CHAPTER II

BRITISH OCCUPATION AND ANNEXATION OF NORTH EAST INDIA.
INTRODUCTION:

North East India would have a different tale to tell but for its timely annexation by the British. The decline in the Ahom Power towards the close of the 18th century caused a political vacuum which could have been easily filled by the Burmese who had on many an occasion raided the country successfully before the British decided to beat them back. Even if the Burmese failed to realise their ambitions, it was unlikely that the Ahom Power would have been resurrected, weak and thoroughly degenerated, as it was by internal squabbles, and Wanton acts of oppression and repression. The Moamaria hordes, stirred as they were by their rude and rebellious nature and stung even more bitterly by the atrocities committed on them by the Ahom rulers regarded the latter as their mortal enemy and had neither rested nor relented until they broke the might of the once most powerful dynasty of monarchs and put its weakling heirs like Gaurinath to panic and flight. Moamarias apart, there were many other fierce hill tribes continually warring with one another and often swooping on the plains areas for loot and arson. There were also brigands of robbers from Bengal ravaging the country and reveling in pillage and plunder. Against this grim and portentous picture of North East India on the eve of the British occupation, it is reasonable to suppose that the British had but retrieved the land and the people from further anarchy and misery and restored peace and order. In a sense, they had stepped into the shoes of the great Ahom kings who had once unified the country under their banner and gave an orderly system of government.
This is not to suppose that the British had no imperial designs to reckon with. It is in the nature of every imperial system to march from success to success. Viewed in this light, the British would have liked certainly to add North East India to the rest of their Indian possessions and thereby achieve what their Moghul precursors failed to accomplish. But in fairness to the British it must be said that their annexation of North East India was not an act of naked aggrandisement; it was, on the contrary, the culmination of an involvement which they had but begun reluctantly and later found themselves unable to give up for reasons not always of their own interest or valition. They had, for instance, the entire legacy of the former Ahom kings in dealing with the frontier tribes as well as the Burmese invaders. They had also, however, the immense advantage of opening up a new vista of lucrative trade and business and a fresh source of supply of raw materials to feed in industries at home. And when the British had finally quit India in 1947, they had bequeathed to the present Indian government not merely a host of problems they had left unresolved but also a political and administrative framework by which they had largely succeeded in bringing home to the numerous tribes and ethnic groups living in the region the basic requirements of civilised living. On the other hand, Assam which has always had a leading part to play in the region emerged as a full-fledged province of the Indian Union.

Early British contacts with North East India date back to the years following East India Company's control of civil administration in Bengal since 1765. The Jaintias and Garos, the Assamese and Kacharis were
among the first Hills and Plains people of North East India to come in direct contact with the British during the closing decades of the 18th century. But it was not until the Burmese invaded Assam and posed a danger to the Bengal possessions of the British that the latter decided on a deeper involvement in the region hitherto unknown and unwanted by them. Following the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824–26 which proved a resounding victory to the British, the Burmese renounced all their claims on Assam, her dependencies and the border states of Cachar and Jaintia. This gave the British at least legally the status of being the Sovereign Authority in North East India which the Ahom rulers who preceded them enjoyed for centuries. And yet they proceeded cautiously and often reluctantly being unsure in part, of what their obligations might be in case of a deeper commitment and anxious also not to dispossess the numerous tribal principalities abounding in the region the right to order their own lives in the manner of their own customs and systems of living. They were keen, however, to tame the warring tribes to lead a more tranquil life and prevent them at any rate from pursuing such heinous practices as head-hunting, plunder and pillage of the plains areas bordering the hills in Assam and Bengal. Viewed in this light, the long tale of confrontation and consequent subjugation and annexation of vast tracts of land by the British appears to be dictated as much by the exigencies of time and situation as any other consideration the British might have had in mind. Indeed the British policy towards North East India was one of conciliation rather than retaliation or repression, corrective interference rather than coercion. Internal squabbles and
internecine warfare, corruption and gross mismanagement among the local chiefs were the principal causes which led the British finally to assert their authority and enforce their administration over the entire region. As Mackenzie puts succinctly "The policy of the Government to the tribes on its North-East Frontier has,........ been throughout in its main features a policy of conciliation and not a policy of repression or devastation. It was, indeed,........ for many years far too conciliatory to be either strong or altogether successful." Again, as he elaborates further, "........ the Government has had an active policy forced upon it uniformly against its will; and while anxious in the extreme to leave the tribes alone, if they would but consent to be let alone, it has been compelled from time to time by the mere force of events to take up questions it would have gladly overlooked, and to govern actively where it would have been content to be at peace. A strong, systematising, aggressive despotism would have found a policy and enforced it long years before the British Indian Administration could be brought to confess that a definite policy on this frontier was either necessary or desirable."**

**ANNEXATION OF ASSAM:**

Assam, so named after its people or rather after its Ahom Rulers who took pride in calling themselves 'A-Sam-a' meaning 'the peerless' or 'unequalled' was never a part of any Indian empire at any time until the British annexed it in 1859. For six long centuries before

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2. Ibid., Chapter I, p.8.
the British took possession of Assam, the Ahoms, a Shan race ruled over it autocratically and aristocratically. Rudra Singha (1696-1714), the most notable among the Ahom Sovereigns raised the Ahom Power to an unchallenged supremacy all over North East India. In about half a century since the death of Rudra Singha, however, the very foundations of the once most powerful kingdom of the Ahoms were shaken by successive Mowamaraprisings. Consequently, Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795), the most ignoble among the Ahom Princes sought the military assistance of the British who had by this time established themselves firmly in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Cornwallis sent Capt. Walsh in 1792 with a detachment which suppressed Mowamarap rebellion, humbled Krishna Narayan who had arrogated to himself the sovereignty of Darrang and restored Gaurinath Singha to supremacy. During the time of Chandra Kant Singha (1810-18) the Burmese had for the first time (1816) interfered in the internal affairs of the Ahoms at the instance of Chandra Kant himself who was at logger-heads with Purandhar, the Buragohain, though the latter was responsible for the appointment of the former as King. The Buragohain did not forgive Chandra Kant for his unpatriotic act. He deposed Chandrakant and placed Purandhar Singha on the throne. Chandrakant did not keep quiet. He again sought the help of the Burmese. The Burmese invaded Assam for a second time and restored Chandrakant to the throne. In course of time, the Burmese found the latter undependable. Therefore, they invaded Assam for a third time. Chandrakant fled to Goalpara and sought the help of the British. There was a crisis in Anglo-Burmese relations at this time owing to the pretensions of the Burmese over Chittagong, Murshidabad and Burdwan. Ultimately
the government of Ammrest declared war against the Burmese and brought the entire Brahmaputra Valley under its control. Another British Army advanced upon Prome, the capital of lower Burma and on 24 February 1826 the Treaty of Yandabo was concluded. By this Treaty, the British acquired control of the whole of Brahmaputra Valley. Thus, Assam came under the control of the British. David Scott was appointed the Commissioner of Assam. In 1833, Purandhar Singha, an aspirant to the throne of the Ahoms was placed in charge of Upper Assam while lower Assam continued to be under the direct control of the British. But Purandhar Singha defaulted in the payment of tribute to the British. Further, he was inefficient and incompetent as an administrator. Dissatisfied with Purandhar Singha, the British pensioned him off and annexed his territory (1839). Assam as a whole became a 'non-regulated' province of the Indian Empire.

Annexation of Cachar:

Cachar, like Assam came under the control of the British when the latter triumphed over the Burmese in 1826. It was, however, restored to Govinda Chandra, an old king of a native dynasty. In 1850, the king died leaving no heir to the throne. The situation encouraged his rival, Tuluram Senapati to advance his claims to be raised to the throne. But his claims were ultimately rejected by the British. In 1832 Cachar was annexed to the British territory.
ANNEXATION OF MATAK AND SADIYA:

Matak, the tract of land south of Sadiya in the extreme northeast was given to Bar Semapati, the local chief for protecting the people from the Burmese atrocities. The Bar Semapati died in 1839, nominating Manju Gohain to succeed him. The latter was unwilling to accept the conditions imposed by the British. Therefore, the Matak tract was taken over by the British in 1842.

Sadiya was entrusted to the care of the Khampti chief, Sadiya Khowa Gohain. In 1835 a dispute arose between the Sadiya and Matak chiefs in regard to a tract of land called Chukowa. The Political Agent at Sadiya directed the disputants to appear before him. But the Sadiya Khowa Gohain forcibly occupied the tract in dispute and refused to appear before the Political Agent. The British immediately abolished the post of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain and made Sadiya a part of the British territory.

In 1842 a proclamation was issued incorporating Matak and Sadiya in the Lakhimpur district of Assam.

SUBJUGATION OF THE HILL TRIBES NOW FALLING IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH:

THE AKAS:

Eastward of the Bhutias, and between the Gabbaru and the Desseroi rivers live the Akas, known among themselves as Hrusse. The Akas are divided into two distinct clans - the Hazarikhawas and the Kapachors. A British Political officer writing in 1894 observed:

"Of all the savage races on the Northern Frontier of the Assam Province,
the Akas have been most contumacious and trouble some." The British government, following the practice of their Ahom predecessors acknowledged the right of the Hazarikhawa Akas to "posa" or dues from the plains people at the foot of their hills amounting to each household providing "One portion of a female dress, one bundle of cotton thread and one cotton handkerchief." The direct collection of posa by the Akas caused great suffering to those who contributed it. There were frequent quarrels, outrages and kidnapping of women. The British granted a lump sum payment in lieu of the posa and thereby brought the Akas under some control.

The Kapachoris were rallied under their leader, the Taghi Raja who defied the British authority for a long time. Between 1832 and 1842 when he finally surrendered, he perpetrated several heinous acts of murder and arson on civilians and officials alike. In 1842 the Government contemplated an expedition into the hills. Taghi Raja surrendered. An agreement was signed with the Akas under which the latter were to receive an annual payment of Rs.360 as stipend for peaceful conduct. The Akas took an oath "on the skins of a tiger and bear, on elephant's dung, and by killing a fowl" that they would never defy the British authority. Practically they gave no trouble afterwards.

5. Ibid., p.25.
The Daflas who call themselves 'Bangni' meaning simply 'men' are spread over the hills bordering the districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur in Assam. They are not so much a single homogeneous tribe as a horde of petty clans independent of each other and generally incapable of combined action. But there was an understanding among themselves not to interfere with each other in the collection of 'posa'. Each clan knew the village it had to look for 'posa'. Posa was not a petty dues for the Daflas as it was for the Akas. The Daflas claimed by way of 'posa' "from every ten houses, one double cloth, one single cloth, one handkerchief, one dao, ten head of horned cattle, and four seers of salt." And this was exacted whether the villagers were in a position to pay or not. The British tried several times to persuade them to give up the right to collect 'posa' directly from the ryots but of no avail. The British forbade them to collect 'posa' directly. They retaliated, raided the Plains and even abducted some British subjects (1835). Consequently an expedition was sent against them and they were punished. Gradually, they came to terms with the Government and renounced their right of 'posa' in exchange for an annual stipend. Some of them gave trouble even afterwards. By 1874-75, however, they had settled down and gave no further trouble.

6. Ibid., Chapter V, p.27.
THE KIRIS AND THE ABORS:

To the north-east of the Daffas live the Miris and the Abors. The latter call themselves 'Padam'. The Miris are found both in the plains and in the lower hills along the north bank of Brahmaputra from the Simi area of Lakhimpur to the Dihang river. The Abors live further east in the hills between the Dihang and the Dibang, the Bar (great) Abors occupying interior ranges at high altitudes. While the Miris became sober by the circumstance of their living close to the plains, the Abors retained much of their pristine savagery and hardihood. The latter, in fact, claimed complete overlordship over the former. They (The Abors) also asserted their authority over all the fishermen and gold washers who came to the Dihang.

The Miris, belonging to the same tribal stock as their mountain brethren and speaking the same dialect acted as the channel of communication (their name in Assamese implies "ago-between") between the plains authorities and the warlike Abors.

The Abors remained friendly with the British government for as long as the latter respected the rights of the former. The rub, however, came in 1847. The Abors kidnapped a few gold washers. The Government sent Capt. Vetch with a small force to rescue them. The Abors made a night attack on Capt. Vetch and his camp. The latter retaliated and burnt down a village as punishment. Eversince the Abors assumed a hostile attitude towards the British government and began attacking the latter's domains whenever they could. In 1858 they destroyed a gold washers'

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village only six miles away from Dibrugarh town. A succession of two punitive expeditions sent to subdue the Abors proved a failure. A third and a stronger expedition was launched in 1859 and this time the Abors were driven back and a number of their villages were burnt. Consequently a section of the hostiles came to terms; but another section was again on the war-path in the following year. The Government had no alternative but to deal with the Abor menace more firmly. They began making elaborate preparations including the construction of a road along the frontier and creation of a series of outposts. The offenders, on seeing the preparations submitted. During the next few years, agreements were concluded with a number of Abor clans by which the latter were promised allowances in kind for guarantee of good behaviour on their part. Peace prevailed for a number of years to follow.

In 1889, a section of the Abors went back on their guarantee for good behaviour by resorting to the murder of a few Miris whom they decoyed. The Government imposed a fine on the erring tribe and got the frontier blockaded until it was paid. In a few years, the Government was obliged once again to resort to a long blockade of the Abor frontier following a gross recrudescence of violence on the part of the Bar Abors. In 1900 the Abors made a general submission. But it was not until 1911 when the Abors made another treacherous attack on a party of British officials and the Government meted out the challenge by severe reprisals that these highlanders could be brought under control.
THE MISHMIS:

Beyond the Abors in the country between the Dibong and Brahmakund inhabit the various tribes of the Mishmis. The British would have let them alone but for an unhappy incident in 1854 which had in turn triggered off a few others. In that year, a French missionary and his associate were murdered by a Mishmi chief when the former undertook a journey through the territory of the latter. Government sent Lieutenant Eden with a small force to capture the offending chief. It was a brilliant feat of arms for Lt. Eden to locate the offending village and capture its chief. In the years to follow, the Mishmis rallied to make more frequent raids. In 1866, the British government raised a local militia among the neighbouring Khamptis and persuaded a section of them to settle on the frontier of the Mishmis. This proved successful in containing the Mishmis for a time. In 1889 the Mishmis resumed hostilities by killing a few Khamptis whom they captured. Once again, the government had to despatch a force to punish the guilty and this done, the Mishmis gave no further trouble. The authorities, however, abstained from direct management of the Mishmi affairs for that would bring them in contact with tribes still wilder than the Mishmis.

THE KHAMPTIS:

As already noted, with the annexation of Sadiya in 1842 the Khamptis who lived there came directly under British rule. The Government had, however, left them untaxed and free to manage their private affairs. But the many Assamese whom the Khamptis kept as slaves led the Khamptis
to suspect the designs of the government. For, although they assisted the latter in the operations against the Singphos, they were soon found in a state of simmering discontent. In 1839 they made a night attack on the British garrison at Sadiya and killed the Political Agent and a few others. When the government sent forces to punish the rebels, the latter sought refuge amongst the Mishmis. They were, however, hotly pursued.

The last of the rebels made his submission in 1845. Some of them were deported to the western part of Sadiya, while others were made to settle above Sadiya town so that they formed a screen between the Assamese and the Mishmis.

THE SINGPHOS:

The Singphos who lived along the Patkai ranges and who had close racial affinities with Burmese made a common cause with the latter to attack the British in 1825. Captain Neuville who led the British troops made a series of heroic thrusts by which the Burmese were repelled back and their Singpho allies reduced to submission. In the process, the gallant captain had also succeeded in restoring a few thousands of Assamese captives to freedom.

Not quite reconciled to the loss of their slaves whom the British freed as a matter of their general policy, the Singphos perpetrated a series of uprisings the last of which took place in 1843. In this the Singphos were joined by the Shans and Burmese across the border. The government lost no time in marching troops against the rebels. The operation dragged for months but in the end it resulted in the capture
of the rebel chiefs and complete submission of the Singphos as a whole. Since then, the latter gave no further trouble.

ANNEXATION OF THE NAGA HILLS:

The word 'Naga' refers to an agglomeration of many war-like tribes inhabiting the region of the rugged mountains running more or less in line with the great Patkoi and Barail ranges and overlooking the Brahmaputra Valley all along its western confines. Throughout their history, the Nagas were known to be jealously conscious of their independence and passionately attached to their war-like habits. The Ahoms had never quite attempted to subjugate the Naga tribes, much less annex their territory. The British, even more than their Ahom predecessors, had desired to leave the Nagas alone and in fact, they did leave them alone for a long time. Ultimately, however, they realised that the policy of non-interference served neither their interest nor that of the Nagas themselves. If at all, it had encouraged the more contumacious sections to continue their acts of cupidity, while the more amenable and less hostile sections remained unrewarded. In the end, therefore, the British were led to assume the more direct responsibility of effective political policing, if not active administration of the entire Naga territory.

Of all the Nagas with whom the British came in contact, the Nagas of the Patkoi mountains appeared to be the least troublesome. In fact, when the British first encountered the Patkoi Nagas consequent on one of their raids in 1857, the latter were actually found to be lorded by the Singphos who often took a large number of these helpless Nagas
captive. For a time the British authorities entertained the idea of protecting the Patkoi Magas from Singpho atrocities by creating a post under a European officer. But the idea was since given up as inexpedient.

The Boree Magas occupying the low hills to the south of the Sibsagar district of Assam were the next to come in direct contact with the British. In 1841 Capt. Brodie, was sent to deal with a section of the Boree Magas when the latter attacked a party of Assamese travellers. Capt. Brodie who had on two later occasions undertook an extensive tour of the territory of the Boree Magas found them to be organised in two distinct groups of clans, eastern and western. The eastern clans about ten in number were more powerfully organised under their chiefs than the western clans numbering about six. But all the Boree clans maintained regular contact with the plains through their accustomed duars or passes. Many of them were engaged in the manufacture of salt which they retailed in the plains markets nearest to their passes. Brodie took undertakings from the chiefs of the major clans whereby they agreed to keep peace with each other and abstain from outrages on the people of the plains. The undertakings had the salutary effect of keeping peace for some time. They did not, however, prevent the subordinate clans from resuming the raids shortly afterwards. Reports of such raids came to the notice of the government almost every year and at times the government was at a loss to know what it should do about. Finally its officers were advised not to visit the hills nor keep any intercourse with the hillmen. The

8. Mackenzie, A., "History of the Relations, etc., p.31. Mackenzie distinguishes the 'Boree' or dependent from 'Abor' or independent but he considers the former to be in fact more powerful than the latter.
civilising mission was given up. Non-interference became the rule. Orders were, however issued that in case any clan or community committed a raid on the plains, its accustomed dwarf or pass through which it entered the plains should be completely closed till the erring party came up for submission. The effect of closing the passes was quite obvious. The Nagas in this sector lived as much on cultivation as on commerce with the plains. Therefore, the erring clan had either to accept the challenge or admit guilt. More often than not, the latter course was adopted what was more, since the closure of a pass affected the guilty as well as the innocent among the clans, the latter did everything they could to trace the culprits and make them to surrender. This way the fury of the fierce Nagas was contained, if not altogether eliminated. Raids became less frequent. But sometimes there was a setback in the situation. Once such instance occurred in 1875 when a survey party led by Lieutenant Holcombe, Assistant Commissioner of Jeypur and Captain Badgeley was treacherously attacked at Minu, a Naga village four days' march from the plains. Lt. Holcombe and eighty men of the party were butchered. Government had on this occasion, as on other occasions of such a serious nature to send an expedition to hunt for the culprits until they surrendered.

From 1876 onwards the Nagas gave no trouble to the British directly. There were reports of fights and feuds among themselves. But by and large, they desisted from carrying these to the plains. On the other hand, the less warring sections including the Lhota Nagas showed a greater inclination for peaceful commerce with the plains.
While opening communications between Assam and Manipur, the British came in contact with the Kacha Nagas and Angami Nagas. Of all the Nagas with whom the British encountered, the Angamis were by far the most turbulent and least amenable to control. And of all the Naga chiefs, those of Mosemah and Kenemah were the most contumacious. In the beginning, the British government being unsure of what their policy should be and certainly unprepared to take over the Naga country directly by itself depended upon the Rajas of Manipur and Caohar to control such of the refractory Nagas who raided the villages within their borders. It came to be supposed generally that Manipur exercised some sort of authority over the Naga Hills and that Manipuris were the de facto masters of the same. But neither Tuluram, the Caohari chief, nor Gambhir Singh, the king of Manipur was in a position to check the Naga atrocities. The former was too weak to take up the responsibility while the latter was too aggressive to achieve any real submission on the part of the Nagas. The arrangement having thus failed, the British government experimented with a policy of repression in regard to all those Naga clans which were disposed to rebellious conduct. Accordingly between the years 1855 and 1851 ten military expeditions were led into the Naga Hills. And every successful expedition was taken advantage of to obtain oaths and undertakings from the hostiles that they would keep peace with each other and also with the British subjects, refer all their disputes to the British authorities and pay an annual tribute as a token of allegiance to the British government who would in turn redress their grievances, prefect

them from aggression and promote their welfare. But soon enough the Nagas forgot all their oaths and allegiances, returned to their old ways, and recommenced their marauding raids. Repression had but made them even more refractory; while conciliation was often interpreted as a concealment of weakness.

Baffled by the attitude of unrebutting hostility on the part of the Angami Nagas, the British decided to withdraw from the Hills and abstain from any kind of intervention in the affairs of the Nagas. The Governor-General, Lord Dalhousie was by now thoroughly convinced that it was in the best interests of the British to hold on to their own territory, protect it as it must be protected and to keep clear of the Naga Hills and not to meddle with the feuds and fights of the inhabitants therein.10

Thus the policy of non-intervention or what may be called political laissez faire gained ground and held on for the next fifteen years or so. Accordingly, the positions which were hitherto obtained in the Hills were abandoned. For instance, Dimapur was abandoned and Borphazar in the plains became the most forward post. In the very first year of the inauguration of this policy (1851), the Nagas appeared to have celebrated it by making no fewer than twenty-two raids in which a total of 178 persons were either killed, wounded or taken captive. Raids were repeated year after year. But the government would not sanction any action. At one time North Cachar which became a scene of many bloody

raids was proposed to be given up by the local officers as the supreme government permitted no punitive action and persisted in its policy of non-intervention. Indeed, the situation became so awkward to the local officers that the commissioner was constrained to report (1862) that the policy of non-intervention, though sound in theory was unworkable in practice. Sir Cecil Beadon who had just then took over as the Lieutenant Governor agreed with the commissioner and recommended to the supreme government "that the only course left us........., is to reassert our own authority over them (the Angami Nagas) and bring them under a system of administration suited to their circumstances, and gradually to re-claim them from habits of lawlessness to those of order and civilization."

The Government was slowly being persuaded to adopt a bolder and a more forward policy. The suggestion of Beadon to establish a strong central station in the Naga Hills and thereby open up friendly communication with the Nagas was approved. Samuguting was found suitable for the purpose and it was accordingly occupied in 1866. Some sort of regulatory administration was introduced. Those of the Nagas who chose to recommence the raids were severely punished, often their villages raged to the ground. Whenever peace prevailed survey parties and civilising missions were resumed. In 1874, the Naga Hills were made over to the charge of the newly appointed chief commissioner of Assam. In 1875 the land of the Lhota Nagas who on several occasions had attacked the British Survey parties was annexed and an officer was posted at Wokha.

12. Judicial Proceedings, June 1866, Nos. 135-34, as quoted by Mackenzie, A., "History of the Relations, etc."
In 1877 the question of future policy with reference to the Naga Hills and Naga tribes as a whole was again discussed. The Government of India was of the opinion that sooner or later the entire Naga country should be brought under control and as a necessary step in that direction a post should be established well inside the Hills. The Secretary of State agreed with the views of the Government of India and finally approved of a forward policy. In 1878 Kohima was occupied and made headquarters. From Kohima, it became easy to overrun the Konemah village which had earlier defied all attempts at subjugation. The defeat of Konemah "marked the end of serious trouble and hostility in the Naga Hills." In 1881 the Naga Hills District was formed. And from then onwards, as summed up by Sir Robert Reid, "...the process of penetration went on, inexorably if irregularly." In the next four decades or so the whole of the Naga country between Assam and Burma came under the control of the British.

ANNEXATION OF NORTH CACHAR HILLS:

In between the districts of Nowgong in the North, Khasi and Jaintia Hills in the East and Cachar proper in the south is a tract of hilly country known as North Cachar Hills. A great portion of it belonged to Tuluram Senapati. The tribes of Cachar and Kutcha Nagas living in the eastern part of North Cachar were harassed by the Angami Nagas. To protect the former against the depredations of the latter, the British

annexed North Cachar in 1839 and made it over to the Nowgong district. In 1852 North Cachar was placed in the charge of a separate officer specially responsible for protecting it against the Angami raids. In 1844, Tuluram made over the territory under his charge to his son but it was soon evident that the Senapati family was torn by debt and discord and was quite unequal to the task of administration and unable to control the Angami raids. In 1854, the territory was finally taken over by the British and the five surviving members of the Senapati family were pensioned off. In 1867, when the Naga Hills district was formed, North Cachar was parcelled out between the districts of Nowgong, Cachar and the Naga Hills. In 1880 the North Cachar sub-division was reestablished and placed in charge of a junior police officer.

ANNEXATION OF THE GARO HILLS:

The Garo Hills run contiguous with the Khasi Hills and are at present a part of the state of Meghalaya.

The Garos were among the first hillmen in North East India to be encountered by the British. Frequent raids by the Garos struck terror in the minds of the people of the adjoining plains districts of Golconda and Mymensing. In 1816 the Garos pounced on the estate of a Zamindar and burnt his residence. The British government deputed David Scott, then Commissioner of Cooch Behar to enquire into the incident. Scott reported that Karibari, the scene of attack, was one of four Zamindaries exercising control over Garo Hills and that the Zamindars who treated the Garos under their charge as little better than serfs and slaves were
mountain villages. With this end in view, each village or a group of 
villages was entrusted to a Zimmadar who for an annual stipend to be 
given to him by the government would be responsible for arrest of offen­
ders within his jurisdiction. The tribal chiefs agreed to abide by this 
decision. This arrangement was, however, confined to the Garos on the 
Goalpara side. Those on the Mymensing side were expected to be controlled 
by the Zamindars. But the Garos treated the latter as worse than the 
British and would not hold peace. In 1866 it became imperative on the 
part of the Lt. Governor of Bengal to urge the Government of India to 
sanction certain bold measures. The Government of India had finally 
agreed to the adoption of a forward policy. Accordingly, Garo Hills were 
formed into a new district in 1869 and a special officer was appointed to 
take charge of the same. Between 1871 and 1872 trouble arose from some 
remote villages when survey parties were underway. It was soon put down 
with the help of a police party. Henceforward, the new administration 
concentrated on reclaiming all the villages, the nearer as well as the 
more remote and thus the process of annexation of the Garo Hills was 
carried to its logical end.

ANNEXATION OF THE KHASI AND JAINTIA HILLS :

East ward of the Garo Hills and running contiguous with them 
are the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Soon after the annexation of Assam by 
the British, the latter felt the need for penetrating through the Khasi

and Jaintia Hills in order to establish direct communication between Assam and the southern provinces of Sylhet and Cachar. But since the proposition involved the Khasi territory over which no European had ever set foot so far, the British sought to achieve it with the consent and cooperation of the inhabitants thereof and not otherwise. Accordingly negotiations were held with the Khasi chiefs and the latter at a meeting at which David Scott, then Agent of the Governor General, was present on invitation agreed to the British proposal for constructing a road across their territory and even promised assistance in bringing it to a successful completion. The task was put on hand in right earnest in 1828 and for eighteen months to follow it progressed with apparent cordiality between the hillmen and the British authorities. Early in 1829, upon a petty quarrel between a Bengali peon of the British party and the local people during which the former threatened the latter with wholesale subjugation at the hands of the British, the Khasis got alarmed. With doubt and suspicion rankling in their hearts, the tribesmen conspired and attacked the British survey party. Two officers and fifty of their followers were brutally murdered. In retaliation, the British sent and the hillmen put a stout, though desultory, resistance. There ensued a series of attacks and counter attack. In the end, however, the chiefs surrendered one after another. In 1833 Tirat Singh, the ring leader made his submission and a general pacification followed almost immediately.

The chiefs were allowed to retain a large measure of independence subject,

17. Pemberton's Report, sub-sections 2 and 3 of section 2, as quoted by Mackenzie, A., "History of the Relations, etc." p. 221.
however, to the general control of a Political Agent who was henceforth stationed in the hills and made responsible for keeping peace. Captain Lister was appointed as the first Political Agent and he held the office successfully for twenty years to follow. Thus the Khasi Hills came under the control of the British.

Unlike the Khasis, the Jaintias were organised under a monarch who remained independent except for occasional allegiance to the Ahom Sovereigns. British contact with the Jaintias date back to the year 1774 when an expedition under Major Henniker was led into the Jaintia Hills apparently with a view to chastising the hillmen who often raided the villages in Sylhet and caused great suffering and privation to the people. But the incident remained more or less a forgotten episode as there is no evidence of any further contacts between the Jaintias and the British during the next half a century or so.

In 1824 following the Burmese threat to the Bengal possessions of the British, the latter felt the need for entering into a treaty of alliance with Ram Singh, the Raja of Jaintia mainly to prevent him from playing into the hands of the enemy. Accordingly, David Scott, then Agent of the Governor-General addressed a letter to the Jaintia Raja and the latter after some procrastination agreed to the British offer of alliance. Under a formal treaty concluded thereafter, the Jaintia chief acknowledged the supremacy of the British, agreed to abstain from all independent negotiation with any foreign power and even promised to aid

18. Ibid., p. 225.
the British in their operations against the Burmese. But as the later events would show, the Jaintia Raja had not only failed to keep his promises but had actually worked against the British. After the Burmese exit, he tried to occupy parts of Assam and when the British ordered him to vacate a post he established, he treated the latter with indifference. In 1832 one of his vassals, the chief of Goba captured four British subjects and succeeded in sacrificing all but one of them to Goddess Kali. The one who escaped reported about the way the dastardly crime was effected. Finding that the Raja had complicity in his vassal's crime, the British demanded the culprits to be delivered by the former. The same indifference which was shown earlier was maintained on this occasion also. Meanwhile Ram Singh died. His successor, Rajendra Singh was found to be equally obdurate. The culprits were not handed over to the British. The latter had, therefore, decided to dispossess the Raja of his territory. In 1835 by means of two successive operations Jaintiapur and Goba were occupied. Goba was annexed and added to Nowgong. When offered to be reinstated in the Hill region, the Raja refused. Thereupon, he was pensioned off. By proclamation, the whole of the Jaintia kingdom was annexed to the British territory.

ANNEXATION OF THE LUSHAI (MIZO) HILLS:

The Lushai (Mizo) Hills will be seen projecting in a tongue shaped manner from Cachar in the North upto the international boundaries with Bangladesh in the west and Burma in the East and south.

20. Ibid., p. 218.
21. During the period under reference, the Bengal possessions of the East India Company.
The Lushai Hills had been the abode of the Lushais and a number of allied tribes including the Kukis. These tribes were perpetually at war with each other. They also perpetrated raids on almost all the areas in the neighbourhood including the plains of Cachar and Sylhet, Tripura state and Chittagong, Naga Hills and Manipur.

The Lushais or rather their Kuki brethren came to the notice of the British in 1826 when the former swooped on a party of Sylhet wood-cutters, slew their heads and made off with those 'prized' possessions. For a long time since then, the Lushais abstained from giving trouble to the British directly. In 1849, however, they committed a series of outrages against the British. They attacked a party of wood-cutters, cut up a village from all communication and plundered another. The British decided on reprisals being taken against the recalcitrant group of offenders. A punitive expedition under colonel Lister was sent in 1850. The enterprising Colonel located the village from where the raids had taken place and burnt it completely. The operation was so successful that for a number of years to follow, the Lushais were held in check. Colonel Lister reported that while the Lushais were given to understand that they could no longer escape from their raids with impunity, they were far from being humbled. He, therefore, suggested stricter military measures to control the marauding raiders. The government, however, chose to abstain from any extended measure of operation "unless further outrage rendered this necessary." Meanwhile, negotia-

tions were set on foot with those Lushai chiefs who had either come to submit or had chosen to be friendly but their number was small and what was worse, they were not always trustworthy. From 1862 onwards reports of fresh outrages came to the notice of the British but the latter went on evading action until their own subjects were directly affected. An occasion of this kind arose in 1868 when the Lushais directed their fury on a couple of tea gardens in Gachar and in fact, burnt one of them. An expedition was sent the following year with the purpose of pursuing the marauders until they had all submitted and surrendered those whom they had taken captive. The expedition failed to realise the object in view. Suggesting a fresh expedition, the Lieutenant Governor laid down further that it should consist of "a force strong enough to overcome all opposition" and that it should also remain in the Hills "long enough to show that it could go where it pleased and until the chiefs were brought to see that their interests lay in keeping the peace." Further when the last of the rebels made his submission, "the question of permanently locating an officer to have charge of the tract as in the Naga and Garo Hills should..... be taken up and considered". However, the government of India persisted in their objection to any kind of active military operations against the Lushais. The earlier policy of negotiation and gradual reclamation of the recalcitrant tribes to the ways of order and civilisation was resumed. But the Lushais had once again shown themselves

to be as rebellions as ever and recommenced their raids all along the frontier. It became clear that if the government wanted to put an end to the raids permanently, they must pursue military operations more vigorously than ever before. An expedition led in 1871-72 succeeded in bringing all the rebels to be booked and restoring peace along the Assam frontier. By another expedition in 1889, the rebels on the Chittagong frontier were silenced. To stabilise the peace so dearly achieved, strong military outposts were established at Aijal and Changsil in the northern portion of the Hills and at Lungleh in the southern portion. Political officers were also posted at Aijal and Lungleh. For a time peace seemed to return permanently. But all on a sudden a section of the Lushais revolted and massacred the Political officer at Aijal. Troops had to be called to suppress the rebellion. In 1892 when the Eastern Lushais staged an insurrection, it had to be similarly put down. Since then the Lushais offered no further resistance and began settling down as peaceful and law-abiding British subjects.

ANNEXATION OF THE MIKIR HILLS:

The Mikirs were the mildest of all the Hill tribes. Though close to the plains of Assam, the Mikirs kept themselves aloof in the jungles. The Mikirs owed allegiance to the Ahom kings who appointed their chiefs and took tribute from the latter in cotton mats valued at 1 s. 300. In 1838 the British took steps to bring the Mikir's under revenue settlement.
CONCLUSION:

The story of the British entry into and eventual annexation of North East India is as exciting as it is unique. It is at once thrilling and tantalising. Sometimes, it proceeds on a smooth and soft course; but most of the time, it goes through a rough and tempestuous weather and runs along a risky course. The multifarious threads in the story make it a web of the most complex and confounding kind. The men who enacted the story were often the best and the most enterprising among the soldiers and civil servants of the British. The efforts they made were tremendous. And if they were crowned with many a signal achievement, they had also to experience a series of setbacks which cost not a few of their lives.

With the decline and decay besetting the Ahom Power and the departure of the Burmese, it was easy enough for the British to annex the plain areas, but it became far more difficult to control the hill areas adjoining the plains. Difficult though it was, it became necessary and imperative to control the hill areas, for the peace of the Plains was invariably linked up with the peace of the Hills. The Hills of the North East India have been by peculiar circumstance, the abode of the world's richest variety of tribes and ethnic groups. Some of these are also among the fiercest known tribes in the world. To deal with them without quite disturbing their age old beliefs, customs and systems of living and yet to deter them from such deleterious practices as plunder and pillage, head-hunting and human sacrifice was one of the most perplexing problems the British had ever faced.
For nearly half a century since the British found themselves embroiled in the affairs of the North East frontier tribes, they chose to be non-interventionist. But they did not remain a passive witness to the plunder and pillage, murder and privation suffered by the people of the plains at the hands of the marauding tribes. Many an expedient was tried with a view to containing the turbulent tribes to the regions of their own habitation. The right to 'posa' claimed by such tribes as the Akas and the Dafias was recognised. Compensation was paid in lieu of tribute. Agreements were entered into with those tribal chiefs who were disposed to peaceful conduct. But none of these conciliatory measures could bring the tribes to give up their marauding raids, much less convince them to keep peace with each other. Punitive measures like the blockade of the 'duars' or passes used by the tribes to trade with the plains and expeditions of a limited kind became, therefore, necessary. But even these had failed to deter the turbulent tribes from crying a halt to their depredations. The Nagas, Garos and Lushais were found to be more contumacious than most other tribes. Nothing short of conquest and subjugation could bring them to submit to peaceful conduct. Time and again, the local officers who witnessed the fierce tribes turn more ferocious by the fastness of their hills tried to persuade the government to give up its policy of non-interference and adopt a more forward policy of active control of the hill areas. But the government was unwilling to revise its policy being partly undecided about its future obligations to the tribal areas and being also unprepared to bear the expenses involved in the operations of a more extensive kind. Meanwhile, the refractory
tribes were ever rejoicing in their raids. Matters came to such a pass that insistence on non-interference appeared increasingly as an indirect admission of defeat. Thus the policy of non-interference failed. As Mackenzie puts it succinctly: "It failed as a policy—signally failed. Fate seems determined to prove that there shall be no rest for the English in India till they stand forth as governors or advisers of each tribe and people in the land."27

With the imperialist Disraeli coming to power in England, the advocacy of a forward policy with regard to the hill tribes of North East India gathered momentum. Non-interference was finally abandoned. Active penetration and establishment of strong military and civil outposts inside the Hills became the rule. Any tendency towards the repetition of raids on the part of one or more of the tribes was met with hot pursuit of the rebels until they had either surrendered or had been subdued. Eventually, one hill tract after another came under the control of the British. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, most of the Hill tribes became used to British rule and began settling down. Pax Britannica became a Providential decree.