaces. Colonial territorial strategies were not only critical in order to define its spatial and institutional presence in the frontier, but also simultaneously aimed to historicize colonial authority and territorial possession. Colonial territorializing strategies were, however, not a simple linear enterprise. It proceeded over a landscape that was marked by a variety of political systems, relations and practices. Even as colonial authorities worked its way into the region, the state attempt to institute new forms of regulations and authority would also engender various responses and reactions by a variety of actors. The article will examine some of these complex processes that accompanied state territorialization initiatives and ascendancies in the frontier.

Keywords: Territoriality, State Making, Frontier, Resources, Inner Line, Policing

Introduction

Recent studies on frontiers and boundaries have pointed us to the significance of examining processes of imperial state making from the “margins” and how the socio-political dynamics of peripheral regions affect and shape state territorialization endeavors. Rather than unoccupied or unsettled regions, spaces construed as frontiers, as these studies suggests, are marked by a range of systems, structures and long

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histories of mobility (Ludden, 2011; Ludden, 2003b). The socio-political arrangements in such spaces could often encounter and experience forms of transitions, tensions and disruptions as a result of various factors, influences and dynamics. This was especially so during moments of colonial expansion. In the frontier zones, the dynamics of power, politics and knowledge practices were closely entwined in the complex enterprise of empire building. For instance, Thomas Simpson (2021: 5) in his study has highlighted how, “frontiers [in British India] were spaces in which the colonial state was both dramatically present and frequently ineffective. There was no essential contradiction here,” according to Simpson, “but rather symbiosis between the spectacular and the chaotic.” “British power at frontiers,” he further noted, “was only occasionally predicated on categorizing and codifying, emanating more often from indeterminacy and upheaval” (Simpson 2021: 5). While imperial margins were framed and reconfigured by various “frontier practices”, studies have also drawn our attention to the processes whereby “borderland lawlessness” or the ambiguous space between state laws provided often fertile ground for activities deemed “illicit” or “illegal” by states (Tagliacozzo, 2001). At the same time, a focus on the intersections or the interstitial frontier spaces between states have nuanced our understanding of the concepts of spaces, frontiers and boundaries, and how they have historically evolved in the centuries leading up to our own (Ludden, 2003b).

These complex narratives in a way seem to attest to what Paul Nugent and A. I. Asiwaju (1996: 1) calls “a paradoxical quality to all boundaries.” According to Nugent and Asiwaju (1996: 1), “The paradox lies, first of all, in the lack of congruence between the kind of hard lines which are reflected visually on maps and the reality of frontiers which may not be visible to the naked eye.” While these works have broadened our understanding on the historical construction of frontiers and borders, and the interactions between societies and colonial power at varying levels resulting from such modern enterprise of space making. “Boundaries and their meanings,” as David Newman and Anssi Paasi (1998: 187) argue, “are historically contingent, and they are part of the production and institutionalization of territories and territoriality.” At the same time, it is also important to consider the fact that each frontier, boundary or borderland, to borrow from Willem van Schendel and Michel Baud (1997: 212), has their own specific social dynamics and historical developments. These studies are important and they provide interesting insights to explore some of the complex processes of state making and its relationship with practices of modern territoriality in the Northeast frontier of British India as well.

An important element in the colonial enterprise of space making, especially in the frontier geographies, was with regard to the idea of territory. Margaret Moore (2015: 15) has suggested that, “the modern notion of ‘territory’ is inextricably linked to the rights of jurisdictional authority over a territory or geographical domain, and so is a profoundly political notion.” This argument has relevance especially for imperial margins such as the Northeast frontier. In the 19th century, as colonial rule expanded into the Northeast frontier, defining territory would form an important concern of the colonial authorities. From the perspective of the colonial government, defining territory was deemed necessary to determine the nature of political authority in the region. It

was also seen as an important exercise by colonial officials in order to establish outright state claims and jurisdiction over a “fluid” and “ill-defined” frontier space. In the process, this colonial territorializing enterprise aimed to put in place new ways of organizing space as well as determining the nature of access over territory. Territoriality, writes Robert D. Sack (1983: 55), is “the attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions (of people, things, and relationships) by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area.” It is, “a strategy for establishing differential access to things and people” (Sack, 1983: 55). Further, Peter Vandergeest and Nancy Lee Peluso (1995: 388) writes that, “territorialization is about excluding or including people within particular geographic boundaries, and about controlling what people do and their access to natural resources within those boundaries.” These ideas and formulations can be usefully applied in analyzing the significant role of territoriality in the edges of empire, such as the Northeast frontier.

Imperial margins, such as the Northeast frontier, constituted significant sites where colonial authorities sought to impose and define a new idea of modern territoriality. This imperial concern emerged especially beginning in the early nineteenth century, following the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26, whereby British officials in the Northeast frontier perceived a need to consolidate its paramount power over the region. In the attempt to enforce this state endeavor in the frontier geographies, colonial notion of modern territorial space increasingly encountered vernacular ways of organizing and understanding space. This encounter between colonial ways of ordering space and local ideas of organizing space often produced frictions and tensions in the frontier spaces.¹ A host of accompanying practices were closely linked to this colonial enterprise of demarcating territory as well as in reconfiguring the frontier geographies from within. As recent studies have highlighted, this included surveys and map making enterprise, forms of violence, reconfiguring the agrarian landscape, subject formation, legal regimes, as well as instituting new political and administrative structures (Zou, 2019; Kar, 2019; Pau, 2007; Pau, 2018; Sen, 2022). Further, this imperial enterprise also involved strategies such as re-working earlier forms of relations and connections, investing symbols of colonial power over the frontier landscape, as well as regulating mobility and circulation of people and goods in the frontier (Kar, 2009; Simpson, 2015; Jackson, 2016; Dzüvichü, 2021). In the process, these enterprises were closely woven into a complex network of colonial territorializing practices that were devised to reconfigure and establish control over resources, people and territory.

This article explores the relationship between territoriality and state making in the Northeast Frontier of British India in the nineteenth century. It examines the complex ways in which colonial territorial strategies were framed and enacted in a variety of spatial settings. Territoriality formed an important strategy of the British raj in its attempt to “control actions, interactions [and] access” of people, things and relationships over the frontier geographies. By establishing symbols of state institutions in the “wild” frontier spaces, colonial officials sought to institute and put in place a semblance of order over the imperial margins. These undertakings were in turn closely entangled with the colonial efforts to transform the “ill-defined” frontier landscape into clearly defined state spaces. Colonial territorial strategies were not only critical

in order to define its spatial and institutional presence in the frontier, but also simultaneously aimed to historicize colonial authority and territorial possession. Colonial territorializing strategies were, however, not a simple linear enterprise. It proceeded over a landscape that was marked by a variety of political systems, relations, and practices. As a result, even as colonial authorities worked its way into the region, it also produced various encounters and interactions. In the process, this imperial process of territorializing space was mediated by local realities and contestation by the people within these frontier spaces. Further, the state attempt to institute new forms of regulations and authority would engender various responses and reactions by a variety of actors. The article will examine some of these complex processes that accompanied state territorialization initiatives and ascendancies in the imperial margins.

Empire, Territory, Societies

At the opening of the nineteenth century, a series of hostilities along the eastern frontier of Bengal began to demand the serious attention of the British East India Company (EIC). The aggressive actions of the Ava kingdom in Arakan, Manipur, and its assertive interference in the affairs of the Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra valley had increasingly placed the EIC and its sphere of interest in a vulnerable position (Ramachandra, 1978: 69 – 99; Myint-U, 2004: 12-23; Cederlöf, 2014). In fact, palace intrigues by rival court officials in the Ahom kingdom saw the intervention by the rulers of Ava who subsequently overran the Ahom's territory in 1817 (Pemberton, 1991, 1835: 45 – 49; Wilson, 1848: 24-26). Elsewhere, the “forcible cutting of timber in the Kubo valley” by the Manipur Raja Marjit Sing drew down “remonstrance from the Court of Ava” (Myint-U, 2004: 15).² To add to this growing tension, in 1819, Marjit Sing, who was considered by the Burmese court as one of its “tributary princes ... declined obeying the order for his appearance at the installation of the [new] king [of Ava]” (Pemberton, 1835: 46). The Ava court sensing that control over its “tributary” state was being gradually lost immediately dispatched a contingent of Burmese army into Manipur “to seize the rebel [Raja Marjit Sing]”. In the ensuing hostility, the Burmese army advanced into Manipur, while simultaneously making an aggressive push into the British territory of Cachar where the ruling family of Manipur had sought refuge.³ In the ensuing hostility, Manipur and Cachar would get entangled in the First Anglo-Burmese War of 1824-26.

Further south, the situation in the Chittagong frontier was no less alarming. In the Arakan-Chittagong frontier, the Burmese army pursuing Arakanese “fugitives” soon appeared on the borders of the Company's territory (Wilson, 1848: 19-23). In 1823, after seizing the British outpost of Shahpuree, an island on the river Tek Naf, the Burmese Governor at Arakan very soon issued threats to the British authorities in Calcutta to invade and takeover “the cities of Dacca and Moorshedabad”.⁴ While such intimidation was primarily intended to assert Burmese ascendancy in the region, British strategists in Calcutta were aware of the dangers of such a possible venture by the Ava court as it would awkwardly “place the invaders in dangerous proximity to Calcutta” (Wilson, 1848: 23). In the eyes of Calcutta officials, this assertive posturing by the court of Ava posed a potential source of danger to its growing power and

commercial interest in the region. Even as the Ava king pushed the kingdom's frontiers further into territories bordering British protectorates such as Cachar, war seemed to become inevitable. The final stroke to an impending first Anglo-Burmese war occurred in January 1824 when "Burmese troops marched into Cachar and in the following March the British formally declared war against the Burmese" (Aung, 1967: 212). It was during this moment of tussle between the EIC and the Burmese kingdom for territorial control and dominance that the valleys and hill tracts along the eastern frontier of Bengal would enter the colonial spatial ambit.

By early 1826, the war between Burma and the British EIC was brought to a close with the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo. This Treaty proved to be a watershed for regions along the eastern frontier of Bengal. Under the Treaty, the Ava king ceded to the EIC the territory of Assam, Cachar, Jaintia, Arracan, and Tenessarim, etc., and recognized Gambhir Singh as the Raja of Manipur (Aitchison, 1931: 230-233). While the Treaty may have defined the sphere of political authority territorially between British Bengal and the Burmese kingdom, establishing control over these newly ceded territories and its human populations would be an exceedingly complicated exercise. This was especially so, when the British knew very little about the outlying polities and people around this region, not to mention the basic knowledge of the region's geography. As the orientalist Horace Hayman Wilson writes, "The countries lying on the east and south-east of the British frontier of Bengal, from Asam to Arakan, a distance from north to south of about four hundred miles, were almost unknown at this period to European geography" (Wilson, 1848: 10). A series of initiatives including exploration, surveys, mapping, and concomitant cataloging of land, resources and territory were subsequently set in motion by the British administration to make the land and its inhabitants "legible" to the colonial state (Scott, 1998).⁵

In the early nineteenth century, as British agents embarked on expeditions from their frontier stations like Sadiya to undertake various imperial tasks, they encountered a complex political system straddling the frontier tracts between Assam and Burma. For instance, in the late 1820s, Captain S. F. Hannay of the 40th Regiment, Native Infantry, observed that the Singphos were revenue-paying subjects of the Ava king, "the Beesa Gaum being the collector in Hookung and Gakhen Thao in Assam."⁶ At the same time, it was observed that the chiefs paid occasional visits to Ava. It was during such visitations that the king of Burma reportedly conferred on them "high titles". Thus, Hannay writes about "the former Duffa Gam and Beesa Gam [who] had both visited Ava and received high titles, a title also having been sent to Gakhan Thao." Bestowing such honorific titles can be read in multiple ways. On the one hand, the conferred titles symbolically signified the chiefs as "tributary" subjects of the Burmese king. The chiefs could in turn secure patronage and entrenched their position over a strategic landscape. On the other, it was through such practices that the Ava king claimed and asserted his authority over these mountainous territories. Captain Hannay thus remarked how such symbolic investitures have led, "the present King of Ava [to] imagine that all the Singphos are his subjects and the lands which they occupy his territory."⁷

If the Singpho chiefs were crucial mediums in consolidating Ava's control over dispersed frontier areas, along the Ahom frontier the interaction between the hill

people and the valley kingdom was defined by a rather intricate political relationship. Under the Ahom kingdom, Naga chiefs bordering the Sibsagar plains were reported to have paid annual visits to the Ahom court. During such occasions, the chiefs presented the Ahom kings with “slaves, elephant teeth, spear shafts, cloths, and cotton & c”.⁸ In return, the Naga chiefs “received presents of various kinds on their dismissal.” This practice of gifting presents between the Naga chiefs and the Ahom king is interesting. Captain T. Brodie, Principal Assistant to the Governor General Agent, noted that while the Ahom rulers, “considered the offerings of the Naga chiefs as dues.” The hill chiefs treated the exercise, “as a mere interchange of presents.”⁹ To officials like Brodie, if this exchange practice conveyed divergent meanings for the actors involved; on the other, this exercise also appeared rather trivial or inconsequential. However, for the actors involved in this exchange, it was a form of political expression through which political entities in the lowlands and the hills maintained crucial links in the region. Through such strategies, valley kingdoms such as the Ahoms could ensure that channels of communications were maintained with neighboring polities, and relations across boundaries were sustained. For the Ahoms, such gift practices also seem to have served other purposes. Captain Brodie notes how, “the Assam Government found it more convenient to conciliate the Nagas by presents than to overawe them by coercion.”¹⁰ These associated practices thus suggest the subtle nuances through which these political actors defined their relations, while deriving meanings and values politically in a complex frontier space.¹¹

Alongside these varied political practices, early British officials also recognized the fact that dominant hill communities would often derive remunerations or “tributes” from their lowland neighbors. Thus, in 1840, Lieutenant E. R. Grange writes about the “Cacharees” who “have been obliged to pay tribute to the Nagas of Sumoogoding to preserve peace” (Grange, 1840: 952). Altogether, the tribute “consisted of a cow or bullock and one maund of salt per annum” (Grange, 1840: 952). For the communities involved, such transaction constituted a kind of “protection money”, a guarantee that no “raids” would henceforth be carried out on those who paid the “tribute.”¹² Yet, it was also the case that this form of tributary payment was often reportedly a cause of distress and hence resented by the vulnerable party. For instance, Grange records that the Naga villages of “Kareabonglo”, “Galaga and Harapalo” stated that they, “would rejoice in the subjugation of the Angamees who force them to give them conch shells and other things to purchase the preservation of peace” (Grange, 1839: 455). In the case of the “Abors” who routinely levied “contributions on their low-land and less martial neighbors of Assam,” any delay in the payment was reportedly countered by “predatory incursions” and “carrying off the people prisoners” (Wilcox, 1873: 12). Such acts of reprisals not only worked to sustain the power bases of dominant hill chiefs in the region. It also ensured the steady flow of resources to meet various contingencies in the hills.

In the politics of territorialization, access to resources such as “modern” firearms also provided certain communities an edge to build on their power bases in the hills. What needs to be pointed out here is that firearms had been employed by the British as well as the Burmese themselves in the wars and expeditions, which had also stepped up the circulation of firearms in the frontier. In January 1846, Captain S. F. Hannay,

Commanding the 1st Assam Light Infantry reports that, “many Abor Naga villages on the Assam side of the great range have been burnt ... plundered, and many of the inhabitants bought and sold into slavery by the Singphos, who are enabled to overpower small villages from possessing fire-arms.”¹³ It is likely that many of these muskets had filtered into the Singpho hills in the course of the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26 through the agency of the Burmese as well as the British army. One way to tame the growing power of the Singphos, colonial officials suggested, was by gradually arming the affected and opposing communities. Thus, considering the protection of certain Naga villages as “urgently necessary” against Singphos “aggressions,” Captain Hannay proposed, “to distribute firearms amongst them and to teach them the use of them.”¹⁴ For this purpose, the chiefs of the “Husack and Tukak Nagas” were informed “to send down each a smart man to Suddeya for the purpose of being instructing [sic] in the uses of the muskets and when they had learnt it they might be sent back each with ten muskets for the use of their tribes.”¹⁵ If arming people was framed from the official perspective of “defense”, it also seems to have served other larger purposes in the frontier. By subtly creating situations of “disorder” among the varied hill communities, the British gambit generated a sense of heightened instability in the frontier tracts. Through these policies, the British also hoped to rationalize their interventions over these “wild”, yet resource rich areas.

Meanwhile, hill chiefs could also derive crucial support services from valley inhabitants or people who took flight and often made their way into the hills. This came as a surprise to officials such as Captain Hannay. For instance, Hannay found that among the Singphos, “the confidential attendant of both the Beesa and Duffa Gaum were ... generally Ahoms.”¹⁶ At other times, hill societies could also use the services of drifting military resources to augment their position in their ongoing conflicts. Colonial officials thus observed how opposing Naga groups would often “purchase the assistance of a few Kacharees” who reportedly roved about, “armed with muskets” (Wood, 1844: 777). Brown Wood, the Sub-Assistant Commissioner, in fact remarks that, “the Kacharees ... are always ready to give their assistance to the richer party” who in the process “are sure of becoming victors” (Wood, 1844: 777). There are also instances whereby Nagas would engage and draw the support of powerful political entities in their local tussle for ascendancy. Following an expedition into the Naga Hills in 1850, Lieutenant Vincent thus notes how, “in every Angami village, there were two parties, one attached to the interest of Manipur and the other to the British, but each only working for an alliance to get aid in crushing the opposite faction” (Mackenzie, 1884: 112). While securing the aid of powerful political entities were often crucial in determining the outcome of the conflicts; at the same time, such instances indicate how some communities in the hills were politically resourceful by drawing in powerful and dominant actors in their local conflicts to serve their political predicaments.

In this earlier phase, the interaction between the British and the hill people was also in many ways violent and yet, a more “open” encounter. Thus, British officers of the 1840s would arrive with “treaties” addressed to the Naga “Rajahs” in the hope of securing peaceful relations and commercial concessions (Jacobs, 1990: 21).¹⁷ Such political actions seem to convey the sense that to the British officials these “Rajahs”

were established polities worthy to engage with. In September 1841, Captain T. Brodie, Principal Assistant, Governor General's Agent, reports of engaging one such figure, the "Chunguye Rajah" in the Naga Hills. This Rajah, according to Brodie, was looked upon by "all the Nagas between the Dikho and Jeypore ... as their head," and they in turn paid "a tribute called *chace*, consisting of some grain, cloth, & c."¹⁸ While these political gestures were tied to the formal commitment of ensuring peace along the frontier, British authorities were nevertheless surprised when Naga chiefs kept their part of the "oath". Thus, E.R. Grange, the Sub-Assistant to the Commissioner, found it "strange" that the "oath" on "not to molest Company's villages" were "for sometime honorably kept" by Ikkari the Mozemah Chief (Mackenzie, 1884: 104). In the eyes of colonial officials, such an act by the Naga chief seemed inconceivable as the idea and practice of honoring an "oath" was ostensibly considered to be the sole preserve of the modern "civilized" societies, and one that was beyond the capability of the "wild tribes". This was more so since "cultured" practices were deemed to be seemingly absent in the hill societies.

By entering into an alliance with powerful figures, the British also hoped to secure rights and ease access to land, resources and territory along the frontier tracts. Writing to G. A. Bushby, Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, Political Department, in June 1842, Major F. Jenkins, Agent, Governor General, North East Frontier, expressed his satisfaction with the fact that "our relations with the Nagas has admitted of three tea plantations being cleared in their hills, the labor of which is almost entirely performed by themselves." Apart from the tea gardens, Jenkins also reported of "a coal mine in the Naga Hills worked by the Nagas", which was "during the last season superintended by Mr. Landers on the part of Government." With these initiatives, Jenkins was confident that "these hills will soon be everywhere as accessible to us as the plains" (Mackenzie, 1884: 104).

At particular conjuncture, Burmese territorial moves in the region could create a context for the British to intensify its territorial claims over the frontier tracts. For in the first half of the nineteenth century, despite its political ascendancy dented in the 1824-26 war, the Ava court was reported to harbour its own project of expansion into regions such as the Northeastern frontier; one strategy of which was by building roads through the hills. In 1840, worrying news thus reached Calcutta about the reported intention of the Ava king "to open a road to Assam through the Naga Hills from the Kyendwin [Chindwin] river."¹⁹ With Burma still regarded as a powerful entity and the British having experienced serious setbacks in the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26, British military strategist wished to avoid another such debacle at this stage.²⁰ Of special concern for the Company officials was also the close proximity of Burma with the emerging tea gardens in the Assam frontier. British officials were aware that a military engagement with the Burmese would be injurious to the economic as well as strategic interest of the Company.

A flurry of correspondence between officials in Calcutta and Assam subsequently ensued whereby frontier officials tried to play-down the issue as nothing more than simply "rumours".²¹ Writing to Captain Vetch, the Political Agent of Upper Assam in 1840, Captain Jenkins remarked:

If true [of opening up a road] and the Burmese has really intentions of a hostile move in the direction of Jorehut ... any considerable body of Burmese would be placed at our mercy if they made the attempt by Barpulhing as they would not only have to fight their way among the Nagas but opposed in the rear from Muneepor and if not able to maintain themselves at Nagira must perish and from starvation in the forest at the foot of the Naga Hills.²²

In other words, should the Burmese ever venture into Assam, officials like Jenkins were confident that the ecology and the people inhabiting the hill tracts afforded a “natural” barrier against any possible Burmese invasions. In January 1846, Captain S.F. Hannay, Commanding First Assam Light Infantry further noted as to how Naga Hills served as a “buffer”, especially during the First Anglo-Burmese war:

[I]t is a known fact it was only the difficulty attending the subjugation of the Nagas that prevented the Burmese passing into the Assam by the heads of Dikho River instead of being obliged to take the circuitous and difficult route by the valley of Hookong, the principal supplies for the army having been brought up the Kyendwen to Kaksa, a point higher up than the heads of the Dikho.²³

Despite official misgivings, the likely threat of a Burmese incursion from across the frontier also added a new element to the British military strategies. Frontier officials began to devise measures such as placing military outposts at sites “most commandable” to monitor movements and closely watch its rival along this strategic frontier. For instance, earlier in 1838, to enhance “intelligence gathering on the Burma situation” a station was established at Jeypoor by Captain S.F. Hannay, Commanding First Assam Light Infantry. Through this station Hannay hoped to “have an opportunity of watching the Namsang Nagas to the Kyendwen River” as well as gaining knowledge of that important route.²⁴ Besides, by engaging valley kingdoms like Manipur, British strategists created a bulwark and preempt possible land avenues of advance towards Assam from Burma.²⁵

In their efforts to block off access to the Burmese, another strategy devised by the British was to woo powerful intermediaries in the hills, such as the Singphos who previously were in the “ambit” of the Ava King. Strategic imperatives apart, the combination of geographical location and economic potentialities of the Singphos’ territory also attracted colonial officials in this venture. Thus, we find one such person in Beesa Gaum, the Singpho chief, whose country the British coveted for its tea forest tracts.²⁶ In 1826, Beesa Gaum, the Singpho Chief, was made the “paramount chief” over the other “sixteen chiefs.”²⁷ Besides a monthly allowance of rupees 50 a month, he also served “as an organ of communication with the other chiefs and a spy upon their actions” (McCosh, 1836: 200-01). The Beesa Gaum was further persuaded to “desert his own country and live on lands” granted to him at Burhat and Jaipur (McCosh, 1836: 200-01). In addition to this, the Beesa Gaum was charged with duties of furnishing information of anything that might occur beyond the frontier calculated to excite agitation and apprehension.²⁸ Such practices of wooing powerful local chiefs and placing them in a position of ascendancy formed an important colonial strategy as it signified a gradual progression towards territorializing state power over the

frontier geographies through such intermediaries.

Even as colonial strategies sought to counter and thwart any possible Burmese incursion into Assam, other wider processes would set in motion new complex developments in the region. A significant aspect in this regard pertains to the way in which the “wild” frontier areas were gradually beginning to be integrated into the larger nineteenth century networks of global capital and commerce. In fact, by the 1840s, the frontier tracts had emerged as significant locales especially for the commercial production of a global commodity, i.e., tea. Liberal land grant policies were formulated by the colonial government to attract European capitalist for establishing tea plantations resulting in large-scale incorporation of land in the frontier tracts. To add to this, a series of surveys and explorations had confirmed the presence of “wild tea plants”, springs or wells of petroleum, as well as existence of extensive coal bearing tracts, extending from the Singpho Hills, along the Naga Hills, Cachar Hills, Jaintia Hills, including Pandua and Sylhet.²⁹ These “discoveries”, thus, gave added urgency to the colonial enterprise of securing and developing, “a large tract of country abounding in tea tracts, excellent coal, Iron ore and petroleum.”³⁰ To do so would however require the colonial authorities to establish order and stability in the frontier. Colonial officials had to devise ways through which it could exert its absolute authority and territorial claims over these “wild frontier” tracts.

Resource Use and Territorializing Strategies

As early as 1835, John McCosh, Civil Assistant Surgeon, Goalpara, writing about the North East frontier observed that, “in a commercial, a statistical or political point of view, no country is more important” (McCosh, 1836: 193). This observation by McCosh constitutes just one example of the various official writings that recorded the extensive presence of resources in the region. In fact, in the first half of the nineteenth century, several reports began to reach authorities in Calcutta in which officials reported on the presence of a range of minerals and resources in the region. These reports were generated in the course of surveys, travels and expeditions by the colonial officials. In the unfolding developments, the frontier spaces would gradually transform into significant sites of colonial economic undertakings. In fact, between the 1840s and the 1900s, with the intrusion of global capital, various economic enterprises would be established in the Northeast frontier even as these developments linked the region to other wider global flows and circulation. In turn, these developments had shaped the region as a significant resource frontier of the British Raj.³¹

Even as plantations and other sites of colonial capital expanded and sought to “open” up the frontier, it also encountered and disrupted many existing practices and relations, which produced violent reactions.³² The many reported “raids” and “outrages” by the hill “tribes” such as the Nagas on the valley settlements as well as on the fledgling sites of colonial capital were often linked to issues of boundaries, payment of “traditional” tributes, including access to resources, which were often disrupted even as tea gardens, etc., came up along the frontier.³³ For instance, following a raid in Gellukee in November 1867, an official report noted not only the existence of “several tea gardens in the vicinity of Gellukee,” but also the extension of tea

gardens into the Naga Hills. This expanding tea gardens, “had given particular offence to the Namsang Nagas, who are said to be very averse to European settlers taking up lands on what they choose to consider their side of the hills.”³⁴

Apart from the threat posed on sites of colonial economy, the specter of violence and instability in the frontier was also associated to the enduring practices of “feuds” and counter “raids”. The Angamis, Horatio Bickerstaffe Rowney noted, “live high up the mountains... and have always distinguished themselves as caterans and murderers, and also for being perpetually at feud with each other, their feuds going down from generation to generation” (Rowney, 1882: 168). Such unruly actions could often spill into the valleys and was construed to be the cause of much anxiety for colonial frontier officials. In fact, the Angamis, remarked Rowney, “gave a world of trouble to the government by the many plundering inroads they made on the peaceful tribes occupying the foot of their hills” (Rowney, 1882: 168-169). Apart from “plunder”, these violent actions were also associated to several factors such as ideas of status, capturing “slaves”, “revenge”, feuds, etc.³⁵ Through such narratives, violence was not only depicted as intrinsic among the hill people. In the colonial depiction, the Nagas were also increasingly characterized as “wild savages” whose socio-cultural existence was represented as one that primarily rested on feuds and raids.

In the colonial representation, the Naga Hills was thus marked by the absence of a modern institutional system, one that would ensure a semblance of law and institutional order. Official discourse in the process constructed an “imagined” landscape of the “hills” and the “plains”, where the “primitive” hillmen was not only geographically insulated or cloistered from their neighbours, but also culturally separate from the plains. Representing images of “chaos” and “lawlessness” in the hills signified the impediments to “progress”, even as these views simultaneously provided an important basis to legitimize colonial intervention and its task of “civilizing mission”. As Harald Fischer-Tine and Michael Mann has suggested in their work in the larger context of British India, “to be civilized was to be free from specific forms of tyranny” (Fischer-Tine and Mann, 2004: 4). These ideas of violence and conflicts, constructed through colonial writings, marked out the Nagas as requiring modern institutional interventions vis-a-vis their “savagery”. In order to deal and manage these frontier troubles, strategies were formulated by colonial officials. This included policies such as appointing residuary delegates of clans from the Naga Hills.

In November 1868, Lieutenant John Gregory, the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, proposed the idea of receiving “residuary delegates” from the different Naga clans at Samoogoodting in the foothills.³⁶ Writing to Colonel Henry Hopkinson, Agent of the Governor General, North East Frontier and Commissioner of Assam, Gregory outlined the plan to “receive an accredited Agent from each of the most powerful clans in the hills to reside at Samoogoodting.”³⁷ The delegate would “represent the community to which he belongs.” In this scheme, the delegate would receive from the Government “a subsistence allowance at the rate of Rupees 10 per mensem.”³⁸ This scheme was primarily aimed to prevent the “many bloody quarrels amongst this people”, through “the intermediation of a third party respected by both disputants.”³⁹ In this regard, the delegates were to act as “interpreters and messengers

to their respective clans.”⁴⁰ In 1869, this proposal was accorded sanction by the colonial government (Hunter, 1869: 171). Writing on this scheme, officials such as the Secretary of State for India, hoped that “the more intimate relation thus about to be establish with the frontier tribes may eventually wean them from their present lawless habits.”⁴¹

This scheme, however, initially failed to attract the Nagas when it was introduced. In fact, Captain John Butler, the officer in charge of the Naga Hills ‘met with considerable difficulty in getting the Nagas to respond to his invitation to furnish “dobashas” (men understanding two languages, Naga and Assamese) from their respective clans.’⁴² By 1870, a few delegates were attached to the Deputy Commissioner’s office of the Naga Hills under the scheme. Commenting on the initial “trial” of this scheme, A. H. James, Assistant Commissioner in Charge of Naga Hills, noted that delegates appointed under this system “have done nothing towards getting their quarrels made up.”⁴³ Nevertheless, much to the approval of A. H. James, the delegates functioned as, “the most useful go-between of the clans they represent and the Deputy Commissioner.” To add to this, the delegates were considered as “absolutely necessary to the officer in charge of the district to enable him to carry on his relations with the large villages on the higher ranges.”⁴⁴ Given this significance, the continuance of the system was accorded sanction by the colonial government for another year.

In 1872, a report noted that the system of receiving paid residentary delegates has “in many ways proved to be of considerable use.”⁴⁵ These residentary delegates proved to be an important strategy in establishing linkages between the colonial authorities operating from their stations in the plains and the clans in the hills. These delegates not only served “as interpreters and messengers”, but also worked “as informers of the state of affairs in more remote villages.”⁴⁶ Apart from aiding the colonial official in the various frontier governing strategies. These delegates were considered indispensable by John Butler, the Political Agent of the Naga Hills, who accompanied him during his expeditions and tours in the Naga Hills.⁴⁷ In a letter to H. Luttman-Johnson, Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam, on 26 April 1875, Captain John Butler expressed the promising outcome of this policy: “I find them after two years further trail as invaluable as ever and I am hence more than ever convinced that we cannot do better than introduce the plan wherever we advance into a new country of the kind which lies all round our Assam valley.”⁴⁸ This system would in fact continue to form an important basis in strengthening colonial institutional order in the frontier geographies even as colonial administration gradually expanded into the hill tracts, especially over the course of the late 19th and early 20th century. While colonial authorities gradually worked its way in the frontier spaces through such strategies, there were other approaches through which the colonial government further pushed its territorializing strategies in the frontier geographies. An important policy in this regard would be in the form of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873. The introduction of this regulation is closely tied to securing the capitalist’s economic interests in the frontier and a new phase of territorially delineating frontier geographies in the region.

Creating Inner Line, Managing Territory

The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 is closely linked to various colonial concerns that had emerged in the period preceding 1873. On the one hand, in districts such as Lakhimpur, “the operations of speculators in caoutchouc had led to serious complications” with the frontier “tribes” (Mackenzie, 1884: 55). These frontier complications had not only interfered “with the revenue derived by Government from the India-rubber forests in the plains beyond the line of our settled mehals,” but also threatened “disturbances with the hill tribes beyond” (Mackenzie, 1884: 55). In fact, the “profitable speculation” and the unregulated access to resources such as rubber had further alarmed officials of potential “rubber difficulty” that may arise in the frontier, especially considering that the rubber forests reportedly extended over large areas in the Kamroop, Durrung, Luckhimpore, Sebsaugor, Nowgong, Cachar Districts, including the Naga, Lushai, Khasi, and Jynteah Hills.⁴⁹ On the other, “the spread of tea gardens outside [the] fiscal limit had already involved the Government in many difficult questions with the hillmen” (Mackenzie, 1884: 55). This included the various frontier troubles with the hill “tribes” such as Nagas, including the Lushais and Kukis in the Cachar frontier. Given these persistent frontier problems, “the Government came to the conclusion that it was necessary to take special powers and lay down special rules” (Mackenzie, 1884: 55).

To add to this, already by the 1870s, a number of European traders with varied interest and agendas had established their economic bases along the frontier. In 1872, H.L. Dampier, Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, remarked that, “Cachar has more European settlers than Assam.”⁵⁰ Moreover, with the “discovery” of the valuable India-rubber along the hill tracts Major W.S. Clarke, DC of Lakhimpur speculated that “there will as surely be a rush towards the frontier to obtain rubber as there would be if a gold mine had been discovered.”⁵¹ Given these burgeoning interests and possibilities, a concern, which the colonial government wished to avoid, was the hostile reactions of the hill people.⁵² Consequently, the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873 was introduced which gave ‘power to the Lieutenant-Governor to prescribe a line to be called “the inner line”, in each or any of the districts affected beyond which no British subject of certain classes or foreign residents can pass without a license” (Mackenzie, 1884: 56). This regulation thus gave added significance in the colonial enterprise of securing and regulating access to resource rich sites in the frontier.

Following the introduction of the 1873 regulation, colonial authorities initiated a series of surveys in order to define the “inner line” on the ground. Based on these surveys, the colonial government notified the delineation of the Inner Line along the frontier tracts. For example, a government notification announced the location of the Inner Line in the district of Lakhimpur in the following:

From the Sessiri outpost to the Dikrang outpost the line shall follow the patrol-path; thence to the masonry pillar on the right bank of the Brahmaputra river it shall follow the patrol-path. From the said masonry pillar it shall run along the right bank of the Brahmaputra river to the confluence of the latter river with the Namsang river; thence along the left bank of the Namsang river to a masonry pillar near the Hukanjuri tea garden; thence it

shall follow the path connecting the Hukanjuri with the Taurack tea garden to a masonry pillar on the right bank of the Disang river, near the latter garden. Then along the right bank of the Disang as far as the Ladoigah Alli.⁵³

A reading of the above notification shows how the Inner Line was based along patrol paths, embankments, masonry pillars, tea gardens and other natural boundaries. These markers came to distinguish a new territorial borderline in the frontier tracts. While these features came to inscribe a new border in the frontier spaces, the inner line also came to serve other colonial purposes. If on the one hand, the inner line provided a legal-jurisdictional boundary. On the other, it also became a significant instrument for rewriting borders (Kar, 2009). Thus, rather than a “fixed” line on the ground, the inner line was a dynamic line which was prone to modification and constantly pushed further into the interior tracts to bring resources such as mineral deposits and timber reserves under colonial control (Kar, 2009). The inner line in that way came to significantly serve state territorialization strategies in myriad ways in the frontier.

Yet, this policy of constantly pushing the line into the hills was not very often appreciated within the colonial administration. In January 1881, S. O. B. Ridsdale, Officiating Commissioner of Assam Valley Districts in his letter to the Secretary to the Commissioner of Assam expressing his objection argued that such a policy would further remove the inner line from control as “the police posts placed to watch it will be so much isolated that communications will be very difficult to maintain and it will be impossible adequately to check and supervise their proceedings.”⁵⁴ Nonetheless, such objections were deemed as “insignificant”, especially given the scale of colonial commercial interest involved. A notification published in the 1884 *Gazette of India* thus indicates the possibility of such an endless shifting and drawing of lines in the frontier: “the outer line is purposely left indefinite so that we can advance the Inner Line to any extent circumstances may render necessary.”⁵⁵

Besides, the delineation of the inner line on the ground, a significant practice that was associated with this regulation was the imposition of a pass system on the subjects.⁵⁶ Having a pass became a mandatory official requirement in order to cross the line. This colonial invention of requiring a pass introduced a new modern documentary system in the frontier. The pass system was enforced at the police outposts located at the foothills along well-established land routes that linked the hills to the plains. While the emergence of outposts can be traced to the first half of the 19th century as important institutions in the strategies of governing the frontier, the role of the outposts became even more significant with the introduction of the BEFR in 1873.⁵⁷ The police forces manning the outposts were entrusted with the task to enforce this new regulation. This was in addition to their patrolling duties, as well as their frontier policing duty to prevent any potential “raids” on the valley settlements and plantations by the hill tribes. The frontier outposts and the tasks performed by the state forces thus formed an important element in ensuring that the will of the colonial state was carried out on the ground. At the close of 1892-93, there were reportedly, “5 such outposts in the Darrang district, 4 of which were manned by detachments of the Military Police and the other by troops; 13 garrisoned by Military Police in the Lakhimpur district; one at Abhaypur in Sibsagar garrisoned by Military Police; and 7

in Cachar all held by troops”⁵⁸ Through these systems and institutions, mobility of people in the frontier tracts were brought under new forms of regulation and control.

At the same time, access to resources and resource use in the frontier spaces were now required to work through the new colonial arrangements. For instance, woodcutters were now required to work through the system of pass, for cutting timber, bamboos, cane etc., across the Inner Line.⁵⁹ Timbers that were cut beyond the Inner Line with the sanctioned permission of the Chief Commissioner was “to be paid for at the rate of Re. 1 per log.”⁶⁰ Access to resources such as elephants were now permissible only under the sanctioned permission of the colonial administration. A report in 1897 recorded an instance whereby, “Jaining Gam, the Singpho Chief of Bisa, was permitted to catch for his own use two elephants in a jungle tract beyond the Inner Line.”⁶¹ These instances show how access to resources was increasingly brought under colonial territorial control. Any violation of the state authority in this regard was liable to punitive measures. That said, there were also various actors who appropriated the Inner Line to pursue various interests. In October 1884, H. C. Williams, the D. C. of Darrang informed the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam that large numbers of Nepalese had “in the last two or three years crossed the frontier without passes for the purposes of cutting rubber.”⁶² While the “paucity of police” rendered the possibility of their “being taken red-handed across the frontier” a difficult task, the fact that these Nepalese did “not hav[e] local habitation, [made] the chance of [their] subsequent discovery and punishment still less.”⁶³ There were others such as the case of some Miris who moved across the Inner Line and settled beyond the Inner Line.⁶⁴ This movement and settlement beyond the line were actions that were likely intended to avoid their inclusion within the colonial revenue rolls. There were still others such as the “coolies” who often deserted from the tea gardens and coal mines across the Inner Line into the hill tracts such as the Naga Hills.⁶⁵ These various examples suggests the ways in which the Inner Line not only formed a line of territorial differentiation and regulation, but also a line that could be appropriated by a variety of actors to pursue various interests.

If the above examples suggest the challenges in effectively managing the colonial territory, on the other, policing the frontier also proved to be a rather troublesome work. In fact, the efficacy of policing the frontier, especially through the outposts, was hindered by organizational problems.⁶⁶ For instance, the outposts were found to be haphazardly arranged, with no proper system in place. This was especially so as these outposts were “held partly by military and partly by frontier police.” Expressing his frustration, S. C. Bayley, the Chief Commissioner of Assam in his report on the military requirements of Assam in 1879 remarked: “here a police outpost, there a military system, then two more police posts, then again one held by troops” (Mackenzie, 1884: 498). If the outposts were of “haphazard arrangement,” there was further a lack of “administrative unity”, with the outposts “being garrisoned by men under different organization.” With such a system in place, Bayley notes how these outposts, “cease at once to be a connected chain of posts ready to co-operate with each other.” The posting of the military force “to distant and unhealthy posts in the jungle” and the absence of supervision by a European officer sometimes as much as six months have “the worst effect on the health and discipline of the men.” To add to

this, “provisioning and maintenance of these posts” was considered a “troublesome and expensive business” (Mackenzie, 1884: 498). In fact, as early as in 1872, Colonel Hopkinson, the Chief Commissioner of Assam had remarked that the police force engaged to watch the frontier “cost five times more than it did eighteen years ago, while disturbances are more frequent than then.”⁶⁷ Further, the location of the outposts in isolated and unhealthy positions often meant frequent reports of bad health and casualties among the frontier troops. In fact, engaging detachments of Hindustanis and Punjabis in frontier police work was found to be erroneous: “Neither the Hindustanis nor the Punjabis thrive in the climate nor are they well adapted for jungle work” (Mackenzie, 1884: 501). Such prevailing conditions in the colonial frontier forces meant that the resources available for policing work, patrol duties, enforcing territorial lines, and surveillance, etc., were often found to be ineffective, inadequate or limited.

Consequently, efforts were made to revamp the British military resources in the frontier. By the early 1880s, the colonial forces in the frontier began to gradually undergo changes both in terms of strength and reorganization. For instance, “all the Frontier Police units” were turned into Military Police Battalions in 1882; these new battalions were subsequently “arranged territorially” such as the Naga Hills Military Police Battalion (Shakespeare, 1989, 1929: 158). All outposts “were revised and put in a proper state of defense”, proper barrack accommodation was built, including rifle ranges and parade grounds, etc (Shakespeare, 1989, 1929: 55-57). Alongside these developments, improvement in armaments and the use of technologies such as signaling were initiated with the aim to augment policing in the frontier.⁶⁸ Territorializing state power in the frontier thus operated through some of these initiatives even as colonial authorities reworked access to territory and resources.

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, territorializing state power formed an important concern of the colonial authorities in the Northeast Frontier of British India. This was deemed necessary to determine the nature of political authority in the region as well as establish outright state claims and jurisdiction over a “fluid” and “ill-defined” frontier space. Territoriality, as such, formed an important strategy of the British raj in its attempt to “control actions, interactions [and] access” of people, things and relationships over the frontier geographies. In the process, a host of accompanying practices came to be closely linked to this colonial territorializing enterprise in the frontier. Conjunctions of violence and the spatial re-ordering of “unruly” frontiers further came to increasingly reshape access to and control over agrarian and political resources. These interactions, processes and practices also reveal the close link between the increased transformation of frontier spaces with the ebb and flow of capital. The encounter and interaction between the frontier societies such as the Nagas and their ecologies with the British was then significantly shaped by the exercise of coercive power.

Colonial territorial practices came to be associated not only with the exercise of power over the frontier geographies. By establishing symbols of state institutions in the “wild” frontier spaces, colonial officials sought to institute and put in place a semblance of order and control over the imperial margins. These practices came to

inform the gradual extension of colonial power over the frontier tracts. These various undertakings were in turn closely entangled with the colonial efforts to transform the ill-defined frontier landscape into clearly defined state territorial spaces. Imperial margins, such as the Naga Hills, thus emerged as important sites where colonial authorities framed various measures in order to define a new idea of modern territoriality. Colonial territorializing strategies also came to be closely intertwined with the colonial bordering practices. Further, in their efforts to extend its influence over the local political entities, colonial authorities reshaped earlier forms of relations and access to territory. In the process, lands were incorporated into the expanding capitalist zones for plantations and other economic enterprises. Access and rights over land and resources were redefined, mobility and circulation were regulated, and frontier inhabitants were gradually brought under new forms of governance. At the same time, instituting symbols of British power over the frontier spaces also worked through the formulation of Inner Line and the various institutions through which the inner line was enforced. The various measures adopted by the colonial officials along the frontier could nevertheless also produce different or uncertain results often contradicting and undermining the intention of the colonial authorities. A range of people in the frontier appropriated these impositions in a variety of ways to either defy the incoming pressure of the colonial state or, otherwise, to pursue their varied agendas. Thus, the unregulated flows of people and goods could progressively undermine the colonial strategy of establishing absolute authority and territoriality. In the course of rule, the territorial practices of the British shaped and produced the Naga Hills and other hill tracts as distinct spatial units of the British raj, occupying the edges of the imperial territory.

Endnotes

¹ For a study that examines the varying perception of space and territoriality in the context of Kukis vis-à-vis the colonial state, See, Jangkhomang Guite, 'Colonialism and Its Unruly? The Colonial State and Kuki Raids in Nineteenth Century Northeast India,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 48 (05) 1188 – 1232, 2014.

² Marjit Singh had earlier been installed as the new Raja of Manipur by the Burmese king. According to Thant Myint-U, "Marjit Singh had spent much of his youth at Ava, and the Ava court was of the view that he would serve as a pliant tributary prince." However, by 1819, Marjit Singh began to assert his autonomy much to the dislike of the Burmese court, leading to the eventual intervention of the Burmese in Manipur. See, Myint-U, *The Making of Modern Burma*, p.15.

³ Prior to this, Manipur had been ravaged twice in 1758 and in 1764 by the Ava King Alaungpaya. During these two invasions, "thousands of people were deported and the valley was left nearly empty for years", writes Thant Myint-U. "Many of the captives were smiths, weavers and craftsmen of all sorts", who were settled around the capital Ava and subsequently came to provide special services to the crown and the Burmese nobility. See Thant Myint-U, *River of lost Footsteps: A Personal History of Burma* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2007), p. 110. Also see Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier*, p. 48; Aung, *A History of Burma*, p.11.

⁴ 'Burmese War,' *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany, Volume 18, By East*

India Company, 1824, p. 431.

⁵ Also see, Gunnel Cederlöf, 'Fixed Boundaries, Fluid Landscapes: British Expansion into Northern East Bengal in the 1820s,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 46 (4) 513 – 40, 2009; David Vumlallian Zou and Satish Kumar, 'Mapping a Colonial Borderland: Objectifying the Geo-Body of India's Northeast,' *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 70 (1) 141-170, 2011.

⁶ Foreign and Political Department, National Archives of India, New Delhi (hereafter FP&D), 8 May 1837, Nos. 64 - 66, P.C.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ 'Reports of Lieutenant Brodie's dealing with the Nagas on the Seebaugor Frontier, 1841 – 46,' in, *Selection of Papers regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and Burmah and on the Upper Brahmaputra* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1873), p. 286.

⁹ Ibid., p. 287.

¹⁰ 'Reports of Lieutenant Brodie,' p. 287.

¹¹ In this regard, one can also refer to the work by Natalie Zemon Davies in relation to the practice of gift exchange in the context of early modern France. Davies writes that, "Every gift produces a return gift in a chain of events that accomplishes many things all at once." For instance, the practices of gift exchange often not only opened and sustained channels of communication across boundaries, it could also ensure that "peace is maintained and sometimes solidarity and friendship; and status is confirmed or competed for." See, Natalie Zemon Davies, *The Gift in Sixteenth – Century France* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), pp. 4, 72.

¹² Even as late as 1869, the Angamis reportedly continued to collect "tributes from Bokolia and Mohedejoa (now Manga), in Karbi Anglong." See Charles Chasie, *The Naga Imbroglia: A Personal Perspective* (Kohima: Standard Printers and Publishers, 2000; 1999), p. 30.

¹³ *Selection of Papers*, p. 314

¹⁴ In 1837, some Nagas on the Assam side were attacked by a party of Singphos from the Irrawady. What concerned officials like Captain Hannay was the fact that the "Nagas were without firearms," and so "more easily mastered by the Singphos" who possessed and knew "the use of this weapon." F&PD. 8 May 1837, 64 – 66, P.C.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ F&PD. 8 May 1837. Nos. 64 - 66, P.C.

¹⁷ Also see, 'Reports of Lieutenant Brodie's dealings with the Nagas on the Seebaugor Frontier, 1841 – 46,' in *Selection of Papers*, pp. 284 – 315.

¹⁸ See, *Selection of Papers*, p. 287.

¹⁹ F&PD. 29 June, 1840. Nos. 109 – 111.

²⁰ Douglas Peers argues that the Burma war was "the costliest war fought to date" and most controversial. It not only failed to secure any tangible benefits for either the colonial state or the troops and officers in the army. The regime was shot through with so many flaws and inconsistencies that effective military operation was made less certain. See Douglas Peers, *Between Mars and Mammon: Colonial Armies and the Garrison State in India, 1819-35* (London: I.B. Tauris Publication, 1995), pp.144-183; For an illustration on the crucial role of information order in the Burmese war,

See, 'Misinformation and failure on the fringes of empire' in C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). C.A. Bayly suggests that, the impermeability of the Burmese information order "remained strikingly meager into the later nineteenth century."

¹ F&PD. 29 June 1840. Nos. 109-111. Writing to Captain Gordon, Political Agent to Manipur, and Lt Brodie and Bigge, on the reports of the impending threat as just "rumors" Francis Jenkins remarked: "the only bad consequences from the opening of such a road should it be actually under construction would be the alarm of the Assamese. For as regards military operations the load would be of more consequence to us than to the Burmese with their light equipped levies. But with the ready means possessed by us of moving on and from Munipore by Cachar ...we need not comprehend that the Burmese will ever venture to invade Assam in any force. All that we have to guard against in my opinion are desultory irruptions of the border tribes and insidious counsel can do aid to our own discontented chiefs."

² Ibid.

³ See *Selection of Papers*, p. 315.

⁴ F&PD. 4 April 1838. Nos. 112-113.

⁵ In fact, as early 1826 the British, in order to put a "powerful check upon the Burmese Govt.", had recognized "Gumbheer Sing" as the Rajah of Manipur who was vested not only with the status of a sovereign ruler but was also allowed to maintain the "Manipur Levy" of 3000 men to be trained and equipped by the British government. See, Pemberton, *Report on the Eastern Frontier*, pp. 50, 51; also see Mackenzie, *History of the Northeast*, 150 - 52

⁶ Tea was first "discovered" in the 1820s in the Singpho country. According to Jayeeta Sharma, colonial botanist such as Nathaniel Wallich "urged Colonial Jenkins to speedily annex these tea forest tracts" arguing that "Such resources were too valuable to be left in native hands." Besides this, the Singpho territory was also situated along an important trading route which connected Assam, Burma and China. See, Sharma, *Empires Garden*, pp. 40-41; Mackenzie, *History of the Northeast*, pp. 63 - 67.

⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

⁸ Considering the strategic position of the Singpho country, such a measure was imperative "for the Burmese were expected daily to show themselves on the Patkoi, and early news of their advance could come to us only through the Singphos." Mackenzie, *History of the Northeast*, pp. 63 - 67.

⁹ William Robinson further writes that springs or wells of petroleum were found in the vicinity of these coalfields. Brine springs were located in Borhat, Nagahat, and Jaipur, while 'the best-iron' was found in the Bor-Khampti country. See, William Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Asam with a Sketch of the Local Geography* (Calcutta: Ostell and Lepage, British Library, 1841), pp. 30-35; Report on the coal Beds of Assam', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (JASB), vol. VII. Part I (January-June, 1838).

¹⁰ F&PD. 16 May 1838. Nos. 53-58, P.C; F&PD. 7 February 1851. Nos. 192 - 207, F.C.

¹¹ For some important work that underlines the significance of the Northeast frontier

as a significant site of resource extraction and colonial capital, see, Jayeeta Sharma, *Empires Garden: Assam and the making of India* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011); Amalendu Guha, *Planter Raj to Swaraj* (New Dehi: ICHR, 1977); Bodhisattva Kar, 'Historia Elastica': A Note on the Rubber Hunt in the North-Eastern Frontier of British India,' *Indian Historical Review*, 36 (I) 131-150, 2009; Aparajita Majumdar, 'The Colonial State and Resource Frontier: Tracing the politics of appropriating rubber in the Northeastern Frontier of British India, 1810-84,' *Indian Historical Review*, 43 (I) 25-41, 2016; Arupjyoti Saikia, 'Imperialism, Geology and Petroleum: History of Oil in Colonial Assam,' *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. xivi No. 12, March 2011

³² See, 'Paramourncy in the Hills,' in H. K. Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. IV* (Guwahati: Publication Board Assam, 2004), p. 220; also see, Lipokmar Dzüvichü, 'Roads and the Raj: The Politics of Road building in colonial Naga Hills, 1860s-1910s,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. L, Number 4, October-December 2013, pp. 473-494.

³³ For instance, in the year 1862-63, the Angami Nagas reportedly carried out, "In the District of Nowgong alone, no less than 126 residents have been killed, thirty-one wounded and sixty-two taken captive by these savages." See, F&PD – A, December 1869, Nos. 216 – 92; *Annual Report on the Administration of the Bengal Presidency, for 1862-63*, p. 94; also see, *House of Commons parliamentary Papers, 1872* (The House of Commons, 1872), p. 16. Instances of raids have also been noted in other parts of the region in the 19th century, such as the case of Lushai and Kuki "raids" along the Cachar frontier and the Chittagong Hill Tracts. For some works that explores the significance of raids and the colonial strategies of territorialization that subsequently proceeded in the frontier regions, see, Guite, 'Colonialism and Its Unruly'; Tamina M. Chowdhury, 'Raids, Annexation and Plough: Transformation Through Territorialisation in Nineteenth-Century Chittagong Hill Tracts,' *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 53 (2) 183 – 224, 2016.

³⁴ *Annual Report on The Administration of The Bengal Presidency 1867-68* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat press, 1868), p. 250.

³⁵ For instance, see, William Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Asam With Sketch of the Local Geography and A Short Account of the Neighbouring Tribes* (Calcutta: Ostell and Lepage, 1841), p. 391; John Owen, *Notes on the Naga Tribes in Communication with Assam* (Calcutta: W. H. Carey and Co., 1844), p. 90;

³⁶ F&PD - Political A, January 1869, Nos. 168-72

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ W. W. Hunter, 'North-Eastern Frontier,' *The Calcutta Review, Vol. XLVIII* (Calcutta: Barham, Hill, & Co., 1869), p. 171.

⁴¹ F&PD – A, April 1869, Nos. 315

⁴² *Report on the Administration of Bengal, 1871 – 72* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1872), p. 20.

⁴³ F&PD, Pol – A, December 1870, Nos. 28 – 31.

⁴⁴ A of sum of Rupees 417-10 was reportedly expended up till September 1870 on the

delegates which was considered “not ... very expensive”. F&PD, Pol – A, December 1870, Nos. 28 – 31.

⁴⁵ ‘Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India During the Year 1870-71, The House of Commons, 13 June, 1872,’ in Parliamentary Paper, Vol. 44, House of Commons, 1872, p. 10.

⁴⁶ Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the Years 1874 – 75 and 1875 – 76, Part II. B (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1877), p. 18

⁴⁷ For instance, John Butler noted that, “Those who were out with me during my late expeditions in December and January also accompanied me through our subsequent operations with the Eastern Naga Hills Field Force and were of the very greatest assistance to me throughout and I anticipate the very greatest benefit from the story.” F&PD - Political A, June 1875, Nos. 164 – 166.

⁴⁸ F&PD - Political A, June 1875, Nos. 164 – 166. In fact, it was noted in the administration report of 1874-75 that such a similar system “adopted in the Khasi and Garo Hills has proved ... very fairly successful.” See, Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the Years 1874 – 75 and 1875 – 76, Part II. B (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1877), p. 18.

⁴⁹ F&PD – Revenue A. July 1872, Nos. 13 – 26.

⁵⁰ F&PD – Revenue A. July 1872, Nos. 13 – 26.

⁵¹ F&PD – Revenue A. July 1872, Nos. 13 – 26; F&PD, Rev. A, Sept, 70, Nos. 5 – 8; F&PD - Rev. A, July 70, Nos. 32 – 34; F&PD-Rev. May 70, Nos. 9 – 12; *ibid*, Oct 69, 4 – 6; F&PD. A. May 72, Nos. 16 – 32.

⁵² In a letter to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department, which was written on 5th September 1871, S.C. Bayley, Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Judicial Department, stated: “It may truly be said that any indiscreet European settler may involve the Government any day in a frontier war, and Government has no effective powers of control.” F&PD – A. May 1872, Nos. 16 – 34.

⁵³ F&PD – Pol. A, September 1875, nos. 269 – 272. In another instance, the Sibsagar Inner Line followed, “the southern revenue survey boundary of the district from its eastern limit, namely, a point on the Disang river, to its western limit, a point on the Doyang river.” See, Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the Year 1876-77, Part II (Shillong: The Assam Secretariat Press, 1878), p. 1.

⁵⁴ Nagaland State Archives, Kohima (hereafter, NSA), Sl. 123, 1899, Legislative Department.

⁵⁵ The “outer line” according to the *Gazette of India* determined the limits of British jurisdiction “over which we claim some sort of sovereignty, but exercise no jurisdiction and work by personnel influence only.” NSA, Sl. No. 115.

⁵⁶ Following the introduction of the BEFR of 1873, a form of pass was “in force in all the districts to which the Regulation has been extended, viz., Lakhimpur, Darrang, Sibsagar, and Cachar.” See, Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the Year 1876-77, Part II (Shillong: The Assam Secretariat Press, 1878), p. 1.

⁵⁷ Instances where military outposts were used as a strategy to contain “raids” or “frontier disturbances”, as well as the use of outposts to serve other colonial governing interests in various other locales in the Indo-Burma frontier has been highlighted in,

Pum Khan Pau, *Indo-Burma Frontier and the Making of the Chin Hills: Empire and Resistance* (London and New York, 2020), pp. 38, 47, 66, 93, 127.

⁵⁸ *Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam* (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1896), p. 232.

⁵⁹ Progress Report of the Forests Administration in the Province of Assam for the Year 1874- 75 by Gustav Mann (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1875), p. 14.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶¹ The report goes on to note that the Chief of Bisa “actually caught one, and paid in Rs. 100 as royalty.” See, Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam, 1896- 1897 (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1897), pp. 23-24.

⁶² Assam State Archive (henceforth ASA), Chief Commissioner Proceedings, Foreign Department, December 1884.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Writing on the Miris, a colonial report in 1894 observed that, “Some hillmen, long settled in the plains removed the previous year to a place only a short distance across the Inner Line. They were ordered to come back or go up to the hills, and as they neglected to obey, two of them were imprisoned. See, Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam, 1893- 1894 (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1894), p. 22.

⁶⁵ See, Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam, 1897- 1898, Part II B (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, 1899), p. 22; Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam, 1901- 1902, Part II B (Shillong: Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1903), p. ii.

⁶⁶ An important factor for this was that the police in Assam was divided into two branches i.e., the civil police and the armed or frontier police. While the civil police took the ordinary duties connected with detection and prevention of crime, the duties of the frontier or armed police involved guarding jails, and treasuries, furnishing escorts. Mackenzie, *History of the Northeast*, p. 497.

⁶⁷ F&PD – May 1872, Nos. 16 – 34.

⁶⁸ See, *Proceedings of the Chief Commissioner of Assam*, Foreign Department, July 1882.

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