

**TRIBES AND THE COLONIAL STATE:A STUDY ON THE TRIBAL-BRITISH CONFLICTS
OVER NATURE IN ASSAM IN THE LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY**

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Abstract:

The article investigates into the tribal indigenous opposition towards colonial attempts of intrusion in the hill forests of British Assam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Several tribal communities resided in the hills bordering the Assam plains and functioned as autonomous administrative units. Establishment of British political and administrative control over Assam in the first half of the nineteenth century led to the initiation of colonial contact with the tribes neighbouring the region. The areas inhabited by the tribes were incorporated within the territory and thus the map of Assam was expanded under the colonial administrative ambit. The establishment of British administration in the region was perceived by some tribes as encroachment over their lands and forests, especially when the British government tried to implement its forest policies and management mechanisms in their areas and attempted to commercially exploit their natural resources. The article examines certain tribal reactions against such colonial approaches and the modes of retaliation employed by the British authorities to counter them. Though most of such resistances were brought to submission by the British but they certainly hinted the latter with the idea that colonial admission into the hills would not be free access without indigenous opposition.

Keywords: Nature, Forests, Tribes, Hills, British, Assam.

Introduction

Nature based conflicts generally refers to clashes associated with the natural environment among parties with diverse interests over nature. It fundamentally forms part of the broader notion of environmental movement that can be defined as collective human action on aspects those are essentially beneficial to the natural environment. According to

AlmeidaPaul and Linda Brewster Stearns, environmental movements can be divided into categories like local grass root level movements, social movements, and a cycle of protests.ⁱNature based conflicts belong to the third category when they are usually reactions either forprotection of indigenous forest rights or against appropriation of forest lands and natural habitats by governmental and commercial agencies to prosper political, administrative, industrial and tradeinterests,or to promote modern development. Some of them are human responses against climate changes and environmentaldegradationtoo. Such efforts are organised human endeavour within a larger or smaller geographical space directed towards local or broader goals associated with the natural environment.

Nature based conflicts have been an important sphere of interaction between the government and the indigenous communities ofIndia under the British. Collective human protests against colonial forests policies could be noticed in parts of the country by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when applications of Scientific Forestryⁱⁱ practices directed towards commercial returns from forestsacquired importance in the administrative agendas of the British government. However,instances of environmental protests in India could be traced even prior to that. For instance,as early as 1700s in the Marwar region of Rajasthan, the followers of Bishnoi faith in the Khejarli village located in the regiongave up their lives in the hands of the king’s soldiers while protecting trees considered as sacred.ⁱⁱⁱIn India, with the growth of environmental history as a genre of historical discipline by the late twentieth century, scholarly discussions on such aspects gained ground among academicians, social scientists, and environmentalistswho spoke on appropriation of forests, erosion of indigenous forest rights, loss of natural habitats, forest policies, commercialisation, and climate change among others.^{iv}Nature based conflicts are visible in the post independent era too. Continuation with the colonial structure of forest administrationwith minor breaks and continuities even after independence and commercial importance attached to natural resourceshave left little scope for change. Chipko movement, Silent Valley andAppiko movements, Narmada BachaoAndolon are some of the nature based conflicts that have Indian independence. The only difference is that in the post-colonial era, such conflictsreceive support from various governmental and non governmental agencies, human rights groups, and activists in their endeavours while in the British period, most of them were isolated phenomenon often suppressed by the colonial administrationbefore they could assume an organised form.

Objectives and Methodology

The paper is an attempt to enlist some nature based clashes between the hill tribes and British government in colonial Assam. It tries to understand attempts of British intrusion in the hill forests of the region leading to British- tribal conflicts and counter retaliation by the colonial government. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the realms of tribal interactions against external interventions often culminating into contradictions. The second part discusses certain instances of tribal- British conflicts over nature in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. The paper discusses the British-Aka conflict, the Garo agitation, and British-Adi clash. The study is based on the scholarly works by British administrators, government reports, gazetteers, anthropological research, secondary literature, and journal articles.

Spheres of tribal interactions against external intrusions

Prior to British appearance in Assam, the hill tribes bordering the region preferred to live in isolation and limitedly interacted with the neighbouring areas especially the plains. The independent tribal units had different administrative systems. Some were democratic in character while others were despotic. For instance, in Khasi hills there existed petty monarchies while in Lushai Hills and in North East Frontier, each village was a chieftainship.^v One of the sphere of interaction between the hill tribes and the neighbouring areas was the tribal raids which were expressions of authority over some areas or people in the form of violent attacks, plunder, extraction of surplus, kidnapping, or murder of the enemy. For tackling the matter, the Ahom king of Assam, Pratap Singha (1603-1641) came up with the system of 'Posa' under which the villages situated in Assam frontier and adjoining foot hills paid certain commodities of regular uses to the hill tribes on the promise that they would stay away from raiding in the plains.^{vi} He also established weekly markets and fairs in the border areas to encourage trade relations between the plains and the hills. Some of the tribes were recruited in the Ahom army too.^{vii}

Trade relations with the neighbouring areas was another realm of interaction between the hill tribes and their counterparts in the plains in the pre- British era. The tribes carried on trade mostly on natural products with other tribes or with the plains based on the system of barter. Some of the tribes like the Khasi were skilled traders who had trade relations with Bengal, Assam, Garo Hills and within Khasi Hills. They traded on commodities locally cultivated and sold them in weekly markets, one of the prominent

feature of Khasi localities at that time. The people exchanged cotton, rude implements of husbandry manufactured from local iron, small quantities of potatoes, honey, wax etc in the markets of Assam plains for salt, tobacco, dried fish, horned cattle, goats, pigs, and silk clothes. Sohra (Cherrapunji) in Khasi Hills and Pandua in Sylhet were trading centres of the Khasis in the pre-colonial period.^{viii} Similarly, the Lushais traded in rubber, elephant hides, ivory and sulphur guns with Sylhet and Chittagong for salt, iron, brass, copper utensils and tobacco in return. Tipaimukh at the confluence of Barak and Tuipui rivers, Lusheihaaton the Sonai and Jhalnacherra on the Dhaleshwari were trading centres of the Lushais.^{ix} The tribes of North East Frontier carried trade in pepper, ginger, mishmitita, wax, masks, tibetan salt and utensils among others with the adjacent areas through trade routes known as 'Duars' administered by officials known as 'Duaries'. Sadiya was an important market for the exchange of trading products.^x

British contact with the tribes of Assam took place by the nineteenth century on various grounds. One of the juncture was in the period when the British brought changes in the pre-existing system of 'Posa'. Instead of the previous system of collecting the 'Posa' from the tribes directly, the British entered into agreements with them that they would receive it from the government itself. This resulted into conflicts with the tribes on some occasions. For instance, such agreement was made with the Adi community of North East Frontier who exercised authority over the fishes and gold found in the streams located in the Miri area. While exercising this, the Adis exerted feudal rights over the Miris who made large scale exodus to areas in the foothills of Assam under British protection to seek imperial security against the Adis. Clashes between the Adis and the British ensued when the government declined to return the Miris to them after being demanded by the latter.^{xi} While in areas like Khasi Hills, by 1824, the Indian Empire as a buffer between Bengal and Burma. Later under mutual agreements with the Khasi chiefs, the British government established control over the Khasi forests and mineral resources also.^{xii}

Colonial incorporation of Assam took place under the clauses of the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 after the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826). Subsequently indigenous tea plant was discovered in the region and the explorations associated with it acquainted the tea planters with regional floral and faunal varieties along with its soil types. Robert Bruce in his tea mission to Assam explored 23 species of new timber trees in the region. Such initiatives made the tea planters acquainted with the floral and faunal species and hunting grounds of the province.^{xiii} The discovery of oil in the area in the subsequent years further

informed the colonial administrators about the mineral resources and demography of the territory. Thus, when formal British forest administration was established over Assam initially by 1865 and later by 1868, these information about regional flora and fauna were conveyed to the forest officials employed in the territory. The hold of the administration over Assam forests was strengthened with promulgation of legislations like Indian Forest Act of 1865, the Indian Forest Act of 1878, and the Assam Forest Regulation 1891 among others.^{xiv} Such interactions of the British government with the natural landscape brought them into contact with the regional hill tribes and their territories. The hill tribes residing in the fringes of Brahmaputra plains were included within the region after the entire north east India except Manipur and Tripura was declared as Assam by the British. The erstwhile Bengal districts of Sylhet, and Goalpara were made parts of the region by 1874. Cachar was incorporated by 1832. Colonial intrusion into the tribal areas that functioned as autonomous units brought them into conflicts with the local inhabitants. The tribal reactions were in the form of attacks and raids on the external parties. These clashes were retaliated with armed expeditions by the British resulting in subjugation of the tribal territories.

Tribal-British Conflicts over Nature

The British-Aka conflict

The Akas are the inhabitants of the Kemang district of present day Arunachal Pradesh. Previously the Aka tribes occupied the Himalayan tracts of North East Frontier bounded on the north by the Daflas, on the south by the Darrang district of Assam, on the west by Tibet and the Momba tribes of Rupa and Shergaon and on the east by the Bharali River. Under the Ahom rulers of Assam, the Akas were granted the right of 'Posa' and they exercised authority over the tribes in the western boundary of their region. The system could successfully minimise tribal raids in Assam plain bordering the hills.^{xv} With the establishment of British administration over the region, certain alterations were brought in the existing system. In 1873, a boundary line was put in place by the colonial authorities between the Akas and the tribes dwelling in the western frontier of their territory. The government made over 49 acres of lands as grants to those who had accepted the line.^{xvi} The Kapachors, one of the major clans of the Akas who inhabited the central portion of the present Kemang district of Arunachal Pradesh refused to accept the line between the Bharali and Khari Dikrai rivers that flowed through the territory. This was because the

Akas felt that the demarcation of the boundary line and the gazetting of forests as reserves lying at the border line of the boundary would deprive them from their usual forest based pursuits like hunting and collection of timbers among others^{xvii}. In 1875 the Kapachors claimed their control over the forested lands on the side of the Bharali River that flowed through the Aka territory and later descended into the river Brahmaputra in Assam. They threatened the British that they would create trouble for them if the Kapachor Akas were denied access in those forest areas. However, such protests of the Akas could not continue for long and they were made to surrender by the British. The Akachief Medhi had to accept the terms proposed by the government. They also had to accept the line that was subsequently officially demarcated in 1875.^{xviii}

Though apparently relented, the grievance persisted in the minds of the Akas. In January 1882, the Kapachor Akas and the Daflas who resided across Kameng and Subansiri districts of Arunachal Pradesh, Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur districts of Assam were reported to set up boundary marks in the forests of Potashali, Diyu and Naninimukh declaring that they would not allow anyone to pass through the territories that belonged to them. Though later it was discovered that the tribesmen were actually against the encroachment of some Nepalese who were eager to obtain passes from the forest officials to collect rubber from the Aka territory. However, by the following year, problems restarted when some government personnel entered the Aka territory on official visits. In October 1883 Lakhidhar Kalita, a Mauzadar or a revenue official visited the Aka village under the chief Medhi to collect articles and arrange for an Aka couple to be modelled at an exhibition on tribal issues to be held at Calcutta. But the Akas misinterpreted the purpose of his visit and alleged that the revenue official had come to deprive them of their forest lands and hence detained him. Shortly after, Medhi's brother Chandi with a party of almost a hundred Akas carried off a clerk and forest ranger as captives with two guns from the forest office at Balipara in Assam.^{xix}

The colonial government decided to send punitive expedition into the Aka territory to settle the matter. In November 1883, the Chief Commissioner of Assam Sir Charles Eliot (1881-1885) requested for military assistance to the Viceroy of India. His request was accepted and a military expedition was sent under Brigadier General Sale Hill against the Akas. The latter surrendered the captives along with some rifles and other articles except Lakhidhar Kalita who had died by that time. The expedition was followed by a blockade of

the frontier till 1888 when the Aka chiefs tendered their submission to the government. After the expedition, the Aka region was brought under British control. In 1913-14, 4000 square miles of the Aka territory was surveyed by Captain G.A Nevill, the Political Officer of Western Section of North East Frontier. In 1928-29, an Assam Rifles outpost was established in the region.^{xx}

The Garo Agitation

At present, Garo Hills is one of the constituent districts of the state of Meghalaya. It is bounded on the north and the west by the district of Goalpara in Assam, in the east by the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya and on the south by the Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. The Garos are the tribes who live in the area. Prior to Indian independence, in Goalpara there were four zamindaries namely Bijni, Mechpara, Kallumallupara and Karaibari that bordered the Garo inhabited districts situated on the frontiers of Assam.^{xxi} The region of Goalpara was originally under the Koch kings who ruled over the territory with their capital at Bijni. By the mid seventeenth century, the region came under the Mughal control and remained under the Mughals until it was incorporated within the British Empire in 1765 as a part of Bengal. Under the Mughals, the Goalpara region was divided into a number of estates mostly held by their original owners or zamindars who exercised autonomy in administration in their estates. In the slopes of Garo Hills some local magnates known as Choudhurys exercised power and collected natural products like elephants, cotton, and agar wood in order to pay revenue to the Mughal Faujdar stationed at Rangamati.^{xxii}

In course of time, these Goalpara zamindars^{xxiii} started exercising dominance over the Garos of the neighbouring districts by levying house tax on them and converted them into tenants in their own lands. This led to chronic enmity between the Garos and the zamindars which were reflected in occasional Garo raids in the plains or tax gathering forays of armed expeditions into the hills by the zamindars. The rivalry worsened with the arrival of the British in the area. The acquisition of Diwani in 1765 granted the right to collect revenue from these regions to the East India Company. This legitimised the zamindari claim over the revenue secured from the Garos as the zamindars performed as agents of the British government. It however abolished some of the miscellaneous dues that the zamindars used to collect from the Garos. Nevertheless between 1807-1819, the

Garos held that some illegal levies were collected from them that led to Garo protests between 1807 and 1819.^{xxiv}

In 1822 acquisition of colonial control over the Garo inhabited regions divested the zamindari control over the area. The zamindari of Bijni could no longer demand claim on Garo Hills though the Garos of Habraghatparganas accused that the zamindars encroached in the valley areas of Garo Hills bordering the plains.^{xxv} In order to resolve the issue, the colonial government came up with some measures that could act as solution to the problem. In 1831 David Scott, the Agent to the Governor General in the region (1828-31) provided some plots of lands to the Garos under the Bibhagnama^{xxvi} agreement. The Garos in the border villages paid a tribute (nazar) to the Political Agent at Goalpara. By 1902 several Garo Lashkars^{xxvii} and Nokmas^{xxviii} demanded claims over certain parts of lands in Habraghatparganas which was known as the Nazranamah^{xxix}. The protests of the Garos got an organised shape when the people assembled under one Sonaram Sangma and agitated for the realisation of 25% of revenue share from the Nazranamah. The government convinced the Bijni stakeholders to allow the Garos 25% share of the revenue realised from the area on the condition that they would forever surrender their claims over the land. The Bijni stakeholders however did not accept the claims of the Garos.^{xxx}

The Garos although initially accepted the offer of 25% share of revenue but restarted their agitation with vigour under Sonaram Sangma by the beginning of the twentieth century. This time the issue was centred on forests. Sonaram Sangma agitated against the reservation of forest areas within Garo Hills and protested against the extinction of Garo forest rights in the areas declared as reserved. By 1902 Garo Hills had as many as 14 reserved forests; one was established in 1855, twelve in 1883, and one in 1897. Between 1883 and 1895, a forest area of 139 square miles was brought under reservation. The Garo agitation in 1902 was followed by two memorials by the Garo leaders and Nokmasto the Government of India against reservation of forests in the Garo hills. The British government held that the wastelands in the area were at its disposal and no compensation other than the cultivating rights was to be paid for these lands. It also held that since these lands were government lands, the administration had the authority to levy tax on its users and could reject the indigenous claims of the Garos over these lands. Hence it denied the Garo rights to cultivate, graze, dwell and use these forest areas. The government established forest villages within these areas and settled the labour population for performing the works of the Forest Department. The Garos were also compelled to perform

labour for the Department. By December 1902, Sonaram Sangma marched with some seven hundred Garos from the hills of Habraghat to Dalgomaghat and the agitation continued for a number of years till 1908.^{xxxii}

In order to resolve the issue, the government adopted a middle path by offering 25% of the ordinary land revenue of Nazranamahal to some of the Nokmas and convinced them that they would be compensated if the lands were brought under forest reservation. The Garos were granted the permission to use other forest products except the trees demarcated as reserved. By 1902, 17,482 acres of forests were deforested, and a number of forest villages were established in the area. By 1910 under a notification No 746 dated 24th September 1910; comprehensive rules were framed for the administration of forests in the area. This notification declared the district as an Excluded Area.^{xxxiii}

The British- Adi Clash

Since the inception of colonial administration over Assam and its adjoining areas, the relations between the Adis (previously known as Abors) and the British government were mostly on unfriendly terms. The Adis constituted the largest tribal population of the North East Frontier region and presently occupy the southern Himalayan districts of Siang, Lohit and Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh. The Adi- British clashes began when the British denied handing over the Miris to the Adis who considered the Miris as their subjects.^{xxxiii} In 1900 the British stopped the payment of 'Posa' to the Adis and imposed the blockade on the Adi frontier. Consequently the tribal communities such as the Adis, Mishmis, and Singphos amongst others were exclusively confined to the hills and became dependent on the British for their daily requirements. The chief purpose of the colonial government behind such activity was to bring the tribes under subjugation. The British government was interested in exploring the forest resources of the area that contained 'Simul' (*Bombax Malabaricum*) timber in abundance that was considered suitable for making tea boxes. The region was also found to be suitable for tea cultivation and within a short time span, several saw mills like the Sissi Mills and Trading Company and the Mecklanuddy Saw Mills came up in the area. The saw mills exploited the 'Simul' timber found in the region for making tea chests.^{xxxiv} Gustav Mann, the first Conservator of Forests in Assam in his administration report on the forests of Assam in 1874 expressed displeasure over the depletion of these forests by the saw mills beyond Dibrugarh and Sadiya. But as these regions were located

beyond the 'Inner Line' it was preferred to abstain from interference for political reasons.^{xxxv}

The Sissi Saw Mills and Trading Company and the Mecklanuddy Saw Mills obtained timbers from the Miris who did not require permits to cross the Inner Line to the hills. For extracting timber from the Adi lands, the Miris paid royalty to the Adis without any resistance. However regular removal of timbers from the area led to deforestation in the region and the saw mill owners had to explore other areas containing 'Simul' trees. The saw mills employed contractors who hired Miris for cutting the trees and sent elephants to drag the logs to the river side. The Adis demanded tributes from the Miris at various entry points for the timbers those were dragged. In 1904, the headman of the PasiMinyongs (Adi tribe) levied 'Posa' on the contractors of the Mecklanuddy saw mills who felled timber in the Adi country. In 1906 they interfered with the timber cutting activities of the Sissi saw mills. The managers of the Sissi Saw mill and Trading Company and the Mecklanuddy saw mill sent representations to the Governor of the province praying for the protection of the employees of the saw mills. Accordingly, a memorandum came up which suggested for the establishment of British outposts at Poba, Lallu, Dihing, Dibong, Sisiri and on the Brahmakund rivers for the effective possession and protection of the saw mills.^{xxxvi}

In order to evaluate the actual situation, a Political Officer with an escort of 150 military troops was sent to Padu, Membo, Siluk and Dambuk villages located in the Adi country. The colonial government expressed qualms over its policy of non-interference in the area and proposed for active British intervention in the region. Sir J.D Fuller, the Chief Commissioner of Assam (1902-1905) observed that the Adis should be made to understand that the lands belonged to the British and therefore they do not have the authority to demand tributes and interfere with the timber cutting activities of the saw mills.^{xxxvii} In order to come to an agreement between the Adis and the British government, Mr Neol Williamson the Political Officer stationed at Sadiya along with Dr Gregorson and some coolies decided to meet the Minyong Adis and tour the Adi areas beyond the 'Inner Line'.^{xxxviii} The Adis however took it as an insult and attacked Mr Neol Williamson and Dr Gregorson along with the coolies. On 30th March 1911, Mr Williamson and Dr Gregorson were murdered by the Minyong Adis with the majority of their party members. Only six coolies managed to escape the incident. Such gruesome act by the Adis was strongly retaliated by the British with an impressive expedition sent to the Abor country under

Major General Bower in 1911-12. Peace was imposed on the offending villages by December 1911 and January 1912 and the whole of the Adi territory was brought under British occupation.^{xxxix}

Conclusion

Nature based tribal-British conflicts in British Assam highlight indigenous protests against colonial intervention in the hill areas of the region. The tribes preferred their administrative and existential structures the change of which produced repercussions among them. Though apparently the colonial administration chose to refrain from directly interfering with the hill tribes and their lands in the province, the study shows that when it came to reservation of forests and natural resource utilization, the policy of non-interference was probably abandoned. These conflicts were unequal indigenous fights with the colonial system that usually resulted into total subjugation of the tribes and their territories by the British. Instances of using one tribe against the other for personal interests was a feature associated with such conflicts as can be perceived in the British- Adi clash when the Miri tribes were utilised by the British to access the Adi forests. These conflicts mostly ended in suppression by the British with their superior arm and skilled man power. Yet, these may be considered as initial attempts to protect and preserve indigenous forest claims and rights by the hill communities of the region.

Notes

ⁱAlmeida Paul and Linda Brewster Stearns (February 1998): Political Opportunities and Local Grassroots Environmental Movements: The Case of Minamata, *Social Problems*, Volume 45, No 1, pp 37-60.

ⁱⁱScientific Forestry is a German concept that can be defined as the craft of managing, conserving and repairing forests and its associated resources to generate commercial returns from forests.

ⁱⁱⁱAlexis Reichert, (2015): *Sacred Trees, Sacred Deer, Sacred Duty to Protect: Exploring Relationships between Humans and Non Humans in the Bishnoi Community*, A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the MA degree in Religious Studies, University Ottawa, Canada

^{iv}Guha Ramachandra (1989): *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, Delhi: Oxford University Press. Guha Ramachandra and Gadgil Madhav (1992): *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp 41-177.

^vK.S Singh, edited, (1994): *People of India, Meghalaya, Vol XXXII*, Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, p 1995.

^{vi}Aitchison C.U (1st published 1909, reprint 1983): *A Collection of treaties, engagements and sanads relating India and Neighbouring countries, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Burma*, Volume XII, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, p 79.

^{vii}P.N Luthra (January 1971):*North East Frontier Agency Tribes: Impact of Ahom and British Policy*, Economic and Political Weekly, Volume 6, Issue 23, p 11.

^{viii}W.J Allen, (1858): *Report on the Administration of the Cossyah and Jyntea hills Territory*, Calcutta, p 47.

^{ix}Alexander Mackenzie (1st published 1884 reprint 2012): *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p 363.

^xHabungPayang, (1998):*Economic and Social Change in North East India*, New Delhi, pp-56-57.

^{xi}Aitchison C.U (1st published 1909, reprint 1983): *A Collection of treaties, engagements and sanads relating India and Neighboring countries, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Burma*, Volume XII, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, p 79.

^{xii}HelenGiri (1998): *The Khasis under British Rule (1824-1947)*, New Delhi: Regency Publications, p-138.

^{xiii}H.K Barpujari (1995): *Francis Jenkins Report on the North East Frontier of India*, Guwahati: Delhi: Spectrum Publications, pp xxxvii, 70-81.

^{xiv}H.P Smith and C Purukayastha, (1946): *A Short History of Assam Forest Service 1850-1945*, Shillong: Assam Government Press.

^{xv}Edward Gait, (1st print 1905 and reprint 1981): *A History of Assam*, Gauhati: LBS Publications, pp70-77.

^{xvi}Alexander Mackenzie (1st published 1884 reprint 2012): *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p 25.

^{xvii}Sir Robert Reid, (1942): *History of the Frontier Areas bordering on Assam*, Shillong: Assam Government Press.

^{xviii}Alexander Mackenzie (1st published 1884 reprint 2012): *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p26.

^{xix}Ibid p 26.

^{xx}J.N Choudhury (1983): Arunachal Pradesh: From Frontier Tracts to Union Territory, New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, p 115. Aitchison C.U (1st published 1909, reprint 1983): *A Collection of treaties, engagements and sanads relating India and Neighbouring countries, Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and Burma*, Volume XII, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, p 98.

^{xxi}Alexander Mackenzie (1st published 1884 reprint 2012): *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p 245-246.

^{xxii}Santo Barman (1994): *Zamindari System in Assam during British rule: A case study of Goalpara district*, Delhi: Spectrum Publishing House.

^{xxiii}Zamindars were landowners who leased lands to tenants.

^{xxiv}Alexander Mackenzie (1st published 1884 reprint 2012): *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, New York: Cambridge University Press, p 245-246.

^{xxv}B.C Allen (1905): Assam District Gazetteer Goalpara district, Shillong.

^{xxvi}Bibhagnama was an agreement signed under the initiative of David Scott, the Agent to the Governor General in North East India in order to settle the disputes between the rajas of Bijni in Goalpara district of Assam and the Garos who were settled in the foothills of Duars. Actually prior to 1831 the Raja of Bijni claimed control over the Garo inhabited areas in the foothills of Duars and tried to oust the Garos from the areas. To this, some Garo *lashkars* asserted their ancestral rights over the lands adjoining Garowan Mahal and *pargana* Habraghat and received some revenue from the *ryots* of the region. When due to interference of the Raja of Bijni these payments were obstructed, the Garos filed suits in court based on Garo law. The Raja of Bijni also came up with a resolution before the Commissioner agreeing to grant some cultivated lands of *pargana* for the purpose of a settlement of the dispute. Thus under the initiative of David Scott, the Bibhagnama under Regulation X of 1822 was framed under which 21 plots were made over to the Bijni Rajain the Duars and the lands between the Bijni Raja and the Garos were divided. The Garo laskars signed some bonds in which they undertook to defend the passes against any Garo inroads.

^{xxvii}Lashkars were revenue collecting officials in Garo Hills

^{xxviii}Nokma is the village head man amongst the Garo community of Meghalaya. The Nokma and the village council was the earliest political system among the Garo people. There are five types of Nokma such as the Chalang Nokma, the Gamini Nokma, the Gana Nokma, the Miteni Nokma and the Aking Nokma. In Garo society, Nokma is generally the head and the supreme authority in his village. Maintenance of law and order and settlement of disputes within the village is performed by the Nokma.

^{xxix}Nazranamahal was a settlement under which the Garos in recognition to the suzerainty of government before the colonial conquest of hills in 1862-72 paid a nominal tribute to the zamindars. After the annexation of the hills a house tax was imposed and in 1887, the

government decided to treat it like all other lands and to assess them to full revenue. The areas under this settlement were known as Nazranamahals. The revenue amount in this area was small and in some cases they were paid to the headman as the police duties were in excess to the revenue.

^{xxxj}J C Arbuthnott, Commissioner, Surma Valley and Hill Districts, to the Chief Secretary to the Government of East Bengal and Assam, No 164, report of May 11 to 30, 1907, p 80, A S Files cited by Kumar Sanjeeva in 'State Simplification' Garo Protests in Late 19th and Early 20th Century Assam', *Economic and Political Weekly*, (July 2-8, 2005): Volume 40, No 27, pp 2941-2947).

^{xxxk}Ibid pp 2941-2947.

^{xxxll}Parimal Chandra Kar (1970): *British Annexation of Garo Hills*, Calcutta: Nababharat Publishers, pp 75-76.

^{xxxlll} George D S Dunbar (January 1915): *Notes on Certain Hill Tribes of the Indo-Tibetan Border*, Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Volume One, Part I, pp 15-16.

^{xxxllv}A Hamilton (1st published 1912, reprint 2003): *In Abor Jungles of North East India*, New Delhi, p 40.

^{xxxllvi}Gustav Mann (1874-75): *Progress Report on the Forest Administration of Assam*, Shillong: Assam Secretariat Press, p 2.

^{xxxllvii}A Hamilton (1st published 1912, reprint 2003): *In Abor Jungles of North East India*, New Delhi., p 40.

^{xxxllviii}A.C Sinha, (1988): *Beyond the Trees, Tigers and Tribes Historical Sociology of Eastern Himalayan Forests*, New Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, p 97.

^{xxxllviiii}The Inner-Line Regulation was actually created by the British as a measure for protecting the British subjects in the plains of Assam from the marauding hill tribes. The Inner Line was basically a part of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation 1873. The Inner Line Permit had its humble initiation in 1872 when it was implemented to protect the interests of rubber and elephant traders and as a security to British subjects of Cachar district of Assam and other plains districts of the region.

^{xxxllviiii}A Hamilton (1st published 1912, reprint 2003): *In Abor Jungles of North East India*, New Delhi, p 40.

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