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BAHIS102

HISTORY OF NORTH-EAST INDIA (1228-1947)-II



BA (HISTORY)

2ND SEMESTER

Rajiv Gandhi University

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Authors

1. Amrendra Kumar Thakur, Professor, Department of History, NEHU, Shillong
Units: (2.2.4, 4, 5.2)
2. Paulomi M Jindal, Ideas Syndicate
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3. Neru Sood, Unit (3.2.-3.6)
4. Vikas Publishing house



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Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999

Regd. Office: 7361, Ravindra Mansion, Ram Nagar, New Delhi – 110 055

• Website: www.vikaspublishing.com • Email: helpline@vikaspublishing.com

About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

History of North East India (1228 to 1947) II

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b. Annexations (1864-1905): Garo Hills, Naga Hills and Lushai Hills	
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a. Inner Line	
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b. Freedom Struggle in North East India: Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience	
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d. Impact of Colonial Rule: Society, Economy and Polity	

INTRODUCTION

The North East is the eastern-most region connected to east India via a narrow corridor squeezed between Nepal and Bangladesh. It consists of the contiguous Seven Sister states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura—and the Himalayan state of Sikkim. These states are grouped under the Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (MDONER) of the Government of India. Except for the Goalpara region of Assam, the rest were late entrants to political India—the Brahmaputra valley of Assam became a part of British India in 1824, and the hilly regions even later. Due to cultural and historical reasons, parts of North Bengal in West Bengal (districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and Koch Bihar) are often included in North-East India. Sikkim was recognized as a part of the North-Eastern states in the 1990s. On 15th August, 1947, when India became an Independent nation, North East Frontier Agency commonly known as NEFA became an integral part of the Union of India. It was administrated by the Ministry of External Affairs with the Governor of Assam acting as agent to the President of India. The administrative head was the advisor to the governor.

The states are officially recognized under the North Eastern Council (NEC), constituted in 1971 as the acting agency for the development of the eight states. The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi) was incorporated on 9 August 1995 and the MDONER was set up in September 2001. In 1972, the NEFA became a Union Territory when Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister and acquired the name of Arunachal Pradesh. After three years, in 1975, it acquired a legislature. And finally, on 20 February 1987 statehood was conferred on Arunachal Pradesh when Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister and it became the 25th state of the Union of India.

This book, *History of North East India (1228-1947)*, has been divided into five units and deals with early, medieval and modern history of North East India. The book also elaborates on the British policy of Northern Frontier of Assam and the struggle of the people of North East against the British imperialism.

This book, *History of North East India (1228-1947)*, has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the *Introduction* followed by the *Unit Objectives* for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with '*Check Your Progress*' questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of *Questions and Exercises* is also provided at the end of each unit. The *Summary* and *Key Terms* further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

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UNIT I MODERN NORTH EAST INDIA

Structure

- Introduction
- Unit Objectives
- Annexations 1828–1852
 - Annexation of Cachar
 - Annexation of Jaintias
 - Annexation of Assam and Khasi Hills
 - Administration of David Scott (1824–31)
 - Administration of T.C. Robertson (1832–34)
 - Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)
- Condition of the Province on the Eve of British Occupation and its Effects
- Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills
 - Annexations (1864–1905)
- Annexation of Garo Hills, Naga Hills and Lushai Hills
- Summary
- Key Terms
- Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- Questions and Exercises
- Further Reading

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INTRODUCTION

The British came to India as traders and wanted to explore other regions of South East Asia as well so that they could strengthen trade links and in the process strengthen the economy of Britain. Slowly and steadily, the British however, started to interfere in the political functioning of India and gained control over the subcontinent by following the policy of annexation. With India under control, the British wanted to expand their political as well as commercial territory and focused on gaining control of other South East Asian countries. The British were able to easily control Nepal and China but Burma posed many threats to the British because of its power and the fact that the Burmese were expanding their Indian territory. This eventually led to a war between the Burmese and the British which ended in the victory of the British and they were finally able to expand their territory to Burma as well. The British waged several wars against the Burmese. These series of wars were called Anglo-Burmese Wars and were fought by the British with the help of the Indian army. After the very First Anglo-Burmese war, the Burmese empire came crumbling down. In fact, the Burmese army did not only face a humiliating defeat but also was left economically weak and crippled. The Burmese also had to cede several of their territories to the British. Though subsequent kings tried to get back their territories, but the British army was far more superior and had much better weaponry

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and all subsequent attacks of the Burmese failed. The British were finally able to consolidate their position in Burma and by 1885 had complete control over Burma. In this unit, you will study about the factors which lead to the Anglo-Burmese War, the significance of the Treaty of Yandabo, and the annexation of the North Eastern region by the British.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Assess the British rule in India and South East Asia
- Describe the annexation of the North Eastern region by the British

THE BRITISH IN INDIA AND SOUTH EAST ASIA

The British ruled over India for nearly 200 years. It is interesting to note the emergence of traders as the largest political power in India and subsequently in Asia. Since early times, India had close commercial links with the European countries. In the fifteenth century the trading routes between east and west came under the Turkish control. This led the Europeans to search for new trade routes to the East. This is when Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer discovered a new sea route to India using which many Europeans came to India. This is the route through which the British entered India and established commercial as well as political rule in India. The British first came to India in the form of East India Company in 1608 when the Mughal Emperor Jahangir ruled India. The East India Company was given the permission to establish factories in India. Consequently, the East India Company was able to establish factories in Madras, Bombay, Surat, Orissa, Hugli, Hyderabad and Calcutta. With the increasing trade, the British were also able to politically control the several princely states and territories in India. By this time, the British had taken advantage of the poor state of affairs and economic condition of India for which they were themselves responsible.

The British followed several policies which were inhuman and had turned mercenaries to gain complete political control over India. By 1818, the entire Indian subcontinent except Sind and Punjab was brought under the control of the British. The conquest of Sind occurred due to the growing Anglo-Russian rivalry in Asia and also because the British feared that Russia might attack India through Afghanistan or Persia. Also, river Sind opened several commercial possibilities for the British. Sind was annexed by the British by a treaty in 1843 and roads and rivers of Sind were thrown open to the British for trade. With Punjab and several small territories coming under the control of the British, by 1857, the whole of India was under the control of the British commercially as well as politically. With Britain's ever increasing power in India, it became concerned with protecting India's borders and access routes.

With India under control, the British now shifted focus on expansion in South East Asia. From its base in India, the East India Company established trade links with China. Subsequently, China and Nepal became allies of the British. The English took over Sri

Lanka from the Dutch in 1798 and it became their colony of Ceylon in 1802. The British gained monopoly over the trade of fisheries, cinnamon, salt and tobacco in Ceylon. The only South East Asian country that posed a threat and problems for the British was Burma. Burma was a powerful and confident nation and became an example of 'Mission Creep' for the British. Burma had established control over Assam and Manipur in early nineteenth century which made the boundary line of Burma touch the border of British India and so clashes became obvious and frequent between the two powers. The British were finally able to annex Burma as well and with so much under their control, the British became the most dominant power in South East Asia in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

ANNEXATIONS 1828–1852

Once the British were able to take over Burma, they made it clear that they had no intention of ruling the country. However, the British started following the policy of annexing the various territories so that they had more territory as a part of British India.

Annexation of Cachar

Cachar was one of the first kingdoms to have fallen into the hands of the British, followed by Jaintia.

The kingdom of Cachar was inhabited by the Kachari tribe. Cachar was located between Naga Hills on the east and Khasi and Jaintia Hills on the west. It is believed that Cachar first came in contact with the British in the year AD 1726 when Verelst arrived in the capital city Khaspur with five companies of infantry and stayed in Khaspur for a period of one year. In 1819, the British prevented Burma from capturing Cachar. In South Cachar or Cachar proper, the British placed Govinda Chandra on the throne as the king in 1824. This was done by the British as per a treaty made at Badurpur. North Cachar was then ruled by a powerful man Tularam Senapati. Tularam had many times tried to dethrone Govinda Chandra and establish his rule over South Cachar but had failed in his attempts to do so. The British government was not able to protect Govinda Chandra from the troubles that Tularam gave him but instead forced Govinda Chandra to appoint Tularam as the commander of his forces and also Governor of North Cachar. An agreement was signed to this effect in July 1829. Govinda Chandra was also forced by the British to assign a piece of territory as lease for fifteen years to Gambhir Singha. Gambhir Singha on the other hand, made efforts and encroached on a lot of territory of Govinda Chandra. Govinda Chandra also imposed various taxes on his subjects. He also forced them to pay yearly tributes to the British which only increased the dissatisfaction of the subjects against Govinda Chandra. Govinda Chandra was also facing several attacks from the Kuki Nagas who wanted to overthrow him. When Govinda Chandra

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Check Your Progress

8. When and by whom was the Treaty of Yandabo signed?
9. What was the indemnity that the Burmese had to pay according to the Treaty of Yandabo?
10. What did the First Anglo- Burmese War cost the British?
11. What was the main aim of the Treaty of Yandabo?

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died leaving no heir to the throne, the British annexed South Cachar. On the other hand, in North Cachar, Tularam's powers as governor was reduced by the British with a treaty. The Angami Nagas also posed several problems for Tularam by raiding his territory repeatedly. The main problem behind the conflict between the Angami Nagas and Tularam was the possession of salt springs near Semkhar. Tularam was unable to counter the Naga attacks. In 1839, during their raids, the Nagas were able to reach the British territory. The British army with Tularam's help was able to drive out the Nagas from the territory and peace was restored in North Cachar. By 1844, Tularam was too old to run the administration and his sons were unfit to run the administration. When Tularam died in October 1851, the British tried to annex his territory and were finally able to do so in 1853. Thus, Cachar was annexed by the British dominion completely.

Annexation of Jaintias

The contact of Jaintias and English can be traced back to the eighteenth century when the navigable rivers were used to reach Calcutta for trade and commerce. The early interest of the company in Jaintia was purely commercial. Before 1765, the British acquired only a small share of limestone trade from the Nawab of Bengal. In 1765, the British received Diwani (right over revenue) of the region. The British appointed W.M. Thackeray as the Collector of Sylhet in 1722. With direct administration over the region, the British also took the responsibility of defence of the district. However, the British territory had extensive and undefined frontiers which led several mountain tribes to raid their territory. In fact, the Raja of Jaintia was one of the worst offenders who would raid the British frontiers. Also the Jaintias resented the fact that the British had trade links with the local merchants which was once their monopoly. The Jaintia kingdom also included some portion of the river Surma and levied toll tax on all boats that crossed the river. The Jainta Rajas often obstructed the boats of the East India Company that would pass to Dacca. The Jaintia Rajas also looted the boats apart from levying toll tax on the boats causing delay much to the annoyance of the East India Company.

The Jaintia Raja also raided the British territory many times which affected the revenue collection of the British. With the ever increasing troubles that Raja of Jaintia put forth for the British, Thackeray urged Barwell, the chief of Dacca Council to take strong military action against the Jaintias. The British government sent force under Captain Elleker in 1774 against Jaintia. As a result, a war like engagement between the British and Jaintias under Raja Chatra Singh in Jaintiapur completely routed the Jaintia soldiers and Jaintiapur came under the British control on 29 March 1774.

Thackeray then recommended the annexation of Jaintia Pargana. A treaty was signed on 12 June 1774 between the Raja and the East India Company which provided that the Raja would pay ` 15,000 as compensation and would never interfere in any matters that the company undertook. In addition, the Raja was to give free navigation of the Surma river. Hence, the trade income of Jaintias was cut considerably. The Jaintias, however, continued to raid and encroach upon the British territory during the next few years. In 1821, some agents of Raja were held for attempting to sacrifice some British people before the Jainteswar Kali. The Company issued a warning to the Jaintia Raja that any such offence would lead to the confiscation of his territory. On 10 March 1824, a treaty was signed by virtue of which the Raja acknowledged allegiance to the British and placed Jaintia under the Company's protection. The Raja was, however, given freedom to rule his country according to ancient customs.

The main reason for annexation of Jaintia, however, was the attempt to human sacrifice. The Jaintias made two abortive attempts of human sacrifice in 1827 and February 1832. It was in August 1832 that a real sacrifice was done. Robertson, the agent of North East Frontier took the matter to the Governor General. The king was asked to hand over the chief and other offenders and if the king failed to do so, his territory was to be confiscated as per the warnings issued earlier. In 1834, when Jenkins assumed the charge of the agency, he instructed the king to punish those involved in human sacrifice. In September 1834, those involved in the human sacrifice of British subjects surrendered but an investigation found them innocent and so they were released. The Governor General was convinced of the guilt of the Raja and on 23 February 1835, he decided to confiscate the king's possessions in the lowlands and leave the king in possession of the hills.

The plain areas of Jaintia were annexed on 15 March 1835 under the directions of the government by Captain Lister. During the annexation lots of gold, precious ornaments and treasure was looted and caves and underground tunnels were filled up. The British also destroyed many sacred places. The Raja did not offer any opposition to the British on their annexation of Jaintia and also resigned his other plain territories as well as Jaintia hills to the British. Thus, the entire Jaintia region came under the control of the British.

Annexion of Assam and Khasi Hills

After occupying Assam, the British divided it into two provinces: Upper Assam and Lower Assam. Kamrup, Nowgang and parts of Darrang, with Gauhati (now Guwahati) as its headquarters, constituted lower Assam. Upper Assam comprised the other parts of Darrang, from Biswanath to the river Buridihing with its headquarters at Rangpur.

The Ahom rule in Assam was terminated after the Treaty of Yandabo came into effect. Lower Assam was brought directly under the British dominion because it bore high revenue income. Upper Assam suffered a lot under the Burmese invasion. People lost their confidence in the government and the administration collapsed. It became essential for Upper Assam to be under the governance of the military. Appointed Senior Commissioner of Lower Assam was David Scott and Colonel Richard was appointed as the Junior Commissioner of Upper Assam. The people of Assam were very happy with the British administration in the beginning. Common people now hoped for peace and prosperity, after suffering a lot during the Burmese invasion. Ruling classes thought that their power and privileges would be secured under the British rule. But this was not to happen. The British cared for their own prosperity and their own business. People could now see that the British administration was different. Soon people were unhappy with the administration.

Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar

The Ahom nobility were dissatisfied with the British as they understood that their rights and privileges were not secure under the administration of the British. Soon, Gomdhar Konwar, the prince of Ahom and a scion of the royal family, organized a revolt against the British. Time turned out to be favourable, with the Khasis and Singphos also preparing a revolt against the British. Gomdhar was formally enthroned at Bassa. Revolutionary forces advanced towards Mariani, but the British won the battle led by Lieutenant Rutherford. Gomdhar was arrested and imprisoned.

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Administration of David Scott (1824–31)

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With improvements in conditions in Upper Assam, martial law was also lifted in 1828. Now, the entire valley of Brahmaputra came under civil administration. Civil and criminal justice was under David Scott who was appointed as commissioner. He was the chief of police and also presided over collection of revenue. In simple words, David Scott was given all the charges of the entire valley as a commissioner. He used all his power in revenue collection, judicial and police administration in the valley. Scott was against the implementation of new rules and tried to retain the old system as much as possible. The 'Paik' and 'Khel' systems were retained in Upper Assam. Barbarua was appointed for collecting tax. The 'Pargana' land system of land division was retained in Lower Assam. A Choudhury was made incharge of each Pargana to collect taxes. Payments in cash were accepted. Various taxes were imposed on the people of Lower Assam, some of which were: rent tax, professional tax, and stamp duties. The British police system was followed to maintain law and order. The police system comprised a Daroga, one Jamadar and a number of constables. The post of Barphukan was retained for judicial administration. He took up civil cases. Some panchayat courts were also present to solve petty civil cases. Scott had put a lot of effort towards the welfare of Assam. David Scott steered the administration of Assam through the most crucial times of its history.

David Scott did not annex Upper Assam on the basis of economic as well as social viewpoints. He thought that it would become a liability for the British. People were devastated and lost faith in government administration after the Burmese invasion. Scott noticed the hostile mood of Ahom nobles. Gomdhar Konwar's revolt followed by Dhanjay Pealia Bargohain's conspiracy expressed anger against the British. Therefore, Scott recommended restoring monarchy in upper Assam rather than annexing the British dominion. Accordingly, the prince of Ahom, Purandar Singha, was crowned as the Raja of upper Assam. The British signed an agreement with the king that: (i) the Raja would pay a sum of `50,000 annually as tribute, (ii) the Raja would act according to the advice of the British political agent; and (iii) the Raja would be protected against any foreign aggression. The British very tactfully served its purpose to satisfy the nobles momentarily, and then annex Upper Assam in due time because the conditions of the agreement would be impossible to fulfil for Purandar Singha.

Purandar Singha was a young man of about twenty-five years of age. He readily accepted the treaty being imposed on him but was unaware of the difficulties of his new position. There were a lot of political difficulties and his administration was financially crippled from the beginning. Purandar Singha had spent his earlier days in Bengal. Though he was approved by the British, people of Assam and the nobles wanted Chandrakanta Singha as the king instead. Common people were unhappy with the new rules introduced by the British government after taking possession of Assam. Hence, Purandar Singha could not keep up the agreement with the British. Purandar Singha failed to pay the regular yearly revenue to the British starting from the year 1835 because of a rapid fall in revenue. This violation of agreement gave the British ample and legitimate reasons to support their annexation of Assam. Finally, Upper Assam was formally annexed to the British dominion in India in 1838. In other words, the foundation of British rule in Assam was laid.

Administration of T.C. Robertson (1832-34)

T.C. Robertson was appointed as the agent to the Governor General and Commissioner of Assam after Crack Fort, in 1832. He was soon appraised as a man of tact, prudence and sound judgment of the province. With his prejudice against the 'native agency', he realized that the supervision of British officers was a must in Assam. Robertson divided lower Assam into four districts. An officer called the Principal Assistant led each province. The Principal Assistant acted as a judge, magistrate and collector and was paid a salary of ` 1,000. He had the authority to decide original civil cases from ` 500–1,000; he could also hear appeals from lower courts. He had the same authority as the Magistrate of Bengal to deal with criminal cases. There were two courts in each district, the munsifs and the panchayat. Original cases from ` 100–500 were tried in the munsif's court and appeals were heard from the panchayat court. The panchayat court tried minor cases of up to ` 100. Robertson brought about radical changes in the revenue system. He abolished additional imposts in 1832. But tax on land at various rates was imposed on the peasants. Robertson also introduced measures to safeguard and protect the peasants from extortions. Patgiris, Bishayas and Choudhuries were appointed as revenue officers.

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Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)

After T.C. Robertson, Captain Jenkins became the Commissioner. Upper Assam was the last dominion of the Ahom rule in Assam and was annexed to the British territory under his administration in 1838. He created the post of Deputy Commissioner, who was vested with judicial powers, besides his civil duties. He was to act as district and session judge. The principal assistant was given new powers to transfer cases to subordinate courts. The munsifs and the panchayat courts continued to function and decide civil cases as before. The number of thanas was increased to maintain law and order, and protect the lives and property of people. Darogas was given the charge, who was aided by a Jamadar and a few constables. The khel system was abolished in matters of revenue. New taxes like tax on 'barimati' were introduced. Non-rupit land rates were increased. Professional tax on various professions was the same as in Ahom rule. Meanwhile the discovery and success of tea plantation made it the most important cash crop in Assam. Tea industry was followed by coal and oil industries. Agriculture sector and local economy were no way linked with industrialization in Assam. There was drastic improvement in communication with the other states. Medical care and health facilities were also introduced. One of the most important benefits was modern education introduced under the British rule. A new awakening started in the Brahmaputra valley from the end of the nineteenth century.

At the time of Burmese expulsion, the condition of Brahmaputra valley was most deplorable. The civil administration of Assam was entrusted to David Scott during the period of transition. He was given the title of 'Agent of the Governor General for the entire Eastern Frontier' from Cachar and Sylhet of the south to Sikkim in the north. He was also the Special Civil Commissioner of North East Rongpur, that is, Goalpara and the Garo hills. Mr Robinson says, 'Hitherto the affairs of the province were conducted on much the same system that prevailed before the conquest. The officer in charge exercised general superintendence and devoted their attention to fiscal business while the criminal and civil duties were conducted by councils of the Assamese nobility under the name of Panchayat. Each division had two to three such Panchayats of the province.'

Appeals lay from the court of one Panchayat to the next superior court and ultimately to the court of the Commissioners.’

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The executive officers in judicial cases were magistrates as well as judges trying to deal with the accused with the help of the panchayat but referring all horrendous offences appended with their options to Mr Scott for his ultimate judgement. The revenue administration was carried out in the same manner as it had existed during the conquest. An improved method of assessing land revenue was introduced by David Scott, but he died in August 1831 before implementing it. Thus, the history of the state under the British rule started after appointing David Scott. On the eve of the Anglo-Burmese war, that they had no plan of annexing any portion of the Brahmaputra valley and favoured to stay only as conquerors. As a result, the first rebellion broke out. It was started by Assamese nobles against the newly established authority with demand to eliminate the new administrative system of revenue, which diminished many of them to abject poverty.

Occupation of Lower Assam by the British was not viewed as a serious concern by the Khasi Chiefs who held the low lands, generally known as nine-*duars* north of their hills. The ruler of Khyrim, Barmanik took the initiative in August 1828 down the plains of Dimarua, a few kilometres from Gauhati, seized collections of revenue officers and publicly demanded his independence on the *duars*. The second revolt broke out in Eastern Assam under the administration of the ex-nobility of Assam. The British government somehow succeeded to put off their joint rebellion. Nearly all the territories of Brahmaputra valley and the hilly regions of Jaintia and Cachar were annexed to the Company’s administration in Assam in the course of two years. Accordingly, David Scott, North East Frontier agent to the Governor General, spread British suzerainty over Cachar under an agreement with Raja Govinda Chandra in March 1834. In his agreement with Scott, Raja Ram Singha of Jaintia acknowledged the authority of the British government. Thus, the extension of British dominion into Assam or the North East Frontier started. People submitted to the inevitable; in actuality, they ‘hailed with unbounded joy’ their deliverers who rescued them from the cruelty of the Burmese and granted them the most loyal cooperation. Even an arch-enemy of the British, Maniram Dewan, heavily welcomed the arrival of the English. Scott’s policy of satisfying the former official aristocracy proved a miserable failure. Also, towards the end of 1828, the Ahom, the Khasis, the Singphos as well as the Bhutias in the north were binding on the British subjects.

British administration was imperfect. People demanded a change from the repeated uprising and the administrative confusion of the period. T.C. Robertson was the successor of Scott as the agent of the Governor in 1832. Nevertheless, in 1832, upper Assam except for the territories of Sadiya and Mattak, was made over to the Ahom prince Purandar Singha, who was a vassal king. In October 1838, the territory of Purandar Singha was taken over by the British on the advice of Mr Jenkin, agent of East India Company, and Assam became a ‘nonregulated’ province as a whole of the Indian empire. This was done on the contrary to their earlier assurances with a purely commercial motive. Purandar Singha was humiliated unnecessarily, and it could have been done only with the tacit consent of the rival group of Purandar Singha. The British followed the same tactics in finally annexing Cachar in 1830, and they also annexed Sadiya to British India in 1842. Likewise, Jaintia, which was under the rule of a vassal king, was annexed in 1835 and Manipur was restored to its ruling dynasty. There were eighteen mountain passes along the southern frontier of Bhutan, called Bhutan *duars*. Highlanders of Bhutan held their sway over this border by means of these passes and established their de facto right over the whole border territory. As a result of incessant indignities committed by

the Bhutias on the British subjects, the British government appended all the Assam *duars* in 1841 as the only means of security and peace in this part of the frontier. These *duars* were the main channels of trade between Tibet and Assam.

Hostilities with the Mishimis originated from a simple incident. In 1854, when French missionary M. Kich crossed the Mishimi country into Tibet accompanied by his friend N. Bourri; they were murdered by the Mishimis. The Mishimis were crushed in a series of attacks, and the rebels made their submission to the British in 1843. The Lushais committed their first sweep in 1849 and the punitive expedition that followed was so encouraging that they gave no further difficulty till AD 1858. Meanwhile, T.C. Robertson had felt that mixed activities of a far flung frontier to the provinces was not justified. He realized that for good supervision, there was a necessity of European officers in Assam and on his recommendation, the supreme government granted its approval for dividing the province into four districts: Kamrup, Goalpara, Darrang and Nagaon. In March, 1833, each was assigned a principal assistant vested with the authorities of a collector, judge and magistrate. Guwahati remained the headquarters of the province for many years after British occupation of Assam. But the headquarters of the new administration shifted to Shillong after Assam emerged as a separate province under a chief commissioner. After the formation of separate districts, boundaries underwent changes in 1833. The Dhansiri river basically formed the boundary in the east, and the district of Sibsagar covered some areas of the existing Karbi Anglong district, North Cachar hills and also the Naga hills. In 1853, North Cachar was segregated from a subdivision, and in the next year the region of Tularam was added to the North Cachar subdivision. The Naga hills and a large part of Karbi Anglong were combined into a separate district during 1867, and the subdivision of North Cachar was abolished, and a considerable area of North Cachar subdivision was assigned to the deputy commissioner of Cachar.

The province of Assam was created with a view of relieving Lieutenant Governor of Bengal from a part of his huge administrative responsibility in 1874. The head of this newly created province was titled as the 'Chief Commissioner'. In 1905, Lord Curzon merged the eastern district of Bengal with Assam, but it was reversed in 1912 and Assam was refurbished to its previous territorial position. In 1921, in accordance with the prerequisites of the Government of India Act, 1919, Assam was granted the status of a governor's province.

Condition of the Province on the Eve of British Occupation and its Effects

The disputed succession of the British disturbed the peace and tranquility of the province. Anarchy predominated in the later Ahom period resulting in mismanagement in the state. The situation was further intensified by the successive rebellions, the population of Assam dropped down to half of its actual number. The peasants had to give up cultivation and depended mostly on wild roots and plants. They had to face a lot of stress of protracted wars and oppression. The land was stalked by famine and pestilence. Mills's report on Assam stated that it was not to set back the clock as desired by Maniram or the people of the same dreams, but to strengthen the possession of the British and to strengthen their hold over the administration. David Scott had organized the administration to his greatest capacity and introduced British system in widespread outline and spirit with adaptation for indigenous system prevailing at that time. With regard to the general administration of Assam, even justice was vested in the Commissioner of Assam whose headquarters were at Gauhati. To relieve the commissioner of the civil and sessions court, a deputy commissioner was posted there in 1939. A principal assistant was given

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the charge of each district. This senior (principal) assistant was assisted by a junior assistant and a sub-assistant. A deputy commissioner was redesignated as judicial commissioner in 1861; principal assistant as deputy commissioner; junior assistant as assistant commissioner and sub-assistant as extra assistant commissioner.

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There was a separate civil judicial establishment which consisted of one chief Sadar Amin, six Sadar Amins and seventeenth munsifs. In 1872, separate establishment of Sadar Amin and munsifs was abolished. The credits for the working of the administration in both upper and lower Assam goes to David Scott. The British administration in lower Assam actually began in 1824–1825. There was an increase in revenue collection in each succeeding year and this must have humiliated the people.

New methods were introduced by the British for revenue administration. Paraganas were placed under Choudhuries in the new system. Choudhuries were given the responsibility for the collection of revenue and administration of justice in small criminal cases in their particular paraganas. The Choudhury had to pay the government revenue for six months in advance before collecting any revenue from the people and therefore, we can say that he acted as a revenue collecting contractor. Revenue was estimated as per the classification of the cultivated area. Besides revenue, people were subjected to pay 2 as a capita poll tax. Property of the defaulting tenants was confiscated if they failed to pay. As a result, peasants at times could not save their hearth and home. Hence, resentment grew among the Assamese peasants who were in great need of regular rehabilitation for a considerable period of time. The introduction of a new judiciary system by the foreigners also added to the suffering of the people.

A thana (police station), thanedhar (police) or daroga were in charge of protecting lives and properties of the people in the interiors. Thanedhar was given the authority to arrest people whom he suspected, to detain them and even to hold preparatory trial before entrusting them to Sadar Station. Special lease grants and simple lease grants were introduced under the Charter Act of 1833. They were to administer revenue administration to encourage tea plantation and the British established a company named 'Assam company'. By 1858, almost the whole erstwhile Lakhimpur and Sibsagar were included with this company for tea plantation and consequently expanded its operation to Cachar. Extension of the tea industry compelled import of labour from outside the state. According to Mill, the number of such immigrants in Assam in 1881 was 3,00,000 which reached over 6,00,000 by 1901.

Gaurinath Singha's commercial treaty with Captain Welsh in 1793 opened the gates for the merchants of Bengal to enter the province. Avenues of employment in both office and trade caused a steady inflow of the population from the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dacca and Rangpur to Assam. After it came under the administration of the British, they adopted the same policy in other parts of India. In order to supplement the Charter Act of 1833, the British encouraged the establishment of English schools in Assam as they needed people with the knowledge of English to help run the administration. The people of Assam enjoyed respite after a bitter struggle with the Burmese invaders. Besides, there were very few educated people with the knowledge of English in Assam. In April 1831, the Government of Bengal made Bengali instead of Persian the language of court. The introduction of Bengali not only made the judicial and revenue departments their only preserve, but their services became equally essential to the recently started government schools for death of regional teachers especially to grant instructions in Bengali which had since then been made the medium of instruction in Assam. Eventually, Assamese was prohibited from the courts and schools of Assam in 1839. An English-

educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was appointed as Assistant Commissioner. He saw that peasantry could not be improved to a great extent without the understanding of modern scientific applications. He also believed that a better mode of living cannot be achieved without western education. He laid stress on the requirement of increasing the standard of education. He was the first person to raise his voice against the imposition of Bengali as the medium of instruction, and appealed for replacing it with Assamese. However, concrete steps were taken by the Christian missionaries who not only carried on propaganda through Arunodoi (the first Assamese-language magazine) but also established a few schools for girls. Rev. Nathan Brown started the first missionary school at Sibsagar in 1840 followed by schools set-up by Bronson at Nagaon in 1843 and by Mrs Barkes at Gauhati in 1850. The need for the formation of political association including organization to vent the grievances of people started gradually. The Charter Act of 1833 was a convenient instrument of the British colonialists who now began using their financial resources to serve the interest of the empire including colonialism. Assam began to suffer from the shortcomings of foreign domination as other parts of India did.

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Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills

Garos is a tract of mountain territory inhabited by the Khasis. It is situated between the state of Jaintia and the hills on the west. There were thirty states in the Khasi hills before the advent of the British. Each state had an elected chief who had a council, without whose sanction no important business could be performed. The British first got acquainted with the Khasis in the year 1765 when the company needed the Dewani of Sylhets from the Mughals. The British became a close neighbour of the Khasis after this takeover, and they soon realized the possibilities of trading with them. Consequently, the British started business with the Khasis in items like lime, silk, wax, iron, ivory and honey. Shortly, the British came to monopolize trade in limestone and after the discovery of coal, they started to monopolize trade in coal too. However, this trade had to face disturbances as well. The Khasis often attacked the plains due to the ill treatment rendered out to the Khasi traders by the traders from the plains.

David Scott was appointed as an agent to the Governor General in November 1823, and he was given the responsibility of developing and consolidating companies and also the administration in the North East frontier. The view displayed by Scott marked the introduction of a new British policy referring to the North East. At the same time, the British were following a policy of non-intervention with regard to the state of the Khasis. Scott's view was that for a robust solution to the dispute of trade, the British government had to establish a strong control over all the Khasi chiefs. The Government of Bengal endorsed Scott's views thus heralding a change of policy. Scott realized the needs for maintaining good relations with the Khasis when the need for a postal service from Sylhet to Gauhati was urgently felt. Scott was also interested in building roads in the region. Militarily, the proposed road would reduce the length of the march from lower Assam to Sylhet. It would also enable the British to keep the Khasi chiefs under control and attracted trade and commerce by giving the Khasis easy access to the markets in the plains.

Scott first contracted with Duwan Singh, Syiem of Sohra. He agreed to permit the British to build a road through his territory combining Assam with Sylhet and in return he demanded to get a zamindari near Pandua. However, Scott got permission from Raja Ram Singh to construct a road through his region which connected Jaintiapur

with Naogaon and Raha by the Burmese. Scott had now looked for a new route; all he could think of at that time was a road from Bardwar to Sylhet.

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Scott resorted to a policy of coercion and negotiation to achieve his objective. He ordered the Khasi traders to close down the markets in plains and declared that he would annex Bardwar which belonged to the Syiem (chief) of Nongkhlaw, in the plains. At the same time, he also stated that a normal trade relationship would be supported, and Bardwar would continue to be a part of Hima Nongkhlaw provided the Syiem Tiro Singh allowed the East India Company to construct his territory connecting the Surma valley and the Brahmaputra valley.

Further, Scott asked Tiro Singh to get the approval of all the Khasi chiefs to give the Company the authority of passage as the road would additionally affect areas beyond the jurisdiction of Nongkhlaw syiem. Consequently, Tiro Singh conveyed an assemblage at Nongkhlaw and all the Khasi chiefs were asked to attend the meeting. Scott and his men arrived at Nongkhlaw on 3 November 1826, Scott was highly pleased by the method of Khasi sitting-at-council by the strict consideration of rules that controlled and governed such sessions. Tiro Singh explained the objective of the meeting and requested the different declaimers to express their viewpoints on the proposition of the British government. The debate lasted for two days and ended in favour of the proposition. The decision of the assembly was represented in a treaty which was resolved with the British government. Subsequently, as per this treaty the Khasis accepted to assist the British government in the development of the road, provide men and materials and donate lands for constructing residential quarters.

Dimarua which is a few miles from Gauhati was upheld by Khyrim as an appendix from the Ahoms, but a subordinate chief held the actual management responsibilities. David Scott took over Dimarua after the retreat of Burmese and forbade the Syiem of Khyrim from consolidating tribute for the chief. These aroused Syiem Bormanick and developed down to Dimarua to capture the revenue collected by the officer of the East India Company in 1828. He also elected a Basan in that area and vowed to return again the following year to receive the tribute. Scott decided to take action against Khyrim, and he called upon the Jaintia Raja, and other Khasi Syiems to aid the British against Khyrim. This led to tension among the Khasi Syiems as they realized the imperialist design of the British.

Scott did not keep his promise of reviving Bardwar to Tiro Singh. Tiro Singh was also displeased with the denial of the Company to provide him military support against the Syiem of Rani, Balram Singh, against whom Tiro Singh together with Bormanick, Syiem of Khyrim had made a collective stand. He told the Company's revenue superintendent at Bardwar, 'Mr. Scott made friends with me stating your enemy is the Company's enemy and that he would relinquish the revenue of Bardwar in both money and in paiks. He has not done it and wished to give troops to my enemy.' Tiro Singh was now conscious of the danger of the agreement he made with the Company for the road construction. Realizing that it would appear obvious, if he suddenly stopped the construction, he waited for a better opportunity to oppose it without actually breaking the treaty.

Again there was high domination of the military at Nongkhlaw. Here, the military harassed the poor inhabitants, and other misdeeds finally led to mistrust and hostility among the Khasis. Most people were unaware of the construction of road, and a few headmen complained to Tiro Singh that their opinion was being overlooked in certain important matters. They also understood that the British was trying to ascertain its grip over the hills and a rumour spread that the British imposed taxes on the Khasis. All these

aspects together created an environment of general discontentment between the Khasis and the British. Early in 1829, Tirot Singh made plans to expel foreigners from the country. He did not consider himself bounded by the treaty any longer and pitched his lot with Bormanick and other chiefs against the British. A conference of Khasi Syiems was held at Nongkhlaw, and a decision to drive away the British was taken. The plan was general massacre of all immigrants at Nongkhlaw and the abolition of the Company's post. The plan was put into action the following day, the Company was attacked at Nongkhlaw and Burlton, and Lieutenant Beddingfield of the Bengal Artillery along with many of the Company's men were killed. However, Scott who was in Nongkhlaw at the time of the conference managed to escape to Sohra and then to Cherra. From Cherra, Scott conveyed information to the authorities at Sylhet and Guwahati and Captain Lister immediately started out for the hills.

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ANNEXATIONS (1864–1905)

Most of Burma was under the control of the British except for a few hill regions occupied by the tribes like Garos, Nagas, Khasis and Lushais.

3.6.1 Annexation of Garo Hills, Naga Hills and Lushai Hills

The Garos have been said to have immigrated to Garo Hills from Tibet. The Garos settled in the Garo Hills as they found providence as well as security in this territory and claimed it to be their own. The Garos were head-hunters and a fierce and powerful tribe. Goalpara and Sylhet including a part of Garo hills that formed a part of Bengal were transferred to the East India Company in 1765. Thus, eighteenth century Assam was already a part of the British territory much before the annexation of the Ahom Kingdom. All estates bordering Garo Hills were brought under the control of the British who did not want to control the region. The zamindars were still in control of the Garo hills which the tribe did not like and a conflict between the Garos and the zamindars remained unabated for a long time, till the British noticed it and took advantage of the political unrest. In December 1872, the British sent battalions to Garo hills to establish their control on the Garo hills. The British attacked the Garo hills from three sides—south, east and west. The Garos confronted the British at Rongrenngre with their spears, swords and shields. However, the Garos were no match to the British army who had superior weaponry and guns to fight. The Garos were defeated by the British. When the British had occupied Brahmaputra, they focused on connecting the two valleys of Brahmaputra and Surma by an all-weather road. The Garos and the Jaintias opposed the construction of this road which was of strategic importance to the British for the movement of their troops. When the Garos and Jaintias went forth to stop the construction work, the British were alarmed and burnt several Goras and Jaintias villages. The hostilities increased when the British introduced house tax and income tax in 1860s. The Garos under the leadership of Pa Togan Sangma gave a tough fight to the British but they were defeated by the British and the Garo hills were annexed to the British in 1873.

The Nagas were a tribe that inhabited North Eastern regions of India and North Western Burma. The Nagas were a tribe that practiced head-hunting and preserved the heads of their enemies as trophies through the nineteenth century. Initially, the Nagas did not have any contact with the outside world except for cultural contacts with the Ahoms. The British first came in contact with the Nagas in 1832 when Captain Jenkins, Captain Pemberton and Captain Gordon were sent to the region to find a route to establish direct

Check Your Progress

12. What was the main reason for annexation of Jaintia?
13. Who were the rulers of North and South Cachar when the region was annexed by the British?

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communication link between Assam and Manipur. The expedition of Captain Pemberton and Captain Jenkins was opposed in almost all Naga villages by the Nagas. The Nagas were so bitter in their opposition that they even burnt their own villages. All attempts of the British to annex the region were met with effective guerrilla resistance from the Naga tribes. The British were able to build a military post in 1851. The main opposition to the British came from the Angamis in southern part of Naga hills around Kohima. The Angamis attacked the British post in 1878. There were several encounters between the British and Nagas. Eventually, the Nagas were defeated and accepted the authority of the British in 1880. Naga hills were finally annexed to the British in 1881.

From early times, the Lushai Hills were inhabited by the Kukis, a tribe of the North East region. The Lushais were not heard of until 1940 when they invaded the district from the North. In 1826, the Lushais who were powerful raided the British territory. The Lushais proved to be the most troublesome tribes in the North East frontier. After this first attempt, the Lushais launched several raids and the British finally retaliated in 1844. A British expedition also visited the Lushai hills. This expedition, however, in 1888 was captured and Lt. J.F. Stewart was killed by the tribes. The British got alarmed at the killing of their general and they retaliated. The British launched several expeditions during the years 1889 to 1890 and were finally able to set a permanent post on the Aijal Range. Several operations were launched and the Lushai hills were occupied in 1890 by the British. After occupying Lushai hills, the British divided the region into North Lushai and South Lushai. North Lushai became a part of Assam while South Lushai was attached to Bengal. However, there were several revolts against the British administration in both regions of the Lushai hills. These revolts were suppressed by the British. In 1890, the northern Lushai villages were completely controlled by the British and the eastern Lushais were taken control in 1892. The management of South Lushai was transferred from Bengal to Assam. To ensure efficient control over the area, it was divided into eighteen circles. Later, North Lushai and South Lushai were united. In 1895, the Lushai hills were finally annexed to the British.

SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The British came to India as traders and wanted to explore other regions of South East Asia as well so that they could strengthen trade links and thus the economy of Britain.
- The British ruled over India for nearly 200 years. It is interesting to note the emergence of traders as the largest political power in India and subsequently in Asia.
- The British followed several policies which were inhuman and had turned mercenaries to gain complete political control over India. By 1818, the entire Indian subcontinent except Sind and Punjab was brought under the control of the British.
- Burma was a powerful and confident nation and became an example of ‘Mission Creep’ for the British.
- Before the British conquest, Burma was under the rule of the Konbaung dynasty. The Konbaung dynasty was established in 1752 by a village chief.

Check Your Progress

14. What was the main reason of conflict between the British and the Garos?
15. When were Naga Hills and Lushai Hills annexed by the British?

- The North Eastern states were always a part of India, geographically, culturally and politically. The longest ruling dynasties were established in North East states of India. The state of Assam was ruled by Ahoms for almost six centuries.
- Burma and British, both expansionists and powerful, were always in conflict with each other. Eventually, the British were able to annex Burma following a series of wars known as Anglo-Burmese Wars.
- Burma was a strong nation and it always posed a threat to the British because of its invasion in the North Eastern states. In addition, Burma was strong economically because of its trade links with other countries.
- The Treaty of Yandabo is the peace treaty that put an end to the First Anglo-Burmese war with the British emerging victorious. The treaty was signed on 24 February 1826, almost two years after the war broke out on 5 March 1824.
- The Treaty of Yandabo finally enabled the British to annex Burma and consolidate their position in South East Asia. The treaty put an end to the most expensive and the largest war in the British Indian history.
- Once the British were able to take over Burma, they made it clear that they had no intention of ruling the country. However, the British started following the policy of annexing the various territories so that they had more territory as a part of British India.
- The Garos have been said to have immigrated to Garo Hills from Tibet. The Garos settled in the Garo Hills as they found providence as well as security in this territory and claimed it to be their own.

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KEY TERMS

- **Indemnity:** It refers to a sum of money paid as compensation, especially one paid by a country defeated in war as a condition of peace.
- **Imposts:** It refers to a tax or similar compulsory payment.
- **Vassal:** It a person who held land from a feudal lord and received protection in return for homage and allegiance.
- **The Charter Act of 1833:** It marked the beginning of a system of government for all India. It also tried to separate and decentralize executive and legislative functions.
- **Pargana:** It refers to a group of villages or a subdivision of a district in India.

ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The British wanted to take control of South East Asian countries as it wanted to secure the borders and access routes of India.
2. Burma posed a threat for the British as the former was a strong, powerful and an expansionist nation. Burma had already occupied Assam and Manipur and the British feared loss of territory to the Burma.

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3. The North East region became isolated from the rest of India as it was ruled by powerful tribes who were in complete control of the region. The Mughals and the Delhi Sultans were not able to attack and occupy the North Eastern region.
4. After the end of the First Anglo-Burmese War, the territories that were ceded to the British were Assam, Manipur, Cachar, Jaintia, Arakan province and Tenasserim.
5. Maha Bandula was the Commander-in-Chief of the Burmese army during the First Anglo-Burmese War.
6. Maha Bandula planned to attack the British from two fronts: Chittagong from Arakan in the south-east and Sylhet from Cachar and Jaintia in the north.
7. The British were interested in the trade of rubies, oil and teak from North Burma.
8. The Treaty of Yandabo was signed on 24 February 1826. The treaty was signed by General Sir Archibald Campbell on the British side and by the governor of Legaing Maha Min Hia Kyaw Htin on the Burmese side.
9. The Burmese had to pay an indemnity of one million sterling pounds to the British as per the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo.
10. The First Anglo-Burmese war cost the British between five million sterling pounds and thirteen million sterling pounds. This cost of the war led to an economic crisis in British India.
11. The main aim of the Treaty of Yandabo was to leave the Burmese empire crippled. The treaty not only asked the Burmese to pay a huge sum as indemnity but also forced Burma to cede several of its territories. This left the Burmese defeated and humiliated.
12. The main reason for annexation of Jaintia was human sacrifice. The Jaintia kings carried out human sacrifices of British subjects and after the first instance, the Jaintia kings were warned against human sacrifices and if they were found doing so, their territory was to be confiscated by the British.
13. During the annexation of Cachar Hills, the northern Cachar region was under the rule of Govinda Chandra while South Cachar was under the control of Tularam.
14. When the British occupied Brahmaputra, they wanted to connect the valleys of Brahmaputra and Surma with an all-weather road. The Garos were against the construction of the road and protested against it. This was the main reason behind the conflict between Garos and the British.
15. The Naga Hills were annexed to the British in 1881 while the Lushai Hills were annexed in 1895.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Why was Burma able to invade Assam and Manipur?
2. Why did the British want a war with the Burmese?

3. Briefly describe the battle of Danubyu.
4. How were the British able to annex Garo Hills?
5. When and how were the British able to annex Naga Hills?

Long-Answer Questions

1. What were the causes of the First Anglo- Burmese War?
2. Describe the war between the Burmese and the British on the outskirts of Burma.
3. Describe the battle of Yangon.
4. What were the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo? Analyse the significance of this Treaty.
5. Give a detailed description of the annexation of Jaintia Hills.
6. Explain in detail the annexation of Cachar Hills.

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UNIT II BRITISH POLICY IN THE NORTHERN FRONTIER OF ASSAM

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Structure

- Introduction
- Unit Objectives
- Posa, Duars, Kotokies, Trade and Military Expeditions
- Inner Line
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INTRODUCTION

The establishment of British rule in Assam, as a consequence of the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, brought the colonial forces closer to the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The colonial masters adopted the policy of peace and cooperation as well as the policy of armed intervention and other coercive means whenever and wherever required. And finally they drew the line 'Inner Line' between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to monitor or regulate the movement of people between the hills of Arunachal Pradesh and the plains of Assam. The British policy in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh has been the subject of study by many scholars as a part of the whole of North East India or Assam.

British colonial interests (political, economic, commercial and strategic keeping in view also the areas beyond Arunachal Pradesh) shaped the British policy in Arunachal Pradesh. The growing colonial economy in the Brahmaputra valley in the form of tea, petroleum, coal, rubber and increased revenue from improved agriculture on the foothills of the border area greatly depended on the capacity of the colonial administration to maintain law and order in the border areas.

The British authorities exploited the opportunity to settle the Indo-Tibetan boundary on the north. Enough work had already been done after the Abor Expedition of 1911 and the various surveys and explorations, which had been summarized in a 'confidential note' by the Chief of General Staff in June 1912. The military authorities had suggested that the proposed boundary line should follow some prominent geographical features, preferably the main watershed of the mountain system; and the border thus demarcated should be easily approachable. The frontier, as suggested in the notes, was divided according to the tribes and river basin into Khamti Long, Mishmi, Abor and Miri or Subansiri sections.

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The Tibetans expected that the British would help them defend their territory and secure their rightful place. The Chinese government, however, was not at all satisfied with the boundary agreement and disapproved the action taken by its representatives. China completely disapproved the action of these representatives. China wanted the whole of Tibet as an integral part of it. Sir Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary of the British run Government of India, informed the Peking government on 23 June 1914, that if by the end of June, China refused to rectify the agreement, the British government would begin agreement with the Tibetan government and China would lose all the benefits of the Simla Conference.

Commenting on the boundary line along the whole of the North-East Frontier, that became famous as the McMahon Line, McMahon pointed out: 'The frontier work of the past three years and the negotiations of Tibet Conference at Simla have served to make clear the mutual rights and responsibilities of Great Britain, China and Tibet and it may be hoped that the North East Frontier will now be removed from the anxiety which beset the Indian government during the last few years.'

The McMahon Line runs over a distance of 820 miles or 1320 kms of which 640 miles (998 kms) is between India and Tibet from the tri-junction of Bhutan, Tibet and Kameng district of present day Arunachal Pradesh, through the crest of the Himalayas to the Diphuk Pass to northwest Burma where India, Burma and Tibet meet. Commencing from a point to the east of Bhutan at 92°40" E, 27° 48" N, it crosses the Namjang River and follows the eastern range of the Great Himalayas, then proceeds east and northeast and crosses the Subansiri River and then the Tsari River just south of Migyitun. From this point, it takes a northeastern direction, crossing the Tunga Pass, continues eastward again, crosses the Siang River and ascends the watershed between Rangta Chu in Tibet and Dihang (Siang) and its tributaries in India. Thereafter, it runs south to a point, just below latitude 28° 30" and just west of longitude 96°30", crosses Lohit a few miles to the north of Kahas and joins the tri-junction of Indian, Burmese and Tibetan boundaries near the Diphuk or Talik Pass.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the *posa* system
- Describe the relationship of the British with the Khamtis and Singphos
- Recognize the role of the *Katokies*
- Discuss the market scenario in Arunachal Pradesh
- Explain the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 and the formation of Outer Line
- Discuss the incidents that led to the recognition of the McMahon line

POSA, DUARS, KOTOKIES, TRADE AND MILITARY EXPEDITIONS

The article by Braj Narain Jha, 'Politics of *Posa*: A Case Study of Pre and Post Independence Scenario in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam,' in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (57th Session, December, 1996, pp. 446–458) is important in this context because it discusses the *posa* system comprehensively. Jha also provides

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thorough discussion on the *posa* system in his Ph.D Thesis 'British Colonial Intervention and Tribal Responses in the North East Frontier of Assam (1825–1947),' unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, Arunachal University, Itanagar, 2002. Though Mackenzie's views are very clear and true to the nature of the *posa* rights of the tribal chiefs, the official writings of the British period distorted the facts in this regard. In general, the term *posa* came to be applied to all payments made to the hill tribes by the governments; whether these were in commutation of black mail, compensation for customary demands of the tribal chiefs of the bordering hills of Arunachal Pradesh, it was often confused with 'blackmail' in the official jargon of the British period.

The British administrators neither had the intention to understand the true nature of *posa* nor could they make their doubt clear as to what it was. They cared little to ascertain 'whether these claims had their basis in primeval rights or whether they were merely the definite expression of barbarian cupidity.' Till the third quarter of the nineteenth century they often expressed their grudge that, '... we are met to this day by difficulties arising from the indefinite nature of the connection subsisting between the Assam sovereigns and their savage neighbours.' It is because of this apathetic attitude towards ascertaining the true nature of *posa* that we see the conflicting visions of the British administrators on *posa*. Sometimes it was called 'blackmail', and at other times it was understood as 'a well-ascertained revenue payment, on account of which a corresponding remission was made in the state demand upon the ryot and was compared even with 'the chouth of the Marattas and blackmail of the ancient highlanders.' The situation becomes gloomier when one finds the same comparison of *posa* with 'blackmail' in recent publications.

Thus, we see that proper and objective analysis of the nature of *posa* based on the socio-political realities of the contemporary period of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has hardly been made in any serious studies or in the administrative historiography. That is why it has often been wrongly interpreted as blackmail. Actually, the blackmail had originated in Bengal in a different context. The system of payment of blackmail was, in fact, a British polity stated to buy the raids of the aborigines of the Rajmahal hills in Bengal presidency.

The British continued the *posa* system even after the occupation of Assam as it was under the Ahoms. It was the initial policy of the local British officers especially under David Scott the agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier (1824-31) 'to maintain intact the arrangements of their native predecessors, and to avoid the appearance of anything like radical or unexpected change.' However, demands within the British establishment were to either change the system or altogether abolish the system as the direct collection of *posa* was viewed as inconvenient and as the rights of the tribal over the ryots of Assam who considered the British as their subjects. Robertson the agent to the Governor General and Commissioner of Assam (1832-34), directed Captain White in early 1834 to carry on negotiations with the chiefs of the hills under which either a certain sum of money should be annually paid to them in lieu of all demands or a certain quantity of various articles be collected for them at fixed localities. Under no circumstance were they allowed to proceed beyond a defined line to collect their contributions personally. In this connection, the Government of India held the view that stopping of *posa* might lead to troubles and since it did not affect its interests immediately, the conciliatory policy regarding the *posa* collection should continue. Accordingly, Captain White recommended payment of *posa* in cash than in kind directly from the ryots. It was thought by the local officers that a humane policy displayed towards the tribes would effectually secure the peace of the outlying areas and lead to beneficial results.

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Commutation to cash payments from the treasury proved useful for the British and by 1852 the *posa* of the Akas, the Sherdukpens, the Thembang Monpas, the Dzongpens of Talungdzong and the Nyishis were commuted to cash. In the case of the Adis all dues in kind were commuted to money payments in 1877. Subsequently, various unsuccessful moves were made towards bringing changes to the system or altogether stopping it.

During the British period though the payment of *posa* continued, we also witness that the payment was stopped to some as a punitive measure against the tribe. The payment of *posa* to the Adis was stopped after the Abor expedition of 1894 and consequent blockade of the Ahor hill and it was never resumed thereafter. Commenting upon the violations of the terms by the Adis, Lancelot Hare (the last Lieutenant Governor of the newly created Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam from 1906 to 1911) had earlier argued, 'By their exaction from the Miris, their obstruction of the survey and their assertion of territorial rights the Abors have undoubtedly forfeited all claims to such a subsidy.'

Accordingly, *posa* began to be paid from the respective treasuries of the Darrang and Lakhimpur districts. In 1860, the right of collection of *posa* extended to some of the Adi chiefs under treaty obligations, but the *posa* to the Adis was stopped once and forever in AD 1900. However, the *posa* of the first kind continued. The debate over 'continuance vs abolition' of *posa* continued from the beginning of British rule in Assam to the end and surprisingly enough during the post-Independence period, but the system of *posa* still continues. It is also to be observed that no change has been made regarding the existing practice of the British period.

Cash payment in lieu of all *posa* claims were given with a view to popularizing British products in the hills and for revamping the transborder trade. *Posa* payment made to the different tribal chiefs in the annual fairs was spent by them then and there and the gifts given to them on the occasion gradually induced them to use cheaper factory-made British goods. These measures also served the process of emergence of differentiation within the tribal societies and the power of state was indirectly used to strengthen an economic nexus between the imperial state and the chiefs monopolizing the payment of *posa*. Kingship and kinship combined into the institution of traditional chiefs was gradually made to serve the interest of the state. However, the amount of payments remained the same throughout the British period which has scope for further investigation.

After the immense growth of plantation economy and other economically lucrative ventures, the debate of 'abolition vs continuance' gained momentum since the closing years of the nineteenth century, but to serve the strategic interests and because of lack of sufficient knowledge of the socio-political and cultural affiliations of the tribes of western Arunachal Pradesh and incomplete consolidation of administration in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh the system of *posa*, except for the Adis, was kept intact.

B. N. Jha in his Ph. D Thesis (cited earlier) and S. Dutta in his article 'The *Posa* System: A Historical Analysis' in S. Dutta and B. Tripathy (eds.), *Sources of the History of Arunachal Pradesh*, provides the details of the *posa* paid to various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh during the British period. The details given below are from the two sources.

***Posa* to the Hrusso (Aka) chiefs**

David Scott succeeded in concluding an agreement with the Hrusso (Akas) by which they agreed to forego their right of direct collection of *posa* from individual ryots for an

annual payment of ` 175 by the British government. An agreement was made with Taghi Raja wherein he agreed not to attack the ryots in the plains for a monthly pension of ` 20. Suitable stipends amounting ` 360 per annum were also granted to other chiefs of the Akas with further extension of six more pensions in 1848 to another six chiefs. Captain J.T. Gordon concluded agreements with Hrussos (Akas) chiefs in February 1844 for commutation of their *posa* to cash on prevailing market prices of goods. Monetary payments to the Aka chiefs were finally fixed at ` 668 in aggregate in 1848. The relations of the British with the tribe began to improve after the grant of *posa* in cash to the chiefs. Though later on the chiefs demanded an increase in the amount and troubled the British, the latter as a punitive measure withdrew and stopped the *posa*, the chiefs finally surrendered in 1888 and their *posa* was restored from 1890.

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Posa to the Nyishi chiefs

On 17 April 1836, after much persuasion, eight Nyishi chiefs of Charduar area agreed to receive the *posa* articles in future from the *Malgoozari* (local revenue officer) who would collect the articles from the ryots of their respective villages as per revised rates. In accordance with the direction from the Governor General-in-Council, that appreciated Captain Methie's agreement with the eight Nyishi chiefs, his successor Lt. Vetch, carried on negotiations with the remaining five Nyishi chiefs of Charduar who made similar agreements on 5 April, 1837. The Nyishis of Naoduar also agreed to receive the *posa* through the village revenue officer by 1838-39. Finally, ` 2494-0-1 was annually paid to the Nyishi chiefs of Charduar and Naoduar commuting their rights to raise *posa* in the Duars.

The presence of petty clans, independent of each other, suggests that intertribal subdivisions existed in Nyishi society. There were 30 to 40 chiefs in the same clan or village representing an oligarchic form of government. The chiefs were called *gams*. Dalton, therefore, noted that 238 Nyishi *gams* of chiefs were in receipt of ` 2543 as *posa*. In 1853, the total amount of *posa* to the Nyishi chiefs was ` 4129-15-0 with 24 maunds of salt to the Nyishis of Bankotta in lieu of certain *hat* (weekly market) dues. It is evident from the official records that it was only by 1852 that the *posa* paid to the Nyishis along with other tribes like the Sherdukpens and Akas were finally commuted for money payments. After about a year of the commutation of *posa* into money payments, Gordon mentioned, 'No adverse effects on peace has been felt due to commutation of *posa* to money payments "as stipends to the chiefs."' Great numbers of these clans have left the hills and settled in the plains since the commutation was effected.'

Posa to the Sherdukpen chiefs

On 28 February 1836 Captain Mathie entered into an agreement with the Sat Rajas of the Sherdukpens commuting the *posa* to an amount of ` 2526-7-0 annually. The *Sat rajas* received this amount regularly up to 1839, when their payment was stopped in consequence of their having allegedly murdered Madhu Saikia, the revenue officer of Orung in Panbari village. In 1884, however, the Sherdukpens came to terms and on recommendation of Capt. J.T. Gordon the payment of *posa* was resumed. The amount of *posa*, however, was reduced to ` 1740 annually. Since then, the Sherdukpens seemed to be reconciled to the change and behaved peacefully in general.

Posa to the Monpa chiefs

In early 1844, Captain Gordon entered into an agreement with the Sat Rajas of the Kuriapara Duars along with the *Galong* of Talung Dzong Gompa and Nyetsang as the

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representative of the Tawang Deo, binding the chiefs formally to relinquish all their claims to the lands of the Kuriapara *Duar* in consideration of an annual payment of ` 5000. The relation of the British with these Sat Rajas remained peaceful till 1852 when a misunderstanding developed because of interception of the amount of *posa* by one of the *Galongs* who had supervisory authority over the chiefs. But peace was restored through a treaty signed on 28 January 1853 at Kuriapara by three representatives of the *Tawang Deo* ratifying the earlier agreements of commutation of *posa* to cash amounting to ` 5000.

Posa to the Monpa chiefs of Thembang

The Monpa chiefs of Thembang collected *posa* from the Mazbat area in Charduar. In 1844, they were allowed an annual sum of ` 145-13-6 as commutation of their *posa* to cash.

Posa to the Hill Miris

From Mills' *Report on the Province of Assam, 1854* it is known that Hill Miris were also allowed by the British to draw *posa* in cash and kind annually. The Hill Miris got ` 851-3-9 and 12 maunds of salt annually. From a resolution of the chief commissioner of Assam of 1884 it seems that the different clans of the Hill Miris were in receipt of annual *posa* of ` 281-7-5, ` 930-4-9 and ` 25 in lieu of their rights of collection in the Sisi, Dhemaji and Bordoloni Mouzas of the present Dhemaji district of Assam.

Posa to the Adis

While discussing about the *posa* in the case of the Adis Mackenzie writes, 'So far as can be gathered, the Abors, though much more powerful than any of these tribes, had no such rights. This was, owing no doubt to their comparatively remote situation, cut off as they were by the great river Dihang from the cultivated country along the Brahmaputra valley.' But some *Buranjjis* written in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries mention that *posa* to the Adis had been granted along the *paiks* of some villages. These *paiks* cultivated paddy for their lords and fishermen of their allotted *khels* supplied them with fish. These cultivators and fishermen allotted to the Adis were exempted from paying revenue to the Ahom government.

Initially the different sections of the Adis were paid *posa* in kind such as, iron ore, salt, rum, abkaree opium and tobacco. But the *posa* payment was commuted to annual payment of allowances in cash and also in terms of salt and rum as early as 1854. In the case of Padam-Miniyong section of the Adis, the *posa* payments in kind were commuted to cash payment in 1877 and began to be paid from 1878. It is noteworthy to mention here that the right to *posa* as police payments to maintain law and order in the border had been extended to the Padam-Miniyong Adis through different agreements between the years 1862 and 1866. After that, we see that annual monetary payment to different tribal chiefs and *gams* continued till the end of the British rule in India except for the Padam-Miniyong section of the Adis, whose payments were stopped in 1894 and was never resumed. The amount granted to the different clans/villages of the Adis was ` 3312 per annum and was distributed as follows:

Bor Adis (Padams)	–	` 1096-0-0
Adis of Mebo	–	` 562-0-0
Adis of Padu	–	` 264-0-0

Adis of Duku and Silli	–	`	425-0-0	Pasi-
Miniyong Adis	–	`	465-0-0	
Adis of Kebang	–	`	393-0-0	
Adis of Mankong	–	`	55-8-0	
Adis of Retung	–	`	51-8-0	

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Posa to the Noctes

Even after the occupation of Assam by the British, the Nocte chiefs continued to retain their *khat* managed by their respective *katokies*. The British decided to continue the system. In 1841–42 Captain Brodie entered into an agreement with these chiefs by which they were allowed to use those *khats* in lieu of payment of a trifling tribute. In addition, he abolished tools and cesses collected from the Noctes on brine spring held in their possessions. In 1873–74, the government resumed some of the *khats* of the Namsangia and Borduria Nocte chiefs, which had already been connected with tea gardens, for annual payments in cash. By 1920–21, however, all their *khats* were resumed by the government and annual payments in cash were allowed to the concerned chiefs.

During the Ahom period, the relationship among the state (Ahom state), *posa* holders (tribal chiefs and people) and the allotted *paiks* (*Bahatias*) were interwoven in a system. But after the annexation of Assam by the British, the *paik* factor was eliminated from the *posa* system. Now it became an agreement between two contracting parties, that is, the colonial state and the *posa* holders in which the state took the responsibility initially in kind and subsequently in cash to pay them. Also, no remission was made in the revenue to be taken from the erstwhile *paiks*.

As described earlier, the *katokies* played an important role in promoting and maintaining relations between the Ahom and tribal chiefs and leaders of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The institution and its importance was also appreciated by the British and they, therefore, continued the offices of the *katokies*. The *katokies* were appointed to deal with the Akas, Nyishis, Adis and Hill Miris of the bordering hills. The services of these *katokies* were also utilized for trade regulations between the Monpas and Sherdukpens.

The British issued them a letter of appointment known as parwana and a register was maintained in the headquarters in which details regarding the *katokies* were mentioned. The main duties of these *katokies* were to go into the hills as and when required and to provide information about the tribal affairs to the authorities. These *katokies* also accompanied the deputy commissioners when the latter went into the hills on tours. They were in close contact with various tribes and accompanied the tribal when they came down to the plains during fairs and other occasions. *Katokies* were given revenue-free lands and a nominal salary was also at times paid to them. On certain occasions, they were also rewarded by the tribals whom they assisted. Generally speaking, no formal education was required for appointment as *katokies*, the only requirement being the knowledge of the tribal dialect and capacity of carrying transactions with the tribal. The importance of these ‘go-betweens’ gradually declined after the creation of the post of assistant political officer at Sadiya in 1882.

The British power did not adopt the policy of annexation in the areas of Arunachal Pradesh. Neither did they have a uniform policy towards the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Force was used as and when required, otherwise the policy of peace and non-intervention was followed.

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The British government had the first encounter with Taghi raja (Aka chief). He continued collecting dues from the *Duar* forcefully and also murdered an official posted at Charduar. For this reason, they had been declared as outlawed. In 1829, Taghi raja fought with the Hazari Khowas, and then fled to Assam, where he was captured by the British and sent to the Gauhati (now Guwahati) jail. In 1832, he was released. He again mustered his people and started outrages in the *Duar*. In 1835, he burnt the Assam Light Infantry outpost at Balipara and killed seventeen people. Taghi raja committed several raids in the foothills. The British government stopped the annual payment to the Hazari Khowas. It was unable to capture the culprits. The British decided to send a punitive expedition to the Aka Hills, but in 1842 Taghi raja surrendered. He was released on an oath of good behaviour, and was given a small stipend of ` 20. Following him, many other Aka chiefs also accepted stipends in 1844 and in 1848. However, the Aka chiefs always demanded an increase in the amount of *posa* and to maintain control over forest and forest produce they too pressurized the government. Consequently, the relation was not always peaceful with the British.

A controversy appeared on the question of rights in the forest. In 1900, the Akas demanded a sum of ` 3000 from a merchant of Balipara for tapping rubber in their hills. The deputy commissioner of Darrang interfered in this matter. It was decided that in future all agreements regarding rubber tapping and the payment between the merchants and the hill men would be done in the presence of the deputy commissioner.

The change in the mode of collection of *posa* during the British period was unacceptable to the Nyishis as a whole and remained a matter of dispute between the two forces. Their policy of raid was also a point of constant dispute between them. The Nyishis wanted to collect the *posa* directly from the people of Assam. In 1835, the Nyishis raided the plains. They took away several British subjects with them. The British government sent a small military force into the hills and rescued the captives. After this event, several Nyishi clans of the north of Charduar submitted. They left their right of collecting *posa* from the *paiks*, and agreed to receive the articles of *posa* from the revenue officer of the villages. They also undertook a policy not to assist the enemies of the British. Their new *posa* was fixed at one coarse *arkut* sheet, one long cotton handkerchief, two seers of salt, one dao, and one goat for every ten houses. Many other Nyishi clans also accepted it. The British government always took seriously any raid by the Nyishis on the plains of Assam. To stop the same economic blockade, withholding of the payment of *posa* and finally the armed intervention was followed. We see all these measures in the British intervention in the incidents of the raid of the village Amtolla (in Darrang in 1872–73). The beginning of the twentieth century marked a change in the British policy towards the Nyishis. To establish direct contact with them in 1911, a survey party (known as the Miri Mission) visited many villages of the Nyishi hills and collected important information. This resulted in the inclusion of the Nyishi hills in the Western section of the North-east Frontier.

The British occupation of Assam brought about a change in the *posa* rights of the Adis. The gold washers and fishermen, who had now become the British subjects, refused to pay to the Adis. The Adis in revenge carried off many of them to their hills. In this way, the British–Adi conflict began. So far, the Adis were not so hostile to the British and even helped the British in various ways in the rebellion of the Singphos and Khamptis. The British government tried to conciliate with the Adis on the matter of gold washers and fishermen. In 1847, Captain Vetch, the political agent, met Pashi, Mebo, and other Padams (Adis) and got the captives released. But the Adis were not ready to renounce their claims over the gold washers and fishermen. The Deba Adis of the

Dihang carried off some gold washers in 1847. Captain Vetch got them released in 1848, but not without a small struggle which was the first one between the British and the Adis. While some of the Adis were going to settle in the plains, the others started attacking the gold washers. The British government then took the responsibility of the protection of the gold washers. This step only aggravated the relation between the British and the Adis. This problem continued between the various Adi groups and the British. The problem in their relationship continued in the coming years over the issue of Beheas, Sonowals and the slaves under the Adi masters. The British moves in the Adi hills were also the result of the geo-political situation of the Adis and the moves of China from the other side of the border. Of various missions in the Adi hills by the British government, the murder of Neol Williamson proved a turning point in the history of the relation of the British and the Adis and the Anglo-Adi war took place in 1911–12.

During the initial years of British rule in Assam, the relation of the British with Khamptis was peaceful. However, over land dispute with the Matak the British intervention was not acceptable to the Khamptis and the latter occupied the land. Taking it as an offence the British removed the chief from Sadiya and his post was abolished. Although the other privileges of the Khamptis were retained, they were very angry at the loss of their right to rule as the Sadiya Khowa Gohain. The result was that on 19 January 1839, about 500 Khamptis attacked the British at Sadiya. In this event, Colonel White, the political agent, and a large number of British soldiers were killed. The British government took it very seriously and immediately sent a punitive force. The Khampti insurgents fled to the Mishmi hills. The British vigorously pursued them, but they could not be submitted before December 1843. After this event, Sadiya and Matak were directly brought under the British rule. This development proved decisive in the history of British–tribal relation and an evidence of the use of force by the British. The Khampti unity was broken by the British and the former remained peaceful in the relationship. The superiority of arms of the British played an important role in the same.

During the period of the Burmese occupation of Assam the relationship between the Singphos and Khamptis became an open confrontation and the Khamptis lost. The Singphos carried off a large number of people from Assam as slaves and kept them as their slaves to work on their lands and others were sold as slaves as far as to the Yunnan province of China. The Khamptis asked for British help in this situation. In the beginning, the Singphos were not ready for any agreement, but later on the British compelled them to come to terms and to release all the captives. While the British wanted to utilize the Singphos against the Burmese, the Singphos were in need of British protection against the same. But the Singphos made a common cause with the Burmese when they appeared on the Patkai in June 1825. The British expelled the Burmese from the Singphos villages of Bisa and Duffa Gams. The Singphos chiefs also surrendered. About 6000 captives were released and measures were being initiated for the release of the rest. The Singpho land was also useful for the tea plantation of the region. Also, the British were eyeing upon the same. The Singphos, in fact, did not like interference by the British in their old privileges. The British also used to protect the loyal Singpho chiefs (Bisa Gam) against other chiefs (Duffa Gam). Consequently, Singphos revolted against the British. The British took prompt action and suppressed the revolt. In the end, all the chiefs surrendered.

This was the last Singpho uprising, after which they remained peaceful throughout the British rule. The Singphos assisted the British officers when they visited their country. In 1914, the Singpho tract was included in the Eastern section of the North-East Frontier. The British collected poll tax from them. The policy of acquiring land for plantation and other colonial use and liberating the slaves of the masters of Arunachal Pradesh and

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encouraging them to settle in the British territory of Assam and use the same for colonial use were the cause of confrontation between the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and the British government of Assam.

The markets on the borders of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh underwent tremendous change during the British period from that of the Ahom period. The Ahom rulers were promoting free exchange of goods; and trade was a popular economic exercise. However, with the development of colonial economy and administration the system changed subsequently. The aspects of trade and markets have been studied in the past by some scholars working on the history and culture of Arunachal Pradesh.

During the pre-colonial period, the cold weather annual fairs were held at Udalguri and Doimara in the foothills of Assam which practically lasted from November to March. Udalguri fair was mainly attended by the Monpas of Tawang and Kalaktang and in less number by the Thembang Monpas. The Doimara fair was visited principally by the Shertukpens and also by the Thembang Monpas. At the Udalguri fair main items of import from the Monpa areas were horse and ponies, gold, blankets, salt, musk, wax, spices, yak-tails and rubber. On the other hand, the main items of export to the hills were cotton pieces, silk manufactures, brass and copper manufactures, iron, cotton twist and yarn, woollen goods, tobacco and betelnut. Common items of import from Shertukpen and Thembang Monpa areas at the Doimara fair were spices, wax, musk, chilli, salt, sheep and blankets. However, export items of this fair were almost the same as those at Udalguri. The Sadiya fair, held in the Lakhimpur district of Assam catered to the needs of Adis, Mishmis, Duariah, Singphos and Khamptis. These tribes used a number of passes from the hill territories to the Assam plains.

Restoration of administration (after the Burmese intrusions) had created a political environment, which boosted trade within and outside Assam. Restoring the frontier *haats*, the centres of trade, revived frontier trade with the neighbouring hill tribes became the priorities of the British administration. These *haats* in course of time became centres for collection of raw materials for export of primarily forest products, and also distribution centres for British machine-made goods. Revenue was extracted from these foothill markets. These *haats* – which the tribes frequented to exchange their produce for salt – came to be used as an instrument to exert political power. This measure of economic blockade helped in keeping the tribes under control and maintaining British paramountcy. Frontier trade in the province of Assam under changed political conditions became an exclusive domain of the Marwaris, Bengalis and settlers from outside. They came in as a class seeking avenues for trade, and in the absence of a local trading class, soon gained foothold over the entire gamut of trading activities.

Revival of trade fairs was in line with the broad framework of the mercantile motive of the East India Company reflected in its Report of 1797 which gave emphasis on ‘creating a demand for articles, the products of Europe and Bengal’ and supplying with a valuable return in bullion. The motive is also evident from the *Notes by David Scott on Welsh’s Report on Assam*: ‘The quality of goods of European manufacture has of late increased, and it is probable that there may hereafter be a considerable outlet for woollens at a sort of annual fair held on the confines of Durrung, to which merchants from Tibet and the intermediate country resort.’

The nature of import and export proves beyond doubt that the policy of the British colonial government was to popularize European goods. This conclusion is further strengthened from the trade statistics that the export of British cotton piece had been valued at ` 76 only in 1877 while it increased manifold in a single year and touched the

figure of ` 11,751 in 1878. To add further, the 'Report on Trade between Assam and Adjoining Foreign Countries and Tribes' for the year 1889–90 clearly mentioned that the tendency in trade indicated a steady increase in the demand for European cotton piece – goods, cotton twist and yarn, brass and copper, salt and silk manufactures.

Till 1853, the annual trade at Udalguri was in a flourishing condition which gradually showed a downward trend. This was mainly due to the reduction in the market price of salt owing to the introduction of cheap manufactured salt. With the beginning of tea plantation in the Brahmaputra valley, local markets established themselves at all centres where the villagers were encouraged to bring their produce for sale. As the gardens increased in number, Marwari and Dacca traders increased and the demand for local produced grains increased. The development in railways, coal mines, the strengthening of staff in district offices, the introduction of troops increased the consumer of local produce more than the producers. Consequently, the prices of all articles, in particular, foodgrains increased.

In fact, taste for finished goods was already there to a limited extent, since the customary dues to the hillmen of the Darrang frontier were paid in terms of *gamocha* (handkerchief), *khania kapor*, *cheleng*, *mekhela-chaddar*, cotton twist and yarn, *dao*, and others. from the Ahom period. When the British commuted these customary dues to cash, they began commerce like Tezpur (in the case of the Shertukpen, Thembang Monpa and Aka chiefs) or at fairs (as in the case of the Sat Rajas of Karipara *Durar*, who were paid at the Udalguri fair). Evidently, this mode of payment was directed at diverting the taste from finished Assamese goods towards cheaper European finished goods. This intention is corroborated further by the fact that along with the payment of the amount of *posa* the British used to present these chief articles of British manufacture like broad cloths, bottles of rum and knives. Once the people became used to these articles, they began to purchase them either from Tezpur or from the Udalguri and Doimara fairs. This colonial culture of exchanges culminated in making the chiefs addicted to those goods. The following official assertion about the importance of fairs gives a fair indication of the politico-economic motives behind the organization of fairs: 'the fairs served some purposes of commercial and political utility.' To take the discussion on the Udalguri and Doimara fair further, we find that statistics regarding the volume of trade in Doimara fair have not been shown separately after 1885 and the Udalguri fair also lost importance from the closing years of the nineteenth century. In 1902, the import and export figures at Udalguri fairs stood at a low level of ` 8220 and ` 8598, respectively. However, the Udalguri and Doimara fairs contributed throughout the British period. While assigning the reasons for decline in brisk trade of these fairs, the following factors draw our attention:

- The Darranga fair which began to be organized in 1883 onwards gained importance at the cost of these fairs.
- These cold weather fairs failed to serve the increasing and regular demand of the rising population in the Darrang district due to enormous expansion of the tea industry and the consequent increase of population. Hence, alternative sources of commerce in the form of weekly markets and permanent centres situated at Orang, Amratola, Mazbat, Lahabari, Balipara and Tezpur became the regular channel of commercial transactions.
- Lastly, we also notice a firm determination on the part of the British colonial government for direct entry into foreign trade with Tibet which is evident

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from the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1894, Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 and the commercial treaty concluded with Tibet in 1914.

- Enactment of the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 on the Darrang frontier in 1875 and its consequent amendment in 1892 and 1898 along with the Forest Regulation of 1878 further amended in 1891 need special mention in this regard.

With the gradual consolidation of British rule in upper Assam, the Marwari traders who by this period had monopolized the internal trade of Assam (as an agent of the British trading houses of Calcutta) were encouraged to open their trading agencies at the frontier areas and trade with the hill people. These Marwari traders had their headquarters at Goalpara and Guwahati in Assam. As early as 1833, the Governor General-in Council decided that the tract between the rivers Buridihing and Dibang, part of which was occupied by Khampti and Singphos, should be placed under an officer at Sadiya and in defining the powers and functions of the officer, the agent to the Governor General North East Frontier categorically stated,

Another great object will be the advancement of the commerce in the frontier and any obstruction to a free trade that the agent of the Marwaris may bring to your notice either on our side or on the side of the Ava you will endeavour to remove and report to me as you deem necessary.

In 1834, Lieutenant Charlton was appointed in charge of Sadiya. In a letter written to David Scott, agent to the North East Frontier, Captain Neufville expressed the urgency of encouraging the rising spirit of commercial extension and enterprise amongst the border tribes. He suggested to give them a good market at the frontier with such articles of English and Indian produce as were in demand at a reasonable price receiving in exchange for the native products. The former should, Neufville suggested, consist of coarse med broadcloth, med bailze, *chintze*, white cotton cloth, black muslin, cotton coloured handkerchief, velvet, salt, opium and med blanket of Bhutan and eri cloth of Assam and the latter would be chiefly ivory, gold, amber, musk, *munjee*, *Mishmiteeta* and Khampti *dao* and spear. David Scott also entertained the idea that the trade with the hill tribes to the north as well as the Singphos would naturally increase. For this, he proposed to establish a mart at Sadiya. This he hoped would also appease the Singphos who were suffering from loss of their slaves. An attempt in this line was already undertaken by Scott in 1827, when silk goods of the value of ` 800 were despatched from Calcutta together with the present for the chiefs. Unfortunately, the whole consignment was plundered on the way. Though Scott once applied for a fresh investment of goods, the smallness of sum guaranteed, mere ` 2000 and the requirement of an officer to supervise the business led to the failure of the venture. Neufville recommended that the merchant adventurer Charles Alexander Bruce, in charge of the gun boats at Sadiya, should be vested with the charge of the whole business at a salary of ` 100 a month with a share in profit. Neufville hoped that eventually this trade would extend through the Hukong valley to Mogaung on the upper Irrawady. Moreover, it would gain some profitable occupation to the Singphos in return for their faithful abandonment of their predatory habits and prevent their falling into distress from the loss of slaves and disinclination to agricultural labour. In 1834, first four Marwari traders opened their shops at Sadiya. Jenkins was confident that Sadiya which had been a place of considerable trade during the Ahom period, the condition of things would be slowly get restored and would become better with judicious measures adopted by the British to encouraged trade.

By mid-nineteenth century, different *haats* and shops grew in and beyond the frontier areas. The Nyishis, Miris, Adis, and Mishmis all gradually started settling down

peacefully and traded all along the frontier. The Mishmis came as far as Dibrugarh for trading purpose. Several of the Singphos were employed as blacksmith at Dimapur by the European entrepreneurs and all were also engaged in agricultural.

The rapid expansion of the tea industry in Upper Assam necessitated a greater market for its consumption. Serious thoughts were given to official circles to popularize British Indian tea among the hill tribes of the Eastern Himalaya and capture the markets of Central Asia, particularly Tibet through them. In 1868, Lieutenant Johnson, Superintendent of Keddha Department reported to the officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal, that an inconsiderable trade was carried on with Tibet through the medium of Digaru Mishmis and Adis and with northern Burma through Singphos and under proper management this trade might be greatly developed. There had always been demand for the produce of Tibet and northern Burma but the distance from Sadiya often prevented men from taking their goods to the best market and since sufficient encouragement was not given to the traders, few Marwaris at Sadiya did not find it profitable to lay in a large stock of things for which they had no sale on the spot. It was pointed out that whatever money was needed by the hill tribes was immediately reinvested so that increase of trade on one side would cause a corresponding increase on other sides and one means of increasing this trade was to establish an annual fair at Sadiya. That the British government was more interested in opening up Tibetan trade through the intermediary hill tribes rather than establishing direct intercourse with Tibet is evident from C.U. Aitchinson; Secretary to the Government of India's instruction to C. Bernard, officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal:

...the appointment of a special officer for Tibet is neither necessary nor expedient. It will be quite sufficient for Colonel Haughton to continue to collect all the interpretation in his power as to the goods most in demand, the restrictions placed on trade and to encourage trade by the establishment of fairs in our territories on the border. Our frontier officers may be told generally that any opening for friendly relations should be most of and at once reported to Government whenever it appears available.

Hence, to accelerate the process, official patronage was given not only to the already existing trade fairs but attempts were also made to increase the number of fairs as an auxiliary to regular trade.

Marwari traders and Assamese from the plains attended the fair in large numbers. The European planters attended Sadiya and Udalguri fairs and the latter was also the resort of the Cacharese, the inhabitants of *Duar*. There were several roads connecting the fairs with the other places of Assam such as the Orang-Udalguri, a fourteen-and-half-mile road which carried much of the traffic during the days when the fair was held. Sadiya was connected by Assam Trunk Road linking Brahmaputra at Saikhowaghat. Ferries were mostly used to cross the Brahmaputra at Saikhowaghat. The Sadiya fair was attended by the European traders from Tezpur and Mongoldoi and traders from Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur. The construction of Dibrugarh-Sadiya Railway between 1885 and 1903 which linked Saikhowa further added convenience to traders of plains. A daily service of passenger steamers and a fine fleet of cargo boats owned and managed by the Indian General Steam Navigation Company plied on the Brahmaputra between Goalundo and Dibrugarh.

The hill people were accommodated in long sheds constructed by the British government, providing shelter for about 100 at a time. To each family on arrival was allotted a small space in the shed which members again partitioned and formed residence

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while in plains. In the same cases, such accommodation was also provided to the merchants of plains. The importance of Sadiya fair to the hill tribes also diminished to some extent because of the establishment of numerous shops by the Marwaris at the outskirts of the Lakhimpur district. The tendency since the late nineteenth century for the hill tribes was to visit permanent shops and markets that grew both in and beyond the Inner Line and the inevitable result was the decline of trade in the fairs.

Sadiya developed into a market town with as many as twenty-five permanent shops. It was a market of wax, ivory, rubber, timber, *Mishmi teeta* and limestone brought by the Adis, Mishmis, Singphos and Khamptis. Besides the Marwaris' shops there were general stores under European management and a number of shops owned by the Muslim traders both at Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur. At Margherita, the Khamptis brought down amber from Hukong valley.

The markets frequented by the hill tribes were located in the Brahmaputra Valley. Though it was comparatively easy for the hill people to come down to the plains, it was not easy for the people of the plain to have access to the mountainous terrain of the hill territory. Notwithstanding these difficulties, enterprising Marwari merchants established permanent shops beyond the Inner Line too.

Rubber and opium were the main articles of exchange. In 1886, there were three licensed shops beyond the Inner Line in Lakhimpur district and their number gradually increased. The import of opium of the hill people was discouraged by the British government, but encouraged the sale of high-priced government opium to them, to maximize their profit.

SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The British administrators neither had the intention to understand the true nature of *posa* nor could they make their doubt clear as to what it was.
- The British continued the *posa* system even after the occupation of Assam as it was under the Ahoms.

Check Your Progress

9. What is the McMahon Line?
10. What was the major benefit of Great Britain from the Simla Conference?

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- During the British period though the payment of *posa* continued, we also witness that the payment was stopped to some as a punitive measure against the tribe.
- Cash payment in lieu of all *posa* claims were given with a view to popularizing British products in the hills and for revamping the transborder trade.
- David Scott succeeded in concluding an agreement with the Hrussos (Akas) by which they agreed to forego their right of direct collection of *posa* from individual ryots for an annual payment of ` 175 by the British government.
- On 28 February 1836 Captain Mathie entered into an agreement with the Sat Rajas of the Sherdukpens commuting the *posa* to an amount of `2526-7-0 annually.
- The Monpa chiefs of Thembang collected *posa* from the Mazbat area in *Charduar*. In 1844, they were allowed an annual sum of ` 145-13-6 as commutation of their *posa* to cash.
- Even after the occupation of Assam by the British, the Nocte chiefs continued to retain their *khat* managed by their respective *katokies*.
- The British power did not adopt the policy of annexation in the areas of Arunachal Pradesh. Neither did they have a uniform policy towards the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Force was used as and when required, otherwise the policy of peace and non-intervention was followed.
- The change in the mode of collection of *posa* during the British period was unacceptable to the Nyishis as a whole and remained a matter of dispute between the two forces. Their policy of raid was also a point of constant dispute between them.
- During the period of the Burmese occupation of Assam the relationship between the Singhphos and Khamptis became an open confrontation and the Khamptis lost.
- The markets on the borders of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh underwent tremendous change during the British period from that of the Ahom period.
- Restoration of administration (after the Burmese intrusions) had created a political environment, which boosted trade within and outside Assam.
- Revival of the trade fairs was in line with the broad framework of the mercantile motive of the East India Company reflected in its Report of 1797 which gave emphasis on ‘creating a demand for articles, the products of Europe and Bengal’ and supplying with a valuable return in bullion.
- After the occupation of Assam in 1826 the British followed almost the same policy towards the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Ahoms followed the policy of reconciliation towards the tribes and at no time considered the extension of their rule into the hills.

KEY TERMS

- **Ahom:** These are the descendants of the ethnic Tai people that accompanied the Tai prince Sukaphaa into the Brahmaputra valley in 1220 and ruled the area for six centuries.
- **Ryot:** It refers to an Indian peasant or tenant farmer.
- **Malgoozari:** It stands for the local revenue officer.
- **Paiks:** It refers to the adult male manual workers.
- **Mishmi teeta:** This is a temperate herb found only in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Frontier:** A line or border separating two countries.

ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. David Scott succeeded in concluding an agreement with the Hrussos (Akas) by which they agreed to forego their right of direct collection of *posa* from individual ryots for an annual payment of ` 175 by the British government. An agreement was made with Taghi raja wherein he agreed not to attack the ryots in the plains for a monthly pension of ` 20. Suitable stipends amounting ` 360 per annum were also granted to other chiefs of the Akas with further extension of six more pensions in 1848 to another six chiefs.
2. The main duties of these *katokies* were to go into the hills as and when required and to provide information about the tribal affairs to the authorities. These *katokies* also accompanied the deputy commissioners when the latter went into the hills on tours. They were in close contact with various tribes and accompanied the tribal when they came down to the plains during fairs and other occasions.
3. The areas of conflict between the British rulers and the Nyishis were the change in the mode of collection of *posa* during the British period and their policy of raid.
4. The annual trade at Udalguri fair showed a downward trend mainly due to the reduction in the market price of salt owing to the introduction of cheap manufactured salt. With the beginning of tea plantation in the Brahmaputra valley, local markets established themselves at all centres where the villagers were encouraged to bring their produce for sale.

Self-Instructional

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the agreement of Captain Gordon with the Sat Rajas.
2. How did the British occupation of Assam bring about a change in the *posa* rights of the Adis?
3. Who did the *katokies* deal with? How were they appointed?
4. What was the significance of Udalgiri?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the *posa* system.
2. How did the British impose force on Arunachal Pradesh?
3. Discuss the *katokies*.

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4. Discuss the significance of the Inner Line.
5. What were the implications of the Inner Line Regulations of 1873 on Arunachal Pradesh?
6. What led to the recognition of the McMahon line? Discuss.

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UNIT III BRITISH POLICY IN THE NORTHERN FRONTIER OF ASSAM - II

*British Policy in the
Northern Frontier of
Assam*

NOTES

Structure

- Introduction
- Unit Objectives
- Inner Line
 - Analysis of the Inner Line Regulation
 - Implications of the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 and Arunachal Pradesh
- Outer Line
 - Analysis of the Outer Line
 - McMahon Line
- The Simla Conference (1913)
 - Summary
 - Key Terms
 - Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
 - Questions and Exercises
- Further Reading

INTRODUCTION

The establishment of British rule in Assam, as a consequence of the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, brought the colonial forces closer to the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The colonial masters adopted the policy of peace and cooperation as well as the policy of armed intervention and other coercive means whenever and wherever required. And finally they drew the line 'Inner Line' between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to monitor or regulate the movement of people between the hills of Arunachal Pradesh and the plains of Assam. The British policy in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh has been the subject of study by many scholars as a part of the whole of North East India or Assam.

British colonial interests (political, economic, commercial and strategic keeping in view also the areas beyond Arunachal Pradesh) shaped the British policy in Arunachal Pradesh. The growing colonial economy in the Brahmaputra valley in the form of tea, petroleum, coal, rubber and increased revenue from improved agriculture on the foothills of the border area greatly depended on the capacity of the colonial administration to maintain law and order in the border areas.

The British authorities exploited the opportunity to settle the Indo-Tibetan boundary on the north. Enough work had already been done after the Abor Expedition of 1911 and the various surveys and explorations, which had been summarized in a 'confidential note' by the Chief of General Staff in June 1912. The military authorities had suggested that the proposed boundary line should follow some prominent geographical features, preferably the main watershed of the mountain system; and the border thus demarcated should be easily approachable. The frontier, as suggested in the notes, was divided according to the tribes and river basin into Khamti Long, Mishmi, Abor and Miri or Subansiri sections.

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The Tibetans expected that the British would help them defend their territory and secure their rightful place. The Chinese government, however, was not at all satisfied with the boundary agreement and disapproved the action taken by its representatives. China completely disapproved the action of these representatives. China wanted the whole of Tibet as an integral part of it. Sir Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary of the British run Government of India, informed the Peking government on 23 June 1914, that if by the end of June, China refused to rectify the agreement, the British government would begin agreement with the Tibetan government and China would lose all the benefits of the Simla Conference.

Commenting on the boundary line along the whole of the North-East Frontier, that became famous as the McMahon Line, McMahon pointed out: 'The frontier work of the past three years and the negotiations of Tibet Conference at Simla have served to make clear the mutual rights and responsibilities of Great Britain, China and Tibet and it may be hoped that the North East Frontier will now be removed from the anxiety which beset the Indian government during the last few years.'

The McMahon Line runs over a distance of 820 miles or 1320 kms of which 640 miles (998 kms) is between India and Tibet from the tri-junction of Bhutan, Tibet and Kameng district of present day Arunachal Pradesh, through the crest of the Himalayas to the Diphuk Pass to northwest Burma where India, Burma and Tibet meet. Commencing from a point to the east of Bhutan at 92°40" E, 27° 48" N, it crosses the Namjang River and follows the eastern range of the Great Himalayas, then proceeds east and northeast and crosses the Subansiri River and then the Tsari River just south of Migyitun. From this point, it takes a northeastern direction, crossing the Tunga Pass, continues eastward again, crosses the Siang River and ascends the watershed between Rangta Chu in Tibet and Dihang (Siang) and its tributaries in India. Thereafter, it runs south to a point, just below latitude 28° 30" and just west of longitude 96°30", crosses Lohit a few miles to the north of Kahas and joins the tri-junction of Indian, Burmese and Tibetan boundaries near the Diphuk or Talik Pass.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 and the formation of Outer Line
- Discuss the incidents that led to the recognition of the McMahon line

INNER LINE

After the occupation of Assam in 1826 the British followed almost the same policy towards the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Ahoms followed the policy of reconciliation towards the tribes and at no time considered the extension of their rule into the hills. David Scott, who is considered to be the architect of the British administration in the North East, favoured status quo in their relations with the tribes of Arunachal as well as others. Gradually, for administrative convenience and needs of the expanding colonial economy the need for boundary demarcation (in any form) between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh was realized. Hence, the whole exercise of demarcation started.

Check Your Progress

1. State the kind of agreement which David Scott concluded with the Hrusso (Akas) chiefs.
2. What were the main duties of the Katokies?
3. Mention the areas of conflict between the British rulers and the Nyishis.
4. Why did the annual trade at Udalguri fair show a downward trend?

Regulation I of 1873, called 'Regulation for the Peace and Good Government of Certain Districts on the Eastern Frontier' came into operation on 1 November 1873. This became popular as the Inner Line Regulations because of the name given to the line of control by the author of the Act, Sir Arthur Hobhouse, a member of the Viceroy's Council. This regulation is also called 'The Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation I of 1873.' According to this Act, which was to be applicable to the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo Hills, Khasi and Jayantiya Hills, Naga Hills, Cachar and Chittagong Hills, a restriction line was laid down to regulate intercourse between the tribesmen and the British subjects in the plains; bordering the hills. This line was called the Inner Line and beyond this no British subject was allowed to enter without a formal pass from the concerned authority. The Regulation laid down that 'any British subject or other person ... who goes beyond the Inner Line without a pass, shall be liable on conviction before a magistrate to a fine not exceeding ` 100 for the first offence and to a fine of not exceeding ` 500 or to simple or rigorous imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or to both for each subsequent offences.'

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The Regulation further laid down that, 'any wood, wax, ivory, rubber or any other jungle products found in the possession of any person without permit, may be confiscated to the government.' The Act also prohibited the killing or catching of the wild elephants without a license, and laid restrictions on the possession of land beyond this line, by saying that, 'it shall not be lawful for any British subject, not being native of the district, to acquire any interest in the land or the product of land beyond the Inner Line without sanction of the local government.' The local government, however, was empowered to suspend or alter these restrictions from time to time. It was also made clear that the Government of India was not to be held responsible for the loss of life or property beyond the Inner Line, of those persons who went there without a permit.

The Inner Line was notified for Lakhimpur district on 3 September 1875, in accordance with the Regulation of 1873. This Line was initially proposed by Major W. S. Clarke, Commissioner of Lakhimpur district, on 22 May 1875. Later some changes were made on the suggestions of the chief commissioner of Assam. The Government of India, while passing the Regulation of 1873, had suggested to the Government of Bengal that while prescribing the Inner Line, they should see that the line corresponded to the natural features of the country and if there were no such features, it was to coincide with the obligatory points like crossing of a road. The place where a road crossed the line was to be clearly shown on the map and if the area through which it ran had not been mapped, arrangements were to be made for topographical survey as well. If any tea garden was there in the frontier, it was to be brought within the Inner Line if it was possible to avoid any complications.

In accordance with these suggestions, the Inner Line which was finally drawn up in Lakhimpur was to take the course of the Buri Dihing in the south-eastern sector, as it was a good natural boundary though it kept outside the Inner Line, the coal fields of Tirap and Nandang. The tea gardens of Namsang, Hukanjuri and Taurack, however, were brought within the Inner Line after an agreement with the Namsangia chief. The tea gardens of Joyhing and Harmoti were also brought within the Inner Line. This Inner Line starting from Desang was to go along Desang river, Namsang river, Boori Dihing, Kherampani, Noa Dihing and up to river Brahmaputra. From the north of Brahmaputra, starting from the boundary of Darrang, it was to go along the Rajgarh Ali, Dihing, Rangnadi, Joyhing tea garden, the Sisi river upto the Dimu guard. From there it was to go to the Puba guard, Lalimukh, Debongmukh upto Debong and Dikrang guard. It terminated on Noa Dihing Mukh in the east.

Analysis of the Inner Line Regulation

The Inner Line Regulation was the outcome of lengthy correspondence between the Government of India and the Government of Bengal on the subject of frontier policy. Alexander Mackenzie in his book *The North East Frontier of India* provides some details of the same. The motives behind the extension of the regulation into Darrang and Lakhimpur frontier were not so much political as economic and commercial and they can be summed up as follows:

- To regulate the trade in Indian rubber between the hills and the British traders.
- To regulate the transfer of lands in these areas.
- To control the extension as well as to protect the tea plantations in the foothills.

The implicit policy of non-interference into the affairs of the hill tribes was thus made official and the act sought to keep outside the British boundary all tracts over which 'semi-savage tribes wandered or in which they lived.'

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The British government thus specified the area upto which it would exercise its authority and uphold law and order. It would decline any responsibility beyond that and the tribes living there would be left to themselves. The Inner Line further imposes restrictions on the movement of the people from outside and ascertained that their isolation maintained for it suited the economic and commercial interests of the empire.

It may be pointed out here that the Inner Line Regulation did not impose any restriction on the movement of the tribal into the plains, they were allowed to fish, hunt and trade on both sides of the Line. The British rather organized fairs on the border villages of the administered areas and encouraged the hill men to come to these fairs with their forest products for exchange. This Inner Line was not a static line for all times and purpose. It was rather a flexible and elastic demarcation that could be altered so as to include any area when it suited the British purpose.

As far as the positive aspects of the Inner Line are concerned, there cannot be any doubt that this regulation was a well-thought out measure and was not objected to by either the tribal or the plains' people. Its efficiency and effectiveness can be judged from the very fact that it has remained in existence for the last 140 years without any alternations worth mentioning. From the ethnic point of view, this Inner Line greatly helped in the preservation of tribal culture. The policy of Verrier Elwin, an English self-trained anthropologist, ethnologist and tribal activist also helped in the continuance of their traditional institutions.

However, the Inner Line Regulation saw to it that the economic relations between the outside world and the tribal would remain only one-sided. That is to say, the goods of the tribal could be sold in the outside markets and they could also purchase goods from the plains, the real profit was earned by the British. No doubt some surplus money was generated in the tribal economy, but the British always induced the tribal to spend it on useless and sometimes even harmful products like opium. There were no new openings for the investment of this surplus money for economic growth. V Elwin has pointed out that in one year at the trade fair at Sadiya, the value of the opium sold to the tribal of the hills amounted to as much as ` 30,300. The Marwari people regularly traded opium for local products of hill men. Further, this Inner Line Regulation accelerated the process of economic drain from the hills. The natural growth of commerce was checked and the hill economy became tributary to the imperial economy. The grand British designs of developing trade with Tibet and China through Arunachal Pradesh could never materialize and the pre-colonial economy began to disintegrate.

Economic aspect aside, the Inner Line saw to it that the tribal remained in primitive conditions and did not allow any social, economic or administrative developments in the region. It served as the hinterland to the colonial economy. The process of modernization was postponed, with the result that till very recently, except for the district headquarters, the people of the state lived as they had been doing for centuries. The process of bringing modern institutions and elements of civilization was thus deliberately delayed by the imposition of this Inner Line. Since no outsider was allowed to cross the Inner Line and settle in the hills and as no effort was undertaken by the government, education could not be spread to the hills which proved to be a great obstacle in the path of progress. As early as 1886, Colonel Hopkinson had clearly stated to the government that the British government had undertaken an obligation to administer and civilize the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh after the annexation of Assam, but the issue was scrupulously avoided as it was to prove very expensive without any economic profit.

Implications of the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 and Arunachal Pradesh

In spatial terms, the demarcation of the southern Inner Line was to be in accordance with the plan of Colonel Graham and Colonel Macdonald formulated on the Bhutan frontier in the early nineteenth century. Interestingly, this demarcation was not to be a 'boundary line' but marked the end of civil jurisdiction beyond which the British subjects were excluded. The natural contours of the landscape or in its absence the remnant of a road, path or river was to be followed. Wherever the survey operations had been completed the Line was to be drawn according to the map. Areas lying outside a mapped region were to be surveyed immediately.

It was here that William Lambton's new mode of mapping of triangulation, or trigonometrical survey introduced in the 1820s, and expanded by his successor George Everest into the 'Great Trigonometrical Survey' in the 1840s, was brought into play. This survey sought to connect the southern tip of the peninsula to the foothills of the Himalayas. The production of a map was not just for political and military purposes but 'also a way of constructing India as a domain of British cultural and political sovereignty'. As concrete factual information was gathered, it helped to do away with the 'uncertainties' of both cultural and physical difference making India more comprehensible. Colonial cartography therefore not only created new landscapes, but continuously denied the early spatial configurations.

A natural corollary of insistence in the document of the mapping exercise is a part of this great project to be taken up in Arunachal Pradesh. In the regulation there is a vague reference to the existence of an 'outer line' within which their loose jurisdiction exists. The trigonometrical survey was sent in as an imperative of having a defined knowledge of the territory between the Inner and Outer Line. Resistance from the communities in the northern frontier of Assam led to an incomplete mapping of the area, rendering truncated knowledge of the space. Attempts of missionaries to seek alternate access into China through Tibet were abandoned following the murder of a French Missionary. In 1854, Father M. Krick and his associate were murdered as they entered Mishmi hills.

This nuanced form of political control over the northern and eastern frontier of Assam in terms of 'loose political control' was marked by an absence of direct annexation. Though in the Naga Hills and the Lushai Hills where the demarcation of the Inner Line too occurred, the policy of 'indirect control' of the early nineteenth century was replaced by a 'forward policy' in the 1880s and 1890s, respectively. The exercise of mapping did crucially impinge upon the levels of definition of the territory and the policies thereupon. The Inner Line therefore, remained more of a jurisdictional definition rather than a fixed boundary.

In the case of Lakhimpur, it was construed unnecessary to lay down a definite boundary of the British civil jurisdiction. It was to follow the natural contours of the landform where Rajgarh Ali (a well-defined embankment along the foot of the hills) formed an important landmark. Despite the insistence on following the pattern of the Bhutan boundary which clearly defined the hills and the plains, the Inner Line in Lakhimpur within British territory did not follow a well-defined boundary between hills and plains. Here, it was to be defined by references to 'geographical features and habitats of particular tribes'. Towards Sibsagar, however, it was decided to clearly lay down a line between civil and political jurisdiction as soon as the regulation was put in place.

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In 1895, a proposal was mooted that Rajgarh Ali between the rivers Dikrang and Subansiri were uninhabited by tribes and that portion of the Ali had been washed away by the Ranganadi; hence, it was proposed to push the Inner Line northwards. This was to accommodate the extension of the Dejoo garden invoking Section 2 of Regulation V of 1873 under which the powers of the Lt. Governor to alter the line from time to time was delegated to the chief commissioner. The proposal was notified to alter the jurisdiction in 1898. Along another section of the Inner Line in Lakhimpur district a precise mapping led to the proposal for adopting a line further north of the river Tirap and Dirak. These modifications were made to accommodate the demands of the planters in the neighbourhood and also enable the Assam railways and trading company to secure its timber, mining and petroleum leases outside the line.

The fluidity of the demarcations as permitted in the regulation allowed the 'government to prescribe, and from time to time alter by notification, a line to be called the Inner Line and to prohibit any subject living outside the area from living or moving'. This fluidity of the demarcation along various sectors in the northern and eastern frontier of present day Arunachal Pradesh helped to extend control over resources, particularly forests in the schema of colonial forestry. A conspicuous projection of the tours taken up by the first political officer, Needham from 1881 and by Noel Williamson were 'not just to cultivate friendly relationship with the tribes in the tract within the Inner and Outer Lines'. In fact, they were accompanied by a Surveyor for mapping the territory travelled as well as a forest officer to 'inspect the forest where timber is now being cut and advise us upon them'.

The flexible frontier got transformed into a fixed boundary only in 1914 when the North East Frontier Tracts (henceforth as NEFT) got demarcated into two sections. The sections were initially named as central and eastern, and western sections by two distinct notifications. In 1919, the western section was renamed into the 'Balipara Frontier Tract' and the central and eastern sections into 'Sadiya Frontier Tract'. The mapping exercise which followed the Miri Mission, Mishmi Mission and Aka Promenade did create a sense of certainty about the territory between the 'Inner Line' and the 'Outer Line'.

In the aftermath of Government of India Act, correspondences of the colonial government reveal the necessity of demarcating a well-defined boundary between the Balipara Frontier and North Lakhimpur Subdivision was envisaged including transfer of 32 square miles of a section of the frontier to the plains section. It is interesting to note that in the early years of colonial contact the jurisdiction was largely defined by Rajgarh Ali. This was based on the reports that there were no 'hill villages within a day's march of the plains' and hence the pushing back of Rajgarh Ali would not result in raids of the hill tribes. In the fringes of the Inner Line a number of 'forest reserves' had been created and the earlier ill-defined boundary was construed as problematic and hence the southern limits of the reserves would define 'new boundary'. As fixed territoriality grew after 1935 the contours of the boundary were decided by the extent of the state-controlled forests that infringed on to large chunks of the foothills. The southern limit of the Balipara Frontier tract was marked by Kalingduar reserve, Rowta reserve, Behali reserve and Gohpur reserve.

Check Your Progress

5. What was Regulation I of 1873 called?
6. What were the motives behind the extension of the Inner Line Regulation into Darrang and Lakhimpur frontier?

OUTER LINE

There seems to be a lot of confusion and misunderstanding with regard to the meaning of the Outer Line. Unlike the Inner Line Regulation, we do not get any Regulation that would precisely define the Outer Line, nor do we know with certainty the origin of this term. 'Resistance Movement' of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh against colonial penetration clearly demonstrates that the British were unable to occupy the hills. Geographically difficult, economically unprofitable, futility of the military expeditions in the scattered settlement pattern of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and strong and unique defence mechanism of the village and the houses of the chiefs necessitated the British to search for an alternative policy in the areas of Arunachal Pradesh. It was also difficult because of the fact that in the event of direct possession of these lands the British would carry their international border to that of the Chinese. They had no desire of doing it since it could lead to jeopardizing their investment in Assam.

Despite these problems, the colonial authorities never wanted to keep themselves away from the hills of Arunachal Pradesh because of the economic prospects in the hills which rested in forests and other resources. There was also a bright and broad prospect of frontier and trans-Himalayan transborder trade with Tibet and Central Asia. Therefore, the British wanted to exercise indirect control over these areas and their natural resources. Hence, the originally undefined and ambiguous territory was to be kept with them through some line, even imaginary. It was this imaginary line that became known as the Outer Line.

We have seen in detail the Inner Line as it was drawn after the Regulation of 1873. This Inner Line was the boundary of the ordinary and political jurisdiction of the district officers. The Outer Line was the originally accepted boundary of Assam.

Analysis of the Outer Line

The Outer Line, to some extent like the Inner Line, was a clever administrative tool that could absolve the British of any responsibility while at the same time granting them all the rights and privileges. Lord Hardinge summed up the whole issue of the Outer Line in 1910:

'We only now claim suzerainty upto the foot of the hills. We have an Inner Line and an Outer Line. Upto the Inner Line we administer in the ordinary way. Between the Inner Line and Outer Line we only administer politically. That is our political officers exercise very loose jurisdiction, and to prevent troubles with the frontier tribes, passes are required for our subjects who want to cross the Inner Line. The country between the two lines is very sparsely inhabited and is mostly dense jungle.'

In the absence of any well-defined international border, this line served as the exterior extent of the British Indian empire. This Outer Line was not a fixed line and was deliberately undefined for at least two reasons:

- (i) The British could extend the Outer Line upto any limit as and when necessary so as to bring any tract of territory within the jurisdiction of their officers.
- (ii) The undefined Outer Line would also make the task of extending the Inner Line to any extent into the hills to suit their colonial interests.

It must be made very clear here that the Inner Line was the jurisdictional and not the territorial limit of the British. As was pointed out by the Deputy Commissioner of

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Lakhimpur, Godfrey, 'The Chief Commissionership of Assam extends upto the borders of China and Tibet and Burma.'

Needless to say again, between the Inner Line and the Outer Line the British only administered in theory. Their political officers exercised very loose jurisdiction over these sparsely populated regions, and even this rested sometimes upon force. The line of executive actions of the British officers in these areas was bound to be ill-defined in the absence of a specific limit of the authority of the chief commissioner of Assam. The relations of the British government with the tribes of the hills clearly bring out the reality of the whole situation. On many occasions the British pursued the Aka, Nyishis, Adi, Mishmi, Khampti and Singpho tribes as and when necessary. On different occasions, British troops were also sent beyond the Outer Line and the government collected fines, arrested criminals, and so on; and was always free to deal with the tribal. Their officers conducted extensive tours and survey teams attempted to explore and map the area.

The issue of the Outer Line became more alive after the Chinese activities increased on the other side of the border after 1907. As early as 1908, it had been reported that there had been some activities of the Chinese beyond the Abor Hills. Noel Williamson had also reported the concentration of Chinese in Rima in the same year. Then a fresh Chinese force appeared beyond the Mishmi Hills in 1910. On the earlier occasions, the government had remained a passive spectator to the situation in the tribal hills and was not willing to interfere there, but now the Chinese interest in the hills rather compelled the British to give a serious thought to the problem. The reason for this was very simple. If the Chinese could bring the tribal hills under their influence, the plains of Assam would become vulnerable to the Chinese attack threatening the heavy British investment in the tea gardens, oil fields and so on. Therefore, it was advisable to prevent the Chinese from influencing and extending their control over the hills. The unspecified and undemarcated international frontiers were also threatening to be a point of dispute between the British and the Chinese.

The situation was, however, saved due to the internal troubles in China, that is the Chinese Revolution of 1911. Tibet declared Independence and the issue of the Outer Line was once again buried under the files. Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy of India was strictly opposed to running the risks or spending money on attempts to create a strategic frontier beyond the Outer Line. Lord Minto Governor General from 1905-11, also held the view that the best means of safeguarding the frontier from the Chinese aggression would be to push forward the Outer Line so as to obtain, 'a good strategic boundary agreements being taken at the same from the tribes within and beyond the line binding them to have no relation with foreign power, other than the British.' Thus, till the demarcation of the McMahon Line in 1914, the British maintained the 'loose' political jurisdiction over the tribal hills with the help of the 'Outer Line', though it was indefinite and undefined. This Line served the British aims very well but kept the tribal in darkness and cut away from the rest of the world as was done by the Inner Line.

Check Your Progress

7. Why was the Outer Line not fixed and kept undefined by the British rulers?
8. When did the issue of Outer Line become more prominent?

McMAHON LINE

Colonialism, as we are aware, was not just a narrative of military conquest but manifests itself in a variety of ways, which according to Bernard Cohn anthropologist and scholar of British Colonialism in India, lay in the 'production of the forms of knowledge'. Mapping has been one of the key exercises in the 'production of knowledge' in colonial India. In the 1780s, James Renell, the Surveyor General of Bengal, produced maps using

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It was not only the Company and the Company officials who were engaged in trade in Assam and neighbouring areas but many private European traders also came to this region and started private trade. The economic profitability of Assam and the policies of the British government certainly attracted them. These private traders did not spare the hills and began exploiting them. The independent nature of most of the hill tribes and the frequent visits of these European traders led to suspicion in the minds of the tribal and on many occasions the Europeans were murdered in the hills. This was true not only in the case of Arunachal but also with all the hill states bordering Assam.

The establishment and development of the tea industry in Assam added fresh dimensions to the British relations with the tribal. In some cases, the tea gardens were intended to be established on the hills. This required the occupation of the traditional tribal areas. The extension of the tea gardens and the cutting down of trees for tea chests and construction of houses and sheds were resisted by the tribal. The direct participation of tribes in the foothill markets with the resources of the hills also adversely affected the British interests. Thus, it was required to regulate the commercial relations of the tribal with the outsiders – both officials and non-officials – on the boundary of Assam valley and bring the same under the ambit of the colonial control. All these factors compelled the British to pass the Inner Line Regulation first.

4.5.1 The Simla Conference (1913)

The Tripartite Conference, better known as the Simla Conference, was formally opened on 6 October 1913 at the summer capital of British India, under the chairmanship of Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary, Government of India. McMahon had been the spirit in the formation of the North East Frontier policy since he was made Foreign Secretary in 1911. He was assisted by Charles Bell, the political officer of Sikkim who had an intimate knowledge of the affairs of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. China was represented by Ivan Chen and Lonchen Shatra, and a leading minister of Dalai Lama represented Tibet.

At the conference, the Tibetan sought acknowledgment of its Independence, repudiation of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906, and the revision of the trade regulations. They wanted to have a frontier with China which would include all Tibetan people. The Chinese, on the other hand, wanted that their sovereignty over Tibet should be recognized and their right to control foreign and military affairs of the country should be accepted. The British who were more interested in the Indo-Tibetan border rather than in the internal problems of Tibet wanted to restore the position as it existed prior to 1904 so as to ensure a stable government free from outside influence but with closer ties with Tibet. The discussions continued for about six months both in Simla and in Delhi, and finally on 27 April 1914 a convention was signed under which Tibet was divided into two zones namely, 'Outer Tibet' and 'Inner Tibet'. Chinese suzerainty over the whole of Tibet was recognized; Outer Tibet was declared as autonomous and the Chinese agreed to abstain from any interference in its administration. In place of the earlier trade regulations the convention agreed to a fresh treaty to govern commercial relations between India and Outer Tibet.

Great Britain gained the most from the Simla Conference and the agreement signed with Tibet. Her policy of making Tibet a 'buffer' between India and China was immensely successful. For the first time, a proper frontier was defined and all the confusion prevailing due to the ill-defined 'Outer Line' was over. However, the demarcation of the frontier did not, in any case, change the position of the British vis-a-vis the tribal to any

remarkable degree. McMahon himself commented that the acceptance of a clearly defined frontier by Tibet would enable the Assam government to leave the tribes to themselves, intervening as little as possible in their internal affairs.

Further, the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, and the departure of Henry McMahon to Egypt made the whole issue of North East India a remote concern to the authorities. The government was also not in a mood to publish the text of Simla Conference as long as there remained any hope of the final settlement of the Tibetan issue by negotiations with the Chinese. It was only in 1924 that a summary of the Simla Conference and the Boundary Agreement was published by Charles Bell in his book *Tibet, Past and Present*.

The overall concern of the British government was to secure the frontier with China and to keep the tribal area of Arunachal as a buffer. Syed Ali Imran, the only Indian member of the Viceroys' Council was not very happy with this policy and pointed out: 'Is it (McMahon Line) intended to keep the wild tribes as buffer between the expansion of China and ourselves? If that be so, it entails our keeping them neither down in their present unhappy and barbarous condition for all time to come – for we will not govern them nor will we allow others to do so'. The McMahon Line remained only on the files of the Government of India for many years to come. In 1935, Olaf Coroe, deputy Secretary in New Delhi, insisted that the boundary dispute in the North East should be settled and, therefore, in 1937, the Survey of India authenticated the McMahon Line as the North East boundary of India.

As we have seen earlier, after the British annexation of Assam in 1826 till very late, the extent of the territories of Assam and the hills was not known definitely. We have also noticed that some sort of agreement had been arrived at between the hill tribes and the British wherein the latter had agreed to pay *Posa* to the former, but again the question of British jurisdiction was never settled. The Inner Line Regulation also did not specify the exact relations of the British with the tribal nor did it solve the issue regarding jurisdiction. Broadly speaking, British relations with the hill tribes were based on the fulfillment of the economic interests of the Empire, which had resulted in an undefined and flexible frontier policy. It had been suggested by some officials that after the annexation of Assam the government had undertaken a moral obligation to administer and civilize the hill tribes but the government always avoided this responsibility.

The British not only avoided any direct administration over the hills, they also did not bother to specify the 'external boundary' of their rule in this part of India. In the form of the Outer Lines, the external limit of their rule was defined very vaguely. However, the issue of the demarcation of the northern boundary to the extent of the British Empire would not be kept pending after the increasing Chinese influence in the hills, either on the other side of the Outer Line or in NEFA.

SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

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Check Your Progress

11. What is the McMahon Line?
12. What was the major benefit of Great Britain from the Simla Conference?

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- After the occupation of Assam in 1826 the British followed almost the same policy towards the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Ahoms followed the policy of reconciliation towards the tribes and at no time considered the extension of their rule into the hills.
- The Inner Line was notified for Lakhimpur District on 3 September 1875, in accordance with the Regulation of 1873. This Line was initially proposed by Major W. S. Clarke, Commissioner of Lakhimpur district, on 22 May 1875.
- Inner Line was the boundary of the ordinary and political jurisdiction of the district officers. The Outer Line was the originally accepted boundary of Assam.
- The main aim of the British government in Assam, as in other parts of India and the world, was promotion of their imperialistic designs and profit maximization out of the rule. The Inner Line Regulation was the outcome of lengthy correspondence between the Government of India and the Government of Bengal on the subject of frontier policy.
- As far as the positive aspects of the Inner Line are concerned, there cannot be any doubt that this regulation was a well-thought out measure and was not objected to by either the tribal or the plains' people.
- The Tripartite Conference, better known as the Simla Conference, was formally opened on 6 October 1913 at the summer capital of British India, under the chairmanship of Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary, Government of India.
- Great Britain gained the most from the Simla Conference and the agreement signed with Tibet. Her policy of making Tibet a 'buffer' between India and China was immensely successful.

KEY TERMS

- **Ahom:** These are the descendants of the ethnic Tai people that accompanied the Tai prince Sukaphaa into the Brahmaputra valley in 1220 and ruled the area for six centuries.
- **Ryot:** It refers to an Indian peasant or tenant farmer.
- **Malgoozari:** It stands for the local revenue officer.
- **Paiks:** It refers to the adult male manual workers.
- **Mishmi teeta:** This is a temperate herb found only in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Frontier:** A line or border separating two countries.

ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The Regulation I of 1873 was called ‘Regulation for the Peace and Good Government of Certain Districts on the Eastern Frontier’.
2. The motives behind the extension of the Inner Line Regulation into Darrang and Lakhimpur frontier were largely economic and commercial and can be summarized as follows:
 - To regulate the trade in Indian rubber between the hills and the British traders.
 - To regulate the transfer of lands in these areas.
 - To control the extension as well as to protect the tea plantations in the foothills.
3. The Outer Line was not fixed and kept undefined due to the following reasons:
 - The British could extend the Outer Line up to any limit as and when necessary so as to bring any tract of territory within the jurisdiction of their officers.
 - The undefined Outer Line would also make the task of extending the Inner Line to any extent into the hills to suit their colonial interests.
4. The issue of Outer Line became more prominent after the Chinese incursions increased in the North Eastern region of India.
5. McMahon Line was a line proposed by the British under Sir Henry McMahon at the Simla Conference (1913–14) as the frontier between Tibet and Assam, running along the Himalayas from the eastern border of Bhutan to the Brahmaputra river.
6. Great Britain gained the most from the Simla Conference. Its policy of making Tibet a ‘buffer’ between India and China was immensely successful. A proper frontier was defined and the confusion regarding the ill-defined Outer Line was over.

Self-Instructional

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What did Regulation I of 1873 concern?
2. What did the Outer Line signify?
3. What path does the McMahon Line follow?

4. Write a short note on the Simla Conference.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the Inner Line.
2. What were the implications of the Inner Line Regulations of 1873 on Arunachal Pradesh?
3. What led to the recognition of the McMahon line? Discuss.

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UNIT IV RESISTANCE TO COLONIAL RULE IN NORTH EAST INDIA - I

NOTES

Structure

- Introduction
- Unit Objectives
- Agrarian Revolts
 - Phulaguri Dhewa
 - Munda Rebellion (1899-1900)
 - Jaintia and Garo Rebellion (1860-1870s)
- Freedom Struggle in North East India: Non-Cooperation Movement,
Civil Disobedience, Quit India and India's Independence
- Summary
- Key Terms
- Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- Questions and Exercises
- Further Reading

INTRODUCTION

A new era started in the history of North East India with the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, which saw the expansion of the British rule over this part of the country. With the establishment and gradual expansion of the 'Raj', the era of modern politics also began in this region. After the assumption of political power, the task before the British was to consolidate their position, politically as well as economically, in this area. In this imperial desire they faced the problem of the hill tribes of Assam and the neighbouring hills, including the areas of modern Arunachal Pradesh. We have earlier seen that the British government aptly realized the political necessity and the economic potentiality of these frontier areas, especially the hilly tract inhabited by the tribal of present-day Arunachal Pradesh and initiated a number of measures to safeguard colonial interest. Direct military action was not feasible and, therefore, the British came forward to enter into peace agreements with various tribes of these frontiers. At the same time, taking advantage of the basic weakness of these tribes – the divided house of the tribes as a whole – the colonial rulers called upon these tribes to forego their rights over the foothills and the adjoining plain lands for imperial interests. On the whole, however, the British followed a policy of watch and ward, limited or no direct interference and military intervention only when unavoidable.

Hence, as the beginning of the administrative measures, the Frontier Tracts Regulation was passed in 1880. It was mainly due to the unique geo-political conditions as well as the nature of the relationship between tribes and the British. These areas, at that time were not under direct British administration and the terrains were also not

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suitable for the same. The provisions were made applicable not only to the areas of Arunachal Pradesh but also to the other areas of the region. The new regulation provided that the operation of all unsuitable laws might be barred in the hill districts, in the north Cachar subdivision, the Mikir hills tract in Nowgong and the Dibrugarh frontier tract in Lakhimpur. By orders issued under this regulation, the tracts in question were excluded from the operation of the enactments relating to criminal procedure, (the Civil Procedure Code was never in force in any of the hill districts), stamps, court-fees, registration and transfer of property. A simpler system of administering justice in civil and criminal matters was prescribed by rules framed under the Scheduled Districts Act. In these tracts, the head of the local government was to be the chief appellate authority in civil and criminal matters, and the high court would have no jurisdiction except in criminal cases against European British subjects. The deputy commissioner would exercise the combined powers of judge and district magistrate, and the assistant and the extra-assistant commissioners, the powers of magistrates and munsifs. Petty cases, both civil and criminal, were to be dealt with by village tribunals, presided over by village headmen elected by the people themselves, whose procedure was to be free from all legal technicalities. The Eastern *Dwars* in Goalpara were to be administered in civil matters in accordance with the rules under the Scheduled Districts Act, in lieu of the Civil Procedure Code which had not been in force there.

The Government of India Act, 1919, was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It was passed to expand participation of Indians in the Government of India. The Act embodied the reforms recommended in the report of the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. The Act covered ten years, from 1919 to 1929. The Act provided a dual form of government (a 'dyarchy') for the major provinces.

The Government of India Act, 1935 was originally passed in August 1935, and is said to have been the longest (British) Act of Parliament ever enacted by that time. The Act of 1935 provided for the federal structure, distribution of powers, provincial autonomy, responsible form of government, bicameral legislature, and emergency power of Governor General.

The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (formerly the North East Frontier Tracts) was one of the political divisions in British India and later the Republic of India till 1972, when it became the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Its administrative headquarters was Shillong (till 1974, when it was transferred to Itanagar).

In 1914, some tribal-majority areas were separated from the erstwhile Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam province of British India to form the North East Frontier Tracts (NEFT). The NEFT was initially divided into two sections: the central and eastern section (comprising the erstwhile Dibrugarh Frontier Tract, created in 1882, and some more areas in south) and the western section. Each section was placed under a political officer. After the Independence of India in 1947, NEFT became a part of Assam state. In this unit, you will study about the impact of colonial rule in North East India and the contribution of the region in the Indian freedom struggle movement.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Assess the significance of the Phulaguri movement in Assam
- Discuss the impact of the freedom struggle movement in North East India

AGRARIAN REVOLTS

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From 1763 to 1856 in India, against the situations existing in various regions of India due to the Company rule, over forty major rebellions took place and minor rebellions that took place can be counted by the hundreds. Nevertheless, the nature of these rebellions was not national but local, as were the effect that they had. Since the uprisings had their specific local issues and purposes they remained isolated from uprisings in different regions.

Phulaguri Dhewa

The British were out to get all the money and material that they could from their Indian colony and with this in mind in Assam, they began their rule with an extremely rigorous policy of taxation. They had implemented land revenue and various other taxes that affected every aspect of a person's daily life: tax on tree cutting and cutting of grass in jungles, tax on cattle grazing. They did not overlook any article that was of regular use. Water, jungle wood, bamboo, opium, everything came under their greedy policies. The diverse and high taxations made a certain restlessness seep into the population.

The Nowgaon district residents got to know that there was to be taxation on betel nut and this caused tension among them. On 17 September 1861, in the village of Phulaguri, about 1000 people went to submit a petition to the district commissioner. The district commissioner did not hear them out; instead he had them detained for a day and imposed a fine on them. A decision was taken by the peasants that the betel tax was not to be paid. For a more widespread mobilization of the sentiment, a Raai-Mel (Mass Meetings) of five days was called starting from 15 October. The meeting received huge participation which troubled the administration and on the fourth day of the meeting it sent J.B. Singer who was a senior officer to keep the situation under control. J.B. Singer employed firing and lathi charge which aggravated the crowd and Lieutenant Singer was attacked and killed.

This was the first time that the British administration had received such a shock in Assam. It had put to death thirty-nine peasants and a number of the leaders were hanged. The Phulaguri Movement became an inspiration for peasants to keep rising against the British administration.

Munda Rebellion (1899-1900)

The Munda Rebellion is possibly the most prominent and important uprisings to have occurred post 1857. Unlike other tribes, traditionally the Mundas had specific rights that they enjoyed for being the forest's original clearers. Even before the British had arrived in India, money lenders and merchants had been infringing on their rights.

The British got with them the system of traders and contractors and this quickly put an end to the old system. Indentured labourers were required by the contractors. The Munda Rebellion arose as a result of the oppression of the tribals by both the contractors and the British rulers. Birsa Munda was their foremost leader. He to an extent had missionary education which made him a more aware person. His fellow men were encouraged by him to carry on worshipping the sacred groves as they had always done, a great way to keep the British away from snatching the wastelands away from the tribals. This was what Birsa Munda (an Indian Tribal Freedom Fighter) was standing up for in the face of the British officers and the mahajans/moneylenders.

The missionaries, churches and police stations fell under his attack. Misfortune befell the tribals – they were defeated and in 1900, Birsa Munda who was captured passed away in prison. The sacrifice he had given bore fruit. The people got landownership rights to an extent under the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 along with banning tribal bonded labour.

Jaintia and Garo Rebellion (1860-1870s)

A road was planned by the British post the first Anglo-Burmese War, to connect the Brahmaputra valley with Sylhet. It was strategically required by them for movement of their troops.

The construction of the road was vehemently opposed by the Garos and the Jaintias. The Jaintias, in 1827, attempted to halt work and unrest spread even to the Garo hills. A number of Garo and Jaintia villages were burnt by the British who had been alarmed by the unrest. There was a rise in the hostilities after the introduction of income tax and house tax by the British. While the British defeated Pa Togan Sangma the Garo leader, they captured and publically hung U Kiang Nongbah, the Jaintias leader.

FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN NORTH EAST INDIA: NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT, CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE, QUIT INDIA AND INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

According to Gazetteer of India, Assam state Vol-1, 'Assam had played a significant role in the struggle for freedom though in the earlier stages, her political development was too slow due to want of intellectual contact with the rest of India as a result of backwardness in English education and lack of communication.'

When the non-cooperation call was given, Gauhati's Kaliram Barman took back his nomination paper post scrutiny and resignation was tendered by Kumudram Bora, who was in the council as an elected member.

1. Non-cooperation Movement

In India's political history, the year 1919 proved to be extremely eventful. On 1 August 1920, the Non-Cooperation Movement was launched by Gandhiji. This was the Khilafat movement's direct outcome. The Khilafat movement had received tremendous response from both Hindus and Muslims. Public meetings and/or hartals were observed to respond to the Khilafat movement in North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar Jorhat, Goalpara and Gauhati.

In September 1920, Gandhi did not receive support in Calcutta from Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and others. Bordoloi, on his return to Gauhati, went all out to muster support for the Non-cooperation Movement amongst the Assamese intelligentsia. In October 1920, there were discussions on the issue of non-cooperation across Assam where meetings at the district level were held by the association of Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sibsagar and Nagaon. At the same time, N.C. Bordoloi, C.N. Sarma and Tarunram Phukan travelled through the province in a bid to mobilize public opinion. Due to the initiative of young lawyers, a decision was taken by the Gauhati Bar Association that the visit of the Viceroy would be boycotted by them. Nearly every association at the district level decided that it would boycott the elections of the council and objected to accept honorary posts, honours and titles from the British government.

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Check Your Progress

5. Name the foremost leader of the Munda Rebellion.
6. Mention the items on which the British decided to impose tax in Assam.

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The boycott agitation of students had immediate effect. Their demand for national colleges and national schools were fulfilled. In February 1921, a national school was set-up at Bharalumukh, Gauhati within the residential premises of Rohinikumar Choudhury. In other areas in the province, similar schools got established.

The commercial world's equilibrium was disturbed by the outbreak of the First World War. Across both valleys of North East India, all necessities and foodstuff became scarce leading to economic crimes, such as burglary and theft. In his speech on 13 March 1918, Phanidhar Chaliha implored that the government take such steps that will diffuse the situation. In March 1918, the Assam valley saw the fixing of salt's retail price through a notification, followed by equal measures in hill districts and other valleys. The entrenched economic problem had fallen upon the labour population of the plains' districts. The Chargoia exodus in which the labourers of the tea gardens of the Cachar district were brutally treated by the European planters was taken up by infuriated nationalist leaders. It started with an economic struggle followed by sporadic strikes leading it to mass political action which caused labourers to collectively break out from the system of bonded labour. This happened when incipient class militancy came in contact with the primitive minds that had felt the impact of Mahatma Gandhi. Darrang, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh hosted strikes. In the whole of Assam, the labourers expressed their unhappiness about the food, inadequate leave facility, extreme workload and low wages. The officials were anxious and troubled by extended labour problems.

2. Civil Disobedience Movement

The pace of the Civil Disobedience Movement was kept alive in Assam by Assamese Congress leaders just as it had been proposed by the All India Congress Committee (AICC). It was urged by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) that people need to be ready to calmly face every kind of indignity and hardship and maintain an unflinching devotion towards the Swaraj cause. For Purna Swaraj, people enrolled in huge number as volunteers which added strength to the National Volunteer Corps. On 30 November 1921, both Bordoloi and Phukan who were Assam Congress's foremost leaders got arrested. Next, arrests of a number of leaders followed. The worst hit as far as arrests and sentencing were concerned were Sylhet, Sibsagar, Gauhati, Golaghat and the subdivision of Tezpur. With the economic depression of the 1930s hitting a huge area, the phased Civil Disobedience Movement moved into being an anti-imperialist mass revolt.

Land revenue payments were refused to the British agents by the peasants. Government services lost many government and police official due to resignations. According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam state Vol-1, 'Saptahik Assamiya, a weekly published from Gauhati was prosecuted for defamation of British officer, for publishing a report on defilement of Sundaridiya Satra at Barpeta by Captain Calvert, in course of his repressive operation. Jails were filled with non-cooperators. The British Government exerted its full strength to repress the participants and to suppress the movement by using arms, and finally succeeded in quelling the agitation.'

After the Chouri Choura riots, Gandhiji said that the movement was to be stopped. His decision was backed by the Congress Working Committee. Then on, the Assam leaders pushed forward constructive programmes such as weaving of khaddar, and spinning of yarns.

The AICC meeting was attended by Omeo Kumar Das in 1922. Here, he talked of Assam's severe repression. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr Rajendra Prasad visited Assam as a two-member committee to study its political milieu. They were highly

impressed by the huge progress that had happened in various parts of Assam as far as the movement was concerned. The people had sacrificed and suffered for the movement and for freedom from the British and this impressed both of them. The contribution of Assam was outstanding. Assam's orthodox non-cooperators were firm in their pledge to implement programmes that were constructive, due to which the formation of the Swaraja party took place in 1923 within Congress.

Due to this movement in Assam, the British government granted that it would slowly decrease the consumption of opium in Assam. For Assam, this was the greatest success. The next huge success was when the Local Self-Government Act was introduced and Assam Municipal Act, 1923 was passed, providing for increased number of elected members and also elected chairman.

The Congress as well as the nation was surprised when, in 1923, an election was held to the Legislative Council. For most seats, the Swaraj party put up its candidates and got support from both the Khilafat organization and the local Congress. Unopposed, Tarun Ram Phukan got elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly. Of Assam Council's thirty-nine elective seats, just thirteen got re-elected. Since the Swaraj had not attained absolute majority it needed the Independents on its side and had to negotiate with them. So to attack the government within the Council and destroy the constitution, the new Council's meeting resolved to establish the Assam Nationalist Party in 1924 just the way it had been done in other parts of the nation. Success was gained with this infiltration policy and in April 1924, the Legislative Council of Assam managed a monthly salary cut for the ministers with salaries falling to `1500 from `3,500. Also, on 3 March 1925, the Opium Prohibition Act was passed.

Good times did not last long and in March 1924 the coalition developed a split. The Swarajists were aware that they would not have a majority and in 1925 even though they opposed it, both the Assam Stamp (Amendment) Bill and Assam Court Fees (Amendment) Bill went through. In the end, they lost the majority and were advised in 1926 by AICC to stage walkout in all the legislative bodies.

On 28 December 1926, the 41st session of the Congress took place in Gauhati, under S.Srinivas Iyenger's presidentship. It was attended by responsive cooperators as well as the Swarajists.

Responding to the Civil Disobedience Movement call given by Assam's National Congress in December 1929, on 26 January 1930 there was spontaneous celebration of 'Independence Day'. February in the same year, saw the old leaders in the Provincial Congress resigning from their offices. The situation was diffused by Bishnuram Medhi who volunteered to take on the presidentship of the Congress in Assam. After Gandhi's Dandi March, in April 1930, Civil Disobedience Movement was joined by the Assam Congress as well.

The nation observed the national week of 'war against salt tax'. The law breaking movement spread through violating the forest laws. To quote from the Gazetteer of India, state of Assam, Volume 1 — in Assam, there was boycotting of 'foreign cloths, excisable drugs and the shops selling such goods. Picketing was resorted to. Sri Bishnuram Medhi helped by Tyagbir Hemchandra Barua, Dr Bhubaneswar Barua, Omeo Kr. Das, Sidhinath Sarma, Pitambar Goswami, Gormur Satradhikar, Lakhidhar Sharma and others conducted the movement very successfully. Srimati Chandra Prabha Saikiani and Srimati Durgaprava Barua took up picketing in front of Cotton College Gauhati. The arrest of the national leaders included a spirit of fearlessness amongst the general mass. The authority clamped section 144Cr. P.C. in Nagaon, Tezpur and Dhubri to suppress this

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popular consciousness. But people from different places participated in the protest demonstration. As a result, police attacked the crowd with lathis and batons in such places.’

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The masses in rural regions provided spontaneous support to the movement. Satyagrahis in huge numbers were lathi charged, tortured, arrested and jailed. In the meantime, students started their protest against the circular sent by the government for students and guardians to provide an undertaking of staying away from politics.

The nationalists set-up public high schools such as the Barpeta Bidyapith and Kamrup Academy.

Till May 1934, the movement continued with majority of leaders such as Nobin Chandra Bordoloi being jailed for the second time.

In a bid to retard the movement, the government implemented penal action after arrest and convicted majority of Civil Disobedience Movement members. Till 31 March 1932, in Assam 885 males, fifty-four females were arrested while 672 males and forty-two females were convicted.

From 1930 to 1938, though the leaders of Congress did have differences at times, the organization grew much stronger. According to the Gazetteer of India, Assam state, Volume 1, in a bid to open up fallow wastelands in Assam for cultivation, influxes of landless peasants from East Bengal were being invited to Assam by the then Assam Ministry headed by Sir Md. Saadullah, and because flow of innumerable jobseekers continued to Assam unabated, a section of Assamese nationalists got alarmed and Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury, a staunch nationalist to the core, founded ‘Assam Sangrakshini Sabha’ and without seceding from the Congress, began to voice through this organization, demands ‘for vindication of right of the Assamese people, the children of the soil as against aggression of outsiders.’

One section of the Assam Muslims had great sympathy for those who had come to Assam from East Bengal since most of them too were Muslims. This led to a section of Assam Muslims other than the Assamese Muslims, the old East Bengal Muslims and Hindus not participating in the 1930–32 Civil Disobedience Movement. At a later stage, the Assam Sangrakshini Sabha became Assam Jatiya Mahasabha. Assam Sangrakshini Sabha organized ryot sabhas which became the strongholds of Assam at the time of movements of the later stage which were sponsored by the National Congress.

In Assam’s Civil Disobedience a major role was played by Rani Gaidinliu. She organized a revolt against the constituted authorities.

The 1933 meetings held by the Ryot Association, Assam Association and Assam Provincial Ryot Sanmilan, got conducted in different parts with the agenda being non-political in nature. Civil Disobedience Movement’s political side got restarted after the declaration of the communal award. The purna swaraj ideal as a priority issue was replaced by the issue of the Harijans. After the Poona Pact, the Assam Congress leaders took up the cause of removal of untouchability and upliftment of Harijans.

In keeping with the decision made by Congress regarding reforms under the Government of India Act, 1936, the Assam Congress took part in the election of 1937, winning thirty-three seats of the 108 in the House and becoming the single largest entity in the House. Since at that time, the Congress policy was not to accept ministry, other groups got together to form a coalition ministry with Sir Saadullah as the Chief Minister. For the past fifteen years, he had been associated with administrative machinery of the

British and also the legislature, and was the perfect candidate for the Governor of Assam. To save the humiliation of a no-confidence vote, he had to resign on 13 September 1938, as the coalition's communal policies put the ministry in an awkward position; as they completely neglected to preserve the requirements of 'the children of the soil'.

After this incident, headed by Gopinath Bordoloi, the Congress coalition ministry got formed. In the dispute of the Assam Oil Company, it addressed the issue from the perspective of labourers, which turned the industrial labourers in favour of the Congress. However, September 1939 saw the outbreak of the Second World War, and the ministry in Assam tendered its resignation as Congress did not want to participate in the October–November 1939 imperialistic war. Md. Syed Saadullah on 17 November 1939, formed yet another coalition ministry, creating huge problems since he supported the British. In December 1941, the students of Cotton College put up a demonstration in protest of the circular sent out by the government to have students participate in the War Fund Exhibition held at Gauhati Judge Field. The students were lathi charged. Similar lathi charge incidents also occurred in other parts of the nation.

In protest of the atrocities on the students, Rohini Choudhury tendered her resignation. She was part of Syed Saadullah's coalition ministry. The ministry too resigned on 24 December 1941. To stand against Congress's Santi Sena organization, the Village Defence party was established by the British government. In the rural areas, the Santi Senas swallowed up the Village Defence parties.

3. Quit India Movement

In October 1940, the Viceroy refused to give in to the national government, which was demanded by the Congress. As a result, an individual Satyagraha campaign was started under Gandhiji's leadership. Leaders like Omeo Kumar Das, Bishnuram Medhi and Gopinath Bordoloi, took part and were later arrested. Meanwhile, British allies were heading to India. In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps came to India and made an offer of Dominion status to India. This was refused by the Congress and instead on 8 August 1942, the Congress adopted the 'Quit India' resolution. On 9 August 1942 the British arrested Lila Barua, Dr Harekrishna Das, Debeswar Sarma, Bishnuram Medhi, Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed and Md. Tayabullah as a preventive measure. Both Sidhinath Sarma and Gopinath Bordoloi at that time had been in Bombay regarding the All India Congress meeting but as soon as they returned to Assam, the British had them nabbed at Dhubri. Every organization subscribing to funds from the Congress, and even the Ryot-sabhas, were now declared unlawful. Despite all this, the British were unable to curb the quick pace of the movement.

The action taken by the government on adoption of the Quit India Movement only intensified the people's resolve and acted as a catalyst to the movement. People rose in large numbers against the government policies under local leaders.

According to the Gazetteer of India, Assam state, Volume 1, 'Santi Sena organizations were set-up throughout the state under the leadership of local Congress socialists. Mahendra Nath Hazarika, Lakshmi Prasad Goswami, and Sankar Barua built up an underground resistant movement. A Mritya Bahini or death squad was formed in the state under the leadership of Mahendra Nath Hazarika. The party carried out some serious acts of sabotage throughout the state. In Darrang district, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Gohon Chandra Goswami went underground and carried out sabotage at various places by organizing Mrityu Bahini.'

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The government turned violent to suppress the movement. On several occasions, the government resorted to firing. Many died in the firing, some of whom were Khahulis Numali Taleswari and Kanaklata, all teenage girls.

According to the judgement given for the firing at Dhekiajuli, the police faced severe strictures that could not be relaxed by the high court on any ground. In Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur some of those who faced atrocities from the police were Pohor Gogoi, Bhogeswar Chetia and Madhuban Chutia. Moulana Tayebulla began the individual Satyagraha movement in Sibsagar. He was Asom Pradesh Congress Committee's president. The Quit India Movement was responded to by the whole of Sibsagar district. Processions everywhere were lathi charged. A number of people were arrested and imprisoned or detained.

To quote the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'Kushal Konwar, who was believed to be innocent, was however, declared to be guilty of sabotage and awarded capital punishment by the court that tried him. He was hanged in Jorhat Jail in 1943.'

For undermining the movement, the government resorted to inflicting fines on the people of the different districts of the province.

People formed village panchayats in Bajali in Barpeta subdivision, in Nalbari subdivision and in Kamrup district at Bahjani. Also, they drew up panchayat administration schemes. Rawta Kachari and Madan Barman died in Bajali during police firing. This added fuel to the already flaming hatred that people had towards the repressive bureaucracy of the British.

Food scarcity and mounting prices also added to discontent and people tried paralysing the oppressive government. The Nagaon district played the most important role as far as the 'Quit India Movement' is concerned. Approximately 11 km to the east of Nagaon town, in the village of Barhampur, police opened fire on a massive gathering and Thagi Sut, Lakhimi Hazarika, Phuleswari Konwari and many others lost their lives.

For a month, military supplies were terminated and bazars and *hats* were shut. Troops were positioned all over the state and even then it was not possible to stop or even lessen the sabotaging by Santi Senas.

Azad Hind Fauz organized by Subhas Chandra Bose tried to get India free in 1943, with the help of Japan and Germany. They entered Assam via Burma. The British government in India was shocked by this act. The government decided to release Gandhiji in May 1944; he was in jail, and was sick. Gandhiji, in January 1945, in his last visit to Assam, visited Gauhati with four leaders of Assam. Here, he performed mass-prayers.

The Quit India Movement was not enough to make the British government move out of India. The call for a separate Muslim country gathered force due to the 'communal policy undertaken by the pro-Muslim League, Saadullah ministry in Assam and the increasing number of mutually apathetic East Bengal Hindu and Muslim immigrants' entry into Assam.' There was a rise of strong communal feeling in Assam with the Muslims of Assam being in favour of India's Partition.

Pandit Nehru in December 1945 went on a quick Assam tour and left behind a favourable picture of the Congress in the minds of the people. In the elections, this led to the victory of Congress and the latter won fifty out of 108 seats. With two of the Independents joining them, the strength rose to fifty-two and on 10 February 1946, Congress Prime Ministership of Gopinath Bordoloi formed its ministry.

According to the Gazetteer of India, Assam State, Volume 1, 'The Muslim League went for secret organizational activities to constitute "*Banglo-i-Islam*" comprising Bengal

with its hinterland or Assam as envisaged by the Pakistan National Movement since 1940 for the Millat of Islam.’

Cabinet Mission to India arrived with the intention of solving the problem faced by India. In May 1946, the grouping system was initiated by this mission that led to complete rising of the Assam Provincial Congress against inclusion of Assam in the grouping system which would have branded it as a majority state. The Assam Jatiya Mahasabha also rose up and throughout Assam organized mass agitation.

Assam Jatiya Mahasabha obtained from the Bengal Khidirpur Dock a secret document that revealed Maulana Bhasani group from eastern Bengal forming a conspiracy for invading Assam via migration of population. At this point, Gopinath Bordoloi and Syed Saadullah on the part of Assam took part in the Constituted Assembly making sure that the sixth schedule I of the Constitution was incorporated. This helped to set the disintegration of population and geographical Assam happening for future. Finally, India was split into India and Pakistan in August 1947.

- The Munda Rebellion is possibly the most prominent and important uprisings to have occurred post 1857. Unlike other tribes, traditionally the Mundas had specific rights that they enjoyed for being the forest’s original clearers.
- When the non-cooperation call was given, Guwahati’s Kaliram Barman took back his nomination paper post scrutiny and resignation was tendered by Kumudram Bora, who was in the council as an elected member.
- The pace of the Civil Disobedience Movement was kept alive in Assam by Assamese Congress leaders just as it had been proposed by the All India Congress Committee.
- The nationalists’ set-up public high schools such as the Barpeta Bidyapith and Kamrup Academy.
- In keeping with the decision made by Congress regarding reforms under the Government of India Act, 1936, Assam Congress took part in the election of 1937, winning 33 seats of the 108 in the House and becoming the single largest entity in the House.
- The action taken by the government on adoption of the Quit India Movement only intensified the people’s resolve and acted as a catalyst to the movement. People rose in anti-government mass protests, under local leaders.

The Quit India Movement was not enough to make the British government move out of India. The call for a separate Muslim country gathered force due to the ‘communal policy undertaken by the pro-Muslim league Saadullah ministry in Assam and the increasing number of mutually apathetic East Bengal Hindu and Muslim immigrants’ entry into Assam.’

KEY TERMS

- **Regulation:** It is a rule or directive made and maintained by an authority.
- **Tract:** It refers to an area of indefinite extent, typically a large one.
- **Uprising:** It is an act of resistance or rebellion.

ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

1. The main motive behind trade fairs was the promotion and popularization of European goods.
2. The main aim of the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874 was to provide a simpler form of administration in the province of Assam. Special rules for the administration of justice, in civil as well as criminal matters, were provided by this Act.
3. The North East Frontier Tract has been divided into three administrative units which are as follows:
 - Central and eastern section
 - Lakhimpur Frontier Tract
 - Western section
4. A regulation, known as Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945 was introduced and its main objective was to ensure that a vast majority of disputes, both civil and criminal, were decided in accordance with the prevailing traditional codes of the tribal. Hence, the Act of 1945 recognized the authority of the age-old village councils and also the authority of the village headmen. The village authorities were also given the duty of maintaining peace and law and order in their respective areas.
5. Birsa Munda was the foremost leader of the Munda Rebellion.
6. The British decided to impose tax on items of regular use in Assam which included tax on tree cutting and cutting of grass in jungles, tax on cattle grazing, water, jungle wood, bamboo, opium, betel nut and others.
7. The Non-Cooperation Movement was launched by Gandhiji on 1 August 1920.
8. Due to the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam, the British government granted that it would slowly decrease the consumption of opium in Assam. The next success was the passing of the Local Self-Government Act and the introduction of the Assam Municipal Act, 1923, which provided for increased number of elected members and also elected chairman.

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QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. What were the six zones into which NEFA was divided?
2. What role did Assam play in the Quit India Movement?
3. Write a short note on agrarian revolts in North East India under the British.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the significance of the Phulaguri movement in Assam.
2. Discuss the impact of the freedom struggle movement in North East India.

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UNIT V RESISTANCE TO COLONIAL RULE IN NORTH EAST INDIA - I

*Resistance to Colonial
Rule in North East India*

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Structure

- Introduction
- Unit Objectives
- Impact of Colonial Rule: Society, Economy and Polity
- Hopkinson's Proposals
- Declaration of Scheduled Districts
- Direct Administration
- Division of Frontier in Three Tracts
- Government of India Act, 1919
- Government of India Act, 1935
- Regulation Act of 1945
- Summary
- Key Terms
- Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- Questions and Exercises
- Further Reading

INTRODUCTION

A new era started in the history of North East India with the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, which saw the expansion of the British rule over this part of the country. With the establishment and gradual expansion of the 'Raj', the era of modern politics also began in this region. After the assumption of political power, the task before the British was to consolidate their position, politically as well as economically, in this area. In this imperial desire they faced the problem of the hill tribes of Assam and the neighbouring hills, including the areas of modern Arunachal Pradesh. We have earlier seen that the British government aptly realized the political necessity and the economic potentiality of these frontier areas, especially the hilly tract inhabited by the tribal of present-day Arunachal Pradesh and initiated a number of measures to safeguard colonial interest. Direct military action was not feasible and, therefore, the British came forward to enter into peace agreements with various tribes of these frontiers. At the same time, taking advantage of the basic weakness of these tribes – the divided house of the tribes as a whole – the colonial rulers called upon these tribes to forego their rights over the foothills and the adjoining plain lands for imperial interests. On the whole, however, the British followed a policy of watch and ward, limited or no direct interference and military intervention only when unavoidable.

Hence, as the beginning of the administrative measures, the Frontier Tracts Regulation was passed in 1880. It was mainly due to the unique geo-political conditions as well as the nature of the relationship between tribes and the British. These areas, at that time were not under direct British administration and the terrains were also not

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suitable for the same. The provisions were made applicable not only to the areas of Arunachal Pradesh but also to the other areas of the region. The new regulation provided that the operation of all unsuitable laws might be barred in the hill districts, in the north Cachar subdivision, the Mikir hills tract in Nowgong and the Dibrugarh frontier tract in Lakhimpur. By orders issued under this regulation, the tracts in question were excluded from the operation of the enactments relating to criminal procedure, (the Civil Procedure Code was never in force in any of the hill districts), stamps, court-fees, registration and transfer of property. A simpler system of administering justice in civil and criminal matters was prescribed by rules framed under the Scheduled Districts Act. In these tracts, the head of the local government was to be the chief appellate authority in civil and criminal matters, and the high court would have no jurisdiction except in criminal cases against European British subjects. The deputy commissioner would exercise the combined powers of judge and district magistrate, and the assistant and the extra-assistant commissioners, the powers of magistrates and munsifs. Petty cases, both civil and criminal, were to be dealt with by village tribunals, presided over by village headmen elected by the people themselves, whose procedure was to be free from all legal technicalities. The Eastern *Dwars* in Goalpara were to be administered in civil matters in accordance with the rules under the Scheduled Districts Act, in lieu of the Civil Procedure Code which had not been in force there.

The Government of India Act, 1919, was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It was passed to expand participation of Indians in the Government of India. The Act embodied the reforms recommended in the report of the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. The Act covered ten years, from 1919 to 1929. The Act provided a dual form of government (a 'dyarchy') for the major provinces.

The Government of India Act, 1935 was originally passed in August 1935, and is said to have been the longest (British) Act of Parliament ever enacted by that time. The Act of 1935 provided for the federal structure, distribution of powers, provincial autonomy, responsible form of government, bicameral legislature, and emergency power of Governor General.

The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (formerly the North East Frontier Tracts) was one of the political divisions in British India and later the Republic of India till 1972, when it became the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Its administrative headquarters was Shillong (till 1974, when it was transferred to Itanagar).

In 1914, some tribal-majority areas were separated from the erstwhile Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam province of British India to form the North East Frontier Tracts (NEFT). The NEFT was initially divided into two sections: the central and eastern section (comprising the erstwhile Dibrugarh Frontier Tract, created in 1882, and some more areas in south) and the western section. Each section was placed under a political officer. After the Independence of India in 1947, NEFT became a part of Assam state. In this unit, you will study about the impact of colonial rule in North East India and the contribution of the region in the Indian freedom struggle movement.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the few basic policies followed by the British towards the North East Frontier Tract
- Assess the significance of the Phulaguri movement in Assam
- Discuss the impact of the freedom struggle movement in North East India

IMPACT OF COLONIAL RULE: SOCIETY, ECONOMY AND POLITY

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We have seen that the British government followed a few basic policies towards the North East Frontier Tract. The first and foremost policy of the British was to contain the frontier tribes by continuing with Ahom period's provisions with certain changes in the right to collect *posa*. Cash payment, instead of kind, was started.

Second, the East India Company government tried entering into friendly relations with these tribes through political negotiations and treaties. However, any violation of these treaties was viewed very seriously by the government and force was often applied against such acts.

Third, the government resorted to the 'blockade system', by which the tribes were debarred from coming down to the plains to buy their necessary commodities from the markets of adjoining areas. In case of a serious offence like murder or kidnapping of British subjects, a demand of surrender of the culprits to the British authority was imposed through the native political agent for the trial of the offender. Sometimes, expeditions were dispatched to arrest the offenders, or in the case of kidnapping, to secure the release of the captives. Evidences are not lacking in which the whole tribe or the village of the offender, as a whole, was punished severely, probably to impress upon the whole tribe or the village dire consequences of the acts of a few guilty persons. Though various frontier tribes tried to challenge the authority off and on, the British government overshadowed them with their superior force.

Fourth, the British government established a few markets and organized fairs in the foothill areas, such as Sadiya, Udalguri and Doimara. However, the main motive behind these trade fairs was the promotion and popularization of European goods. Though the British wanted to open stores to provide the necessities to the tribal, this was not successful.

Fifth, the British followed a trade policy that led to the destruction of the tribal cottage industry and crafts. The import of salt, influx of the mill-made goods and yam, and other machine-made goods destroyed the local productions and slowly a tendency developed to purchase manufactured goods and tools from the plains.

Sixth, the British stressed on consolidation but no extension of their rule to the hills. They tried to consolidate the portion of the frontier territory already under their possession and to secure its good administration. For this purpose, the government appointed the *kotokis* mainly to deal with the Nyishis, Adis, Akas, and other hill tribes in the frontiers. In fact, these *kotokis* were like political officers and at the same time worked like ambassadors. The duties of the *kotokis*, as told by H. S. Bivar, were to proceed to the hills on any occasion when required to do so in connection with the tribes and to render aid in furnishing information on the tribes and in interpreting any matter as also to attend upon the deputy commissioner when he proceeded to the country bordering the hills of the tribes to which they were attached.

In addition, the British government established a network of the intelligence service, just after the Anglo-Burmese War of 1824–26, to keep strict vigilance on the movement and communication of the tribes beyond the frontier, particularly those situated near the Burmese frontier and gaining through them information of all movements in upper Burma. As per the British records, by the middle of the nineteenth century there was one Jamadar, a Shan interpreter and seven Harkars in Sadiya Agency. Sadiya Agency continued to

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function under the district officer of Dibrugarh. However, after the information of the combined Mishmi and Singpho rebellion proved to be a rumour in 1866, the intelligence service was subordinated to the police establishment of Sadiya. It is also known that after the Bhutia's raid of 1849, one Jamadar and ten Chowkidars were appointed to watch the Darrang frontier. Thus, at certain points, which were crossroads of the tribal movement, some intelligence was set-up.

Hopkinson's Proposals

In 1862, Colonel Henry Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam, had proposed to the Government of Bengal the ways and means to be adopted for the administration of the North East Frontier Tract as he believed that the policy of conciliation with the hill people had failed. He wrote that, 'in restraining the savage tribes, which infest our frontier, reliance cannot be placed in one course of policy, but there must be a ready adaptation of expedients to suit every varying circumstances; sometimes we must apply coercion, pure and simple, sometimes blockade; very often a judicious system of subsidizing will keep the tribes quiet for long while, but still the surest foundation on which to build our control over them will be their fear of us.' He further argued that the payment of subsidies alone was not sufficient unless it was backed by military power. Hence, he urged upon the government the need for military preparedness to meet any tribal outrage. He seems to have been more in favour of coercion than of conciliation. He held, 'I believe that in our ability to coerce them (that is, the hillmen) where conciliation fails, and in their absolute conviction that we can coerce them if they go too far... lies the most durable guarantee for their good behavior.' He also wanted that the British 'must cease to regard them (that is, the hillmen) as aliens, or even as enemies, instead acknowledge them as subjects, seek to establish ourselves among them, to extent our influence over them, and bring them under our control and within the pale of civilization.' In other words, he wanted that the tribal area should be brought under British occupation.

Colonel Hopkinson was the first British officer who had the foresight to see that by the annexation of Assam, the British government accepted the obligation to undertake the administration of the North East Frontier tribes, and he criticized the government for creating a wall of separation between the hills and the plains of the province. In a nutshell, Hopkinson urged the British to undertake various developmental projects for proper administration of the area. There would be no rest for the British, he held, in Assam till arrangements for administration of the hills were provided for. Colonel Hopkinson wrote in his Report to the Government of Bengal: 'In taking possession of the country (Assam), we incurred a very distinct and positive obligation to administer it to the best of our ability, and at any expense to secure the most absolute protection to life and property by every means available to a civilized government; and it seems inconsistent with this view of our duty that we should have separated the people of the plains from the people of the hills and have made the former our subjects while we renounced the latter, and left them to prey upon those whom we had professed to take under our protection.' He further recommended the construction of roads in this inaccessible land, which he held 'would afford facilities for intercourse between the external world and the world of the tribes', and urged the government to help and aid the missionaries in their work among these hill tribes. This was not accepted by the British government. He also recommended the reorganization of the police force of Assam and the withdrawal of the military and paramilitary forces from the border, which was, however, accepted by the authorities. At the same time, he urged the government to raise a local force under the orders of the chief civil authority for the defence of Assam frontier, because

the management of the frontier tribes was a responsibility of that authority. This view seems to have been accepted by the Government of Bengal which requested the supreme government's sanction of the proposal to raise a force like that of Punjab.

In fact, the Government of India was convinced of the necessity of reorganization of the military force as suggested by Hopkinson, and accordingly, two battalions of military police were recruited, who were posted along the Inner Line. At the same time, heavy concentration was made at the district headquarters for immediate march of the army in any emergency.

It has been suggested by some historians, and with some justification, that the beginning of the political evolution of Arunachal Pradesh can be traced to the Inner Line Regulation of 1873, which was formulated to bring 'under more stringent control the commercial relations of the British subjects with the Frontier Tribes.' It is also worth mentioning that the experience of the colonial rulers with the tribal in India had not been a pleasant one and they had faced trouble in different parts of the country while dealing with them. This was evident through the Mutiny of Singbhum in 1831, Khond Uprising in 1846 and Santhal Rebellion in 1885. Generally, therefore, the British declared these areas as Non-Regulation Tracts to be administered by the Deputy Commissioner according to the needs of the time.

Declaration of Scheduled Districts

The constitutional and administrative growth of Arunachal Pradesh had its genesis in the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874, by which the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo, Khasi and Jayantia Hills, Naga Hills and Cachar were declared 'scheduled districts' on 1 January 1875. Goalpara and Sylhet were also made almost as scheduled districts. This arrangement had a basic aim behind it – to provide a simpler form of administration in the province of Assam. Special rules for the administration of justice, in civil as well as criminal matters, were provided by this Act.

The problem of tribal administration caught the attention of the British Government of India after their occupation of Assam. Therefore, the government wanted to provide a simple form of administration in those areas where the local tribal customs and conventions could be accommodated for settling various tribal disputes; thus, the idea of the scheduled districts came into being. By this Act, the chief commissioner of Assam was authorized to extend the Act to the frontier tracts for peace and governance, with the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council. He could also extend to these areas any Act, or part thereof, passed by the legislators of any provincial or of the central government by a notification in the local gazette. Under Section 2 of the mentioned Act, the chief commissioner had the power to propose to the Governor General in Council, the draft of any regulation for peace and the good government of the frontier tracts, which when approved by the Governor General in Council, had the force of law after notification in the local gazette. The same Act authorized the chief commissioner, under Section 6, Clause C, to define by what authority and jurisdiction, powers and duties incidental to the operation of any enactment, for the time being in force in the Frontier, would be exercised and performed.

Meanwhile, the Inner Line Regulation had been passed in 1873, and the deputy commissioners were asked by the chief secretary to propose the Inner Line of their respective districts. The Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, Colonel Clarke, while submitting his proposal with respect to his district, stated that the frontier of his district was inhabited by tribesmen whom it would be inadvisable to administer as people in

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other parts of the district. Therefore, the chief commissioner of Assam wrote to the Government of India for drafting a set of rules for the administration of justice in the frontier areas, which was approved by the authorities. This provided the basis of administration of justice in this area, the aim of which was to provide an outline pattern of rules, applicable ordinarily to all tracts of the frontier districts, allowing exemption to semi-barbarous or barbarous people over whom British control had been extended.

The passing of two Acts – the Scheduled District Act XIV of 1874 and the Laws Local Extent Act XV of 1874 – made it clear how and in what parts of British India different laws passed by the government were to operate. The Laws Local Extent Act XV specified the laws which were in force in India generally, except in certain backward tracts, described as ‘Scheduled Districts’. The Scheduled Districts Act, XIV of 1874 authorized the government to declare by notification in the gazette what laws were in force in such districts, and to extend to them any enactments in force elsewhere which might seem desirable to bring into operation.

Direct Administration

The next stage of administrative growth can be noticed in the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation (Regulation 2), 1880. The Act provided for the removal of certain frontier tracts in Assam inhabited or frequented by ‘barbarous or semi-civilized’ tribal from the operation of enactments in force therein. As a result, the first frontier tract called Dibrugarh Frontier Tract came into being in November 1882, under the authority of the deputy commissioner of Lakhimpur. In the same year, the government realized the need of a local official to function among the frontier tribes. By the advice of Sir Charles Elliot, a separate office of assistant political officer was established at Sadiya in 1882, and J F. Needham, a British official, originally belonging to the Bengal police, was appointed as the first political officer, to regulate the political relation of the British with the Adis, Mishmi and the Singpho-Khampti tribes of the frontier tract. Till 1882, as we know, the conduct of relations with the frontier tribes was left with *kotokis*, on whom the British officials in general put little reliance and to whom they used to pay some attention. But now onwards, the British officials started touring various parts of the frontier area and prepared notes and reports which were given due weightage by the British government.

Needham was succeeded by Noel Williamson in 1906, who acted with indefatigable energy, courage and enthusiasm in putting the frontier service on a sound basis, till his murder in Abor hills in 1911. Williamson toured various parts of the Adi and Mishmi Hills and tried to cultivate good and personal relations with the people of different tribes. Like Williamson, the Lieutenant Governor of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, Sir Lancelot Hare was also a practical man and supported the ideas of Williamson with regard to the frontier policy. He had his own idea of adopting a policy of direct and immediate British administration of these frontier tracts, which, however, was turned down by the Government of India. Though the government agreed that the British territory should be protected at any cost, it forbade any expeditions to be sent beyond the Inner Line.

As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, that is, in 1908–11, the Chinese movement across the boundary, particularly in the Aka Hills, the Abor Hills and the Mishmi Hills became a matter of concern which forced the government to propose to the Secretary of State for India to secure, as soon as possible, a sound strategic boundary between India and Tibet. At that time, the local government proposed that in future their (British) policy towards the frontier tribes should be one of loose political control, having

minimum interference and at the same time the government should assure the security and protection of tribes from unprovoked aggression from outside, so that they would be prevented from violating either the administrative border or the Chinese territory. Though, as a rule, the Government of India accepted the recommendations of the local government in the real sense of the term it did not permit the extension of the administrative boundary beyond the existing line. The Government of India also sanctioned various expeditions to tour the Mishmis, Miri, Adi and Nyishi Hills to know more about the land and the people for effective administrative control. It also addressed a dispatch to the Secretary of State for India, on the frontier issue, recommending the lines of action proposed by the Governor of East Bengal and Assam, C A. Bell, and the General Staff of Army. The Secretary of State, however, did not take any interest for pushing the British territory into the hills. The Government of India protested as they contemplated the idea to exercise loose political control over the tribes, which could not be done beyond the Inner Line boundary. The Secretary of State now agreed to the proposals and thus the hill tracts of North Eastern Frontier areas were subsequently brought under direct administration.

The direct administration of this area, however, remained on paper and practically no arrangement was made for proper and direct administration. The political officer, responsible for direct administration, continued to be under the local administration and was instructed to exercise 'loose political control' over the tribes. It seems that the Government of India was influenced by the 'buffer' concept of Sir Henry McMahon and his advice, not to offend the Tibetan vested interests in the tribal tracts south to the McMahon Line.

Division of Frontier in Three Tracts

In 1912, the administrative divisions were recognized in Assam and a new system of administration on the frontier was introduced. Two new charges, afterwards known as the Sadiya and Balipara frontier tracts, were created and placed under the control of political officers. These charges consisted partly of the settled plains of the Lakhimpur and Darrang districts, in which the administration was practically the same as that existing in those districts, and partly of areas beyond the Inner Line inhabited by the border tribes, over whom only loose political control was exercised. The Sadiya Frontier tract extended in the North East to the confines of Tibet and touched Burma on the south-east and south, whereas Balipara tract included the important trade route from Udalguri into Tibet, which is the shortest way from India to Lhasa. As a result of this territorial reorganization, the relations between the hillmen and the people inhabiting the plains were considered to have greatly improved.

The Naga Hills, the Lushai Hills, the Garo Hills, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and the North Cachar and Mikir Hills formed five ordinary hill districts of the state, of which the north-eastern border areas of Assam were put directly under the Government of India to be administered by the Governor of Assam. This north-eastern frontier land, known as the North-eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) came to be divided into six zones: the Kameng Frontier Agency, Subansiri Frontier Agency, Siang Frontier Agency, Lohit Frontier Agency, Tirap Frontier Agency and Tuensang Frontier Agency.

The Kameng Agency included the Akas, the Subansiri Agency included the Nyishis and Hill Miris, the Siang Agency included the Adis, the Lohit Agency included the Mishmis and Khamptis, the Tirap Agency included the Singphos, and the Tuensang Agency included some of the Naga clans.

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The Anglo-Abor War of 1911–12, was a turning point in the administrative history of Arunachal Pradesh. After the war, Major General Bower, who was in charge of the famous Abor expedition, in his letter on 16 January 1912, recommended that the frontier should be divided into three sections as follows:

1. The central section would comprise all the Abors and extend westward to the eastern watershed of the Subansiri but exclusive of that watershed under two political officers. It has to be kept in mind that the Abors have always been the most troublesome tribe on this frontier, and past experience has proved the impossibility of exercising effective control over them from a post in the plains.
2. The eastern section would include all the Mishmis and Khamptis, and should be in charge of an assistant political officer with headquarters at Sadiya.
3. The western section would include the eastern watershed of the Subansiri and extend westward to the borders of Bhutan. This section should be under the control of an assistant political officer with headquarters at some convenient centre to be selected later.

His proposal was accepted by the higher authorities with certain modifications. The Government of India, Foreign and Political Department Notification of 1914, promulgated that the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation would extend to the hills inhabited or frequented by the Adis, Miris, Mishmis, Singphos, Nagas, Khamptis, Bhutias, Akas and Nyishis, and these hill areas were separated from the then Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam.

Later it was decided that both geographically and ethnically the main channel of the Subansiri was a better dividing line between the central and western sections than the Subansiri–Siyom divide. But, in spite of this decision, some confusion seems to have remained even afterwards regarding the boundary between the central and western sections, since as late as 1921 the Indian general staff referred to the Subansiri–Siyom divide as the boundary. While supporting the proposals of Bower, the local government recommended that the political officer on this frontier should work directly under the chief commissioner of Assam; it should be inadvisable that they should be controlled either by the deputy commissioner, Lakhimpur, or by the commissioner of the Assam valley districts.

In July 1912, the Chief Commissioner of Assam proposed that the entire tribal area east of the Subansiri–Siyom divide should be in the charge of Dundas, who should have the status of a deputy commissioner and work under the chief commissioner. Dundas would require four assistants to begin with: one for the Lohit Valley; the second for the Bebejiya and Chulikatta Mishmis; the third for the Abor Hills; and the fourth for assisting the political officer at the headquarters in the administration of the plains below the foothills. It was believed that these proposals were within moderate limits and that before long the political officer would require further assistance. For the area west of the Subansiri–Siyom divide, the chief commissioner recommended Captain G. A. Nevill as the political officer who would work directly under the chief commissioner.

In September 1914, the southern boundaries of the eastern, central and western sections were notified to separate them clearly from the adjoining plains districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur. In 1919, the eastern and central sections were officially renamed as the Sadiya Frontier Tract, and the western section as the Balipara Frontier Tract.

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Thus, the North East Frontier Tract came into existence, composed of the following three administrative units, as recommended by Bower: (i) The central and eastern section (ii) the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract (iii) The western section. The boundary of the central and eastern section ran along the then existing Dibrugarh Frontier Tract, stretching a little further south of it and included lands inhabited entirely by the Miris including five small villages inhabited by the Assamese people. The boundary of the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract was so defined as to leave it within the regular jurisdiction of the deputy commissioner of Lakhimpur. The boundary of the western section of the North East Frontier Tract ran from the Subansiri river, which was the boundary between the central and eastern and western sections.

To extend British authority over the three frontier tracts, a political officer was appointed in each of these tracts. W C M. Dundas of Bengal police was appointed as political officer of the central and eastern section, and GA. Neville of Bengal police was appointed as the political officer of the western section, while the Lakhimpur Frontier Tract was left in the charge of the deputy commissioner of Lakhimpur. With the appointment of three political officers in these tracts, loose political control was gradually established over these areas. The political officers yielded a lot of influence regarding the administrative problems of the hill tracts. They had the powers to expel anybody from their respective jurisdiction, if the presence of such a person was prejudicial for the security and peace of the area. These political officers were assisted in their work by the political Jamadars, Harkars and *kotokis*. The political officers were to hold an 'Annual Durbar' where they would present *posa* to the tribes, listen to their grievances and explain to them the policy of the government.

The policy of non-interference introduced by the British in the nineteenth century lasted till 1911. But thereafter British tribal policy on this frontier underwent a fundamental change to cope with the Chinese threat from the north. The old policy was replaced by a policy of loose political control, and a very timely opportunity to introduce the new policy was provided by the murder of Williamson.

Government of India Act, 1919

With the passing of the Government of India Act of 1919, there were some changes in the nomenclature of the sections of the North East Frontier Tract. The Act of 1919 authorized the Governor General in Council under Section 52(A) of the Act to declare any territory in British India to be a 'Backward Area.' Accordingly, in 1921, all the tribal areas in Assam were declared as backward areas. This was followed by an Instrument of Instructions to the Governors of these provinces which laid down that he was responsible for carrying out measures for the social welfare of the tribal areas under his exclusive charge. In actual practice, this Instrument of Instructions implied that the rules framed by the Government of India as well as by the Government of Assam were not applicable to the tribal areas. Thus, while in theory the North East Frontier Tract was a part of the province of Assam, it was denied actual participation in the political process.

Now onwards, the central and eastern sections were to be known as the Sadiya Frontier Tract, and the western section as the Balipara Frontier Tract. However, there was no change in the name of Lakhimpur Frontier Tract. This position continued upto 1937, during which certain areas were either included or excluded in the so called North East Frontier Tract. By the Government of India Act 1919, the North East Frontier Tract was politically made a part of the province of Assam, but the Government of Assam

denied direct participation in the administration of the area. In the real sense, the tracts continued to be governed according to the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation of 1880 and 1884 up to 31 March 1937.

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Moreover, after the First World War, a spirit of humanism spread in the world. People began to talk of human rights and protest against exploitation. The concept of 'mandate' was developed for protecting the interest of the underdeveloped peoples under the supervision of the League of Nations. As a part of this worldwide change of outlook, the protection of tribal rights now caught the attention of the philanthropic people. In India, British administrators like J.P. Mill and J.H. Hutton who served in the hills in the North East were struck by the exploitation of the simple tribal people by adventurers and businessmen which, if not actively patronized, was at least tolerated by the government. Essays appeared in the journals to enlist popular support for stopping such practices towards the tribal people. The government now adopted a more or less benevolent attitude towards the tribal people. But in an atmosphere of political tension between the rulers and the politically conscious sections of the Indian nation, the government solicitude for tribal welfare was utilized more for segregation of the tribal folk from the rest of the Indian community than for actual amelioration of their condition.

This policy of segregation was given shape for the first time in the Reform of 1919 although its beginnings may be traced back to the late nineteenth century. It has already been observed that the Scheduled Districts Act was passed in 1874 to provide for the administration of the tribal areas in a rough and ready manner and the Inner Line Regulation of 1873 began to be applied to segregate tribal areas of the North East Frontier from 1875 onwards. When Edwin Montagu, in concert with Lord Chelmsford, under the direction of the House of Commons, prepared their report on constitutional reforms in India, they recommended measures to be taken for reconstruction of the Indian Government, but the tribal issue was not given any new complexion. While recommending the increasing association of Indians in every branch of administration and 'the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire', they did not deem it proper to either encourage the tribal people to participate in their own administration or to associate the Indian minister and legislators with the administration of the tribal hills of the frontiers.

The Mont-Ford scheme, which involved the division of functions of the provincial government between elected Indian ministers and appointed executive councilors, proposed to keep the tribal areas separate from the regularly administered territory, on grounds that in those areas 'there was no material on which to found political institutions.' It was held that the tracts mentioned in the schedules and appendices to the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874, with 'certain exceptions and possibly certain additions, should be reserved for further consideration'. It was also suggested that the typically backward tracts (frontiers) should be excluded from the jurisdiction of the reformed provincial governments and administered by the head of the province. In these areas, therefore, the old system was to continue, and the tribes were to be kept apart – ostensibly for their own welfare – from the people of the plains.

The reaction of the Government of India to the recommendations of the joint report was embodied in the Ninth Dispatch on the Constitutional Reforms. The Government of India was anxious to limit exclusion as much as possible both in its local extent and in its degree. With this end in view, it estimated the degree of backwardness of each of the tracts and recommended varying degrees of exclusion to conform to such estimates. The recommendation that the backward tracts should be directly administered

by the Governors was not finally carried out, except in the Shan States of Burma. For Assam, the reserved half of the government was given full discretion to administer the tracts as per enactments under the Government of India Act, 1919.

Government of India Act, 1935

Meanwhile, the government has pursued a policy of bringing the frontier territory under its political influence. The tour reports of the political officers showed the popularity of the government in the tribal hills. By the time the Statutory Commission arrived, the officers serving in the frontiers and adjacent tribal hills, like the Lushai and Naga Hills, had arrived at the conclusion that the British would withdraw some day from India and Burma, but if they could create a separate tribal belt along the North East Frontier they might continue to possess a foothold on the Indian territory.

In view of this trend of opinion in official circles, the Simon Commission, which was appointed to report on further progress on constitutional reforms in India, did not find it possible to recommend the incorporation of the hill tracts of the North East Frontier for administrative purposes in the province of Assam. It contains that the backward tracts of Assam are of great importance and extent, that nowhere in India is the contrast between the life and outlook of these hillmen and the total distinct civilization of the plains manifest more. The commission recommended that the British Parliament should avow its special obligation for the tribal folk, educate them to stand on their own feet, give them protection against exploitation, and prevent their raids on the plains. The Simon Commission appointed in 1928 made another recommendation regarding the administration of the tribal areas or the hill areas under tribal settlement. It suggested that the tribal areas should be designated as 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas in consonance with respective stage of development in the stage of literacy and political consciousness. For administration of the tribal area, excluded from the regular administered districts of the province, the Governor General in Council should use the agency of the Governor.

The Commission expected that for developing the tribal areas and for educating the tribal people, huge money would be required. The money would not be forthcoming from the revenue of a poor state like Assam. Further, the Commission apprehended that the representatives of the provincial legislature would not vote for the appropriation of money for development purposes in the hill tracts since that would not immediately benefit the constituencies of the members who would vote. Though in the prevailing atmosphere of distrust and animosity, the British statesmen and administrators alike wanted to sympathize with the tribal folk and alienate them from the Indian people, the tribal people were a part of the myriad Indian population.

But in spite of the recommendations of the Simon Commission, the British Prime Minister denied any intention of the British Parliament to control any territory of British India. The hopes of the British officers in the tribal areas were thus destroyed. The Government of India now asked for reconsideration of the issue of frontier administration by the Government of Assam since the previous scheme of retention of tribal territory under the British Parliament could not be worked upon after declaration of the British Prime Minister. The Government of Assam, nevertheless, proposed the perpetuation of the separation of the tribal tracts of the frontiers from the regularly administered areas in the province of Assam. It wrote, 'Its (tribal tracts) progressive absorption into the province of Assam in the past was forced upon the government by the unavoidable necessity of securing from the marauding and revengeful raids of its denizens, the safety of the plain

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districts for which the government had made itself responsible... what was needed for the future is a policy of development and unification on lines suited to the genius of the hill people, an object in itself of formidable magnitude.'

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The formulation of such a policy could no longer be divorced from political factors. The Government of Assam pointed out that there had already developed in the hills an anti-Indian feeling, probably due to a fear of economic exploitation. It was even apprehensive that a change in policy with regard to the frontiers might provoke rebellion. Therefore, it recommended that in developing a scheme of administration for the hill tribes 'the essence of the system in the administration of the definitely excluded areas would be the personal rule of the Governor exercised through selected officers'. In course of time, it suggested that an indigenous staff of officers of all ranks might be provided for the hill districts and frontiers.

The Government of India Act of 1935, which was passed after taking into consideration Simon Commission's recommendations as well as the points of view of the provincial governments concerned with tribal areas, provided in Sections 91 and 92 that his Majesty by an order in council might declare some territory in India as 'Excluded Areas' or 'Partially Excluded Areas' and empower the Governor of a province to administer that area under the authority of the Governor General. As such, the Government of Assam was vested with wide discretion and authority in matters of administration in these areas. The Governor was given discretion to extend Acts or parts thereof passed by any provincial legislature or the federal legislature to the excluded areas which otherwise would not apply there. Moreover, the Governor was given the power to prepare and approve drafts of regulations for the peace and good government of the excluded areas with the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council. No Act of the federal and provincial legislatures would be applicable to these areas without the prior sanction of the Governor of Assam. However, in 1937, a new development took place when J.P. Mills was appointed as the Secretary for tribal affairs to the Government of Assam. According to the Constitution Act of 1935, it was decided without any difficulty that Balipara Frontier Tract should be an 'Excluded Area'. It accordingly was entered as such in the Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order, 1936, and came under the direct administration of the Governor from 1 April 1937.

In 1938, the formation of a 'Control Area' to the north of Pasighat was sanctioned by the Government of India. The purpose of this was to take measures for the abolition of slavery in unadministered areas (this control area was subsequently extended in 1941). In the same year, Godfrey, the political officer, reported about the annual incursion by Tibetan officials into the Memba and Abor villages south of the McMahon Line and realization of taxes from the tribesmen who were claimed to be Tibetan subjects. As a result, Godfrey, the political officer of Sadiya, along with Williams, the assistant political officer at Pasighat, with an escort of forty-five Assam Rifles led an expedition into the south of the McMahon Line in February – March 1939, with a view to ascertaining the position as regards Tibetan infiltration south of the McMahon Line. It was revealed from this expedition that Tibetan influence extended some 70 miles south of the McMahon Line and that the villages of Shimong and Karko had been paying tribute to Tibet. Accordingly, recommendations were made to the establishment of outposts at Karko and Riga in March 1941. In 1940, Godfrey made an extensive tour up the Siyom Valley through the unadministered Galong country for setting a serious land dispute between the Minyong and Galong Abors. A boundary was fixed and peace restored. The Government of India extended the control area of the political officer, Sadiya Frontier

Tract, up to the McMahon Line in the Siang Valley on 20 May 1941, in order to check the Tibetan influence. They also agreed that if these incursions from the north of the McMahon Line did not cease, it might be necessary at some further date to establish one or more additional outposts further up the valley.

Also, the Government of India sanctioned the extension of the control area of the political officer, Sadiya Frontier Tract, up to the McMahon Line in the Siang valley, in the year 1941. In 1943, a new administrative tract, called the Tirap Frontier Tract was created by taking certain portions of Lakhimpur Frontier Tract and Sadiya Frontier Tract. The new administrative division was placed under a separate political officer with its headquarters at Margherita. In 1943, N K. Rustomji was appointed as an Advisor to the Governor of Assam to look after the administration of the North East Frontier Tracts including the Naga Hills, the Lushai Hill districts and the North Hill Subdivision of the Cachar district. The appointment of the Advisor is said to have set the pattern for the administration of the North East Frontier Agency area later.

Regulation Act of 1945

The year 1945 saw an important administrative development in the North East Frontier Tract. A regulation, known as Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945 (Regulation I of 1945) was introduced and its main objective was to ensure that a vast majority of disputes, both civil and criminal, were decided in accordance with the prevailing traditional codes of the tribal. It was recognized that modern laws that prevailed elsewhere in the country were unsuitable for the tribal areas also. Thus, the Act of 1945 recognized the authority of the age-old village councils and also the authority of the village headmen. The village authorities were also given the duty of maintaining peace and law and order in their respective areas.

In 1946, the administrative divisions of the frontier tract were divided to make their working more viable and efficient. As a result, the Balipara Frontier Tract was divided into the Sela Sub-Agency and the Subansiri Area. Similarly, in July 1948, Sadiya Frontier Tract was divided into two separate units, namely, the Abor Hill District and the Mishmi Hill District, each with its own political officers at Pasighat and Tezu respectively. However, the Sela Sub-Agency and the Subansiri area, with their headquarters at Charduar and North Lakhimpur, respectively, remained under the jurisdiction of the political officer at Balipara.

When India became Independent in 1947, the North East Frontier Tract consisted of Balipara Frontier Tract, Sadiya Frontier Tract, Tirap Frontier Tract and the Naga Tribal Area, which lay beyond the regular administrative jurisdiction of the Assam government. Immediately after the transfer of power, the Governor of Assam was divested of his discretionary powers with respect to the North East Frontier Tract. The Constituent Assembly of India appointed a sub-committee headed by Gopinath Bardoloi to recommend the future pattern of administration of the hill areas of Assam and the frontier tracts. The committee provided for the management of tribal and intra-tribal matters by the people themselves, but general administration, law and order were kept under the government of Assam. It was also recommended that the tribes of the frontier should continue to be kept under their respective political officers, until they (tribal) were developed enough to control their own affairs. As per the recommendations of the Bardoloi Committee, the administration was to be carried out by the Assam government.

SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- A new era started in the history of North East India with the signing of the treaty of Yandabo in 1826, which saw the expansion of the British rule over this part of the country.
- The British government aptly realized the political necessity and the economic potentiality of these frontier areas, especially the hilly tract inhabited by the tribal of present-day Arunachal Pradesh and initiated a number of measures to safeguard colonial interest.
- As the beginning of the administrative measures, the Frontier Tracts Regulation was passed in 1880. It was mainly due to the unique geo-political conditions as well as the nature of the relationship between tribes and the British.

- The Government of India Act, 1919, was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It was passed to expand participation of Indians in the Government of India.
- The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) (formerly the North East Frontier Tracts) was one of the political divisions in British India and later the Republic of India till 1972, when it became the Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Its administrative headquarters was Shillong (till 1974, when it was transferred to Itanagar).
- The first and foremost policy of the British towards the North East Frontier Tract was to contain the frontier tribes by continuing with Ahom period's provisions with certain changes in the right to collect '*posa*'.
- In 1862, Colonel Henry Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam, had proposed to the Government of Bengal the ways and means to be adopted for the administration of the North East Frontier Tract as he believed that the policy of conciliation with the hill people had failed.
- The constitutional and administrative growth of Arunachal Pradesh had its genesis in the Scheduled Districts Act of 1874, by which the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Garo, Khasi and Jayantia Hills, Naga Hills and Cachar were declared 'scheduled districts' on 1 January 1875.
- Administrative growth can be noticed in the Assam Frontier Tract Regulation (Regulation 2), 1880.
- In 1912, the administrative divisions were recognized in Assam and a new system of administration on the frontier was introduced. Two new charges, afterwards known as the Sadiya and Balipara frontier tracts, were created and placed under the control of political officers.
- With the passing of the Government of India Act of 1919, there were some changes in the nomenclature of the sections of the North East Frontier Tract.
- The Government of India Act of 1935, provided in Sections 91 and 92 that His Majesty by an order in Council might declare some territory in India as 'Excluded Areas' or 'Partially Excluded Areas' and empower the Governor of a province to administer that area under the authority of the Governor General.
- The year 1945 saw an important administrative development in the North East Frontier Tract. A regulation, known as Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945 (Regulation I of 1945) was introduced and its main objective was to ensure that a vast majority of disputes, both civil and criminal, were decided in accordance with the prevailing traditional codes of the tribal.

Check Your Progress

7. When was the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Gandhiji?
8. What was the outcome of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam?




**INSTITUTE
OF DISTANCE
EDUCATION** **IDE**
Rajiv Gandhi University

Institute of Distance Education Rajiv Gandhi University

A Central University

Rono Hills, Arunachal Pradesh

Contact us:

 +91-98638 68890

 Ide Rgu

 Ide Rgu

 helpdesk.ide@rgu.ac.in