

CHAPTER: I

INTRODUCTION

Assam and Bhutan had long-established regular trade relations through the passes popularly known by the appellation “*Duars*”. Bhutan's hilly terrain had limited the production of essential commodities. As a result, Bhutan, which shares a border with Assam, was forced to rely on Assam's produce. The Ahom monarchs with respect to expediting trade relations with Bhutan established an organised market system. This includes trade fairs, including a few weekly and daily markets in various regions of their kingdom.¹ People from the surrounding villages, including the Bhutias, came down to the trade fairs and village markets at regular intervals especially in the winter season to buy their necessities. Livestock, earthen pots, ginger, small knives and ploughshare mustard seed, black pepper, earthen pots and vessels among many others were the common items in these trade fairs and markets. These trade relations between Assam and Bhutan were interrupted during the Burmese invasion of Assam. However, the establishment of the British regime in Assam in 1826 instilled a new life in the trade relations and continued until the withdrawal of the British from Assam. The term “*frontier trade*” has been applied to address the trade relations of the Ahoms beyond the jurisdiction of their kingdom with the neighbouring Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan.

The term ‘*Frontier*’ is a word with manifold meanings, albeit, of its usage, there was no proper definition for the term frontier until the late nineteenth century, but with the dawn of the twentieth-century various contrasting inexact definitions came to be employed to explain the term frontier.² According to Malcolm Anderson, a frontier is an area adjacent to an international boundary.³ Whilst, Mark Cronlund Anderson defines the term ‘*frontier*’ as “*instilled and bounded by special meanings, central among them....a line dividing savagery.....from civilization*”.⁴ On the term ‘*trade*,’ Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries defines ‘*trade as a process or an activity which involves buying, selling or exchanging (bartering) of commodities within a country or beyond the country*’.⁵ Niels Steensgaard defines that ‘*the trade is not a historical constant, but a complicated social act that arose out of the necessity*

of the people'.⁶ An inherent occurrence of trade relations between the peripheral lands of neighbouring countries may be defined as frontier trade.

Assam is geographically situated between 89°86' and 98°E longitudes and 28° and 24°N latitudes⁷ is one of the states of North-East India. On the North-western part of Assam bordering Bhutan constitute a region or an area called Duars. The Duars is an appellation meaning 'gateway'. The Duars had been an influencing factor for ages in the determination of trade relations between Assam and Bhutan. Geographically, the Duars are sandwiched tracts of land between Bhutan and the Assam plains⁸ with an average breadth of 30 kilometres and a length of 350 kilometres in Assam and West Bengal.⁹ John Butler defines 'the Dooars or Duars are tracts of land leading into Bootan (Bhutan) mountains'.¹⁰ The Duars served as a path for the entry of the Bhutias into the plains of Assam. The Dooars or Duars are eighteen in number eleven of them being located on the frontier of the Rungpore district and Cooch Behar territory in Bengal, between the rivers Teesta and the Monass (Manas)¹¹ whilst Assam Duars were situated between the rivers Monass and the Dhunseere (Dhansiri).¹²

The seven Duars of Assam commonly known as Assam Duars are

- (1) Bijni
- (2) Chapkahamar
- (3) Chappaguri
- (4) Banska
- (5) Shurkolla
- (6) Kalling and
- (7) Boree Goomah.¹³

Among these Seven Duars- Bijni, Chappakhamar, Chappaguri, Banska and Ghaukolla were located in Kamrup and the Kalling and Booreeguma Duar were located in the Durrung (Darrang).¹⁴ These Duars elongated from the Dhansiri River in the east to the Tista River on the west about 220 miles¹⁵ and are altogether known by the appellation 'Assam Duars'.¹⁶ The river Barnadi in the east and the Manas river in the west are the limits of Kamrup Duars while the river Dhansiri in the east and the river Barnadi in the west are the limits of Darrang

Duars.¹⁷ The Bhutanese maintained contact with the northern plains of Assam via Assam Duars.¹⁸ Assam Duars served as an essential route for maintaining trade relations with Bhutan. Except for Koriapar Duar, which was located in the Darrang district and was under the suzerainty of the Sat Rajas, who were supervised directly by the Towang Raja, a tributary to the Tibetan government at Lhasa.¹⁹ Assam Duars is also popularly known by the appellation Kachari Duars²⁰ because these paths leading to the plains of Assam are inhabited by the Bodo-Kachari people. This is obvious from William Hunter's "A *Statistical Account of Assam*" in which he affirmed that the Meches are the major class or caste inhabiting the tracts of Assam Duars.²¹

1.1 History of Assam Duars

The history of the Duars is shrouded in mystery, as the region was ruled by many dynasties and rulers at various periods of time. Historically, the region popularly known as Duars was part of the kingdom of Pragjyotishpur and in the later period, this Duars formed a part of the kingdom of Kamrupa.²² The Ahoms, an offshoot of the great Shan stock of South-East Asia, ruled over the Brahmaputra valley during the pre-colonial period.²³ In the early thirteenth century, the Ahoms arrived in the Brahmaputra valley, led by Siu-Ka-Pha, a cousin of Mong Mao's ruler and a prince of the Mong-Ri Mong-Ram royal family, a Tai state in Southern China.²⁴ Over time, under Siu-Ka-Pha the Ahom kingdom encompassed the entire Brahmaputra valley, stretching from the Pai-kai foothills on the east to the river Manaha and the Nagarbera hills on the west, and from the northern hill ranges on the north to the foothills of the Naga Hills on the south.²⁵ The Bhuyans ruled the north bank of the Brahmaputra at the time the Ahoms arrived in Assam.²⁶ According to legend, Dhurlab Narayan, the Raja of Kamatapur, waged a war against Dharma Narayan, the King of Gour, and overpowered him. Dharma Narayan sent seven Brahmin and Kayastha families to Dhurlab Narayan after they signed a peace treaty, and Dhurlab Narayan appointed them as wardens of the frontiers and provided them with both land and slaves.²⁷

During his reign, Biswa Singha (1515-40) was successful in subduing the regional chiefs and occupied the area between river Sankosh and Barnadi and established the Koch dominion over the Duar regions. As a consequence, Biswa Singha could wield considerable influence over Bhutan. Moreover, the Bhutias had to pay a tribute to the Koch government in order to maintain regular trade with the plains via the Duars.²⁸ But during the reign of Naranarayan, the kingdom was bifurcated into two halves and the Sankosh river was fixed as

the boundary.²⁹ Raghudeb, son of Koch Hajo ruler Silarai, ruled over the region between Sonkosh and Bharali, while Naranarayan ruled the territory and passes on the west side of the Sonkosh river.³⁰ As a consequence of this, the Bhutias had to pay a tribute to both of the Koch rulers. The Bhutias took the advantage of the differences between the Koch rulers and drove the Koch to their southern boundary. The episode that brought the Ahoms close to the Bhutan frontier was the Mughal invasion of 1612 in which the Koch king Parikshit Narayan, lost his kingdom as far as the Bharali river but his brother Bali Narayan managed to escape to take refuge under the Ahom King Pratap Singha.³¹ The Ahom king Pratap Singha in the year 1616 defeated the Mughals on the banks of the Bhareli and installed Bali Narayan at the Darrang as the tributary king with the title '*Dharma Narayan*'.³² Moreover, in the middle of the 17th century taking advantage of the state of affairs of Ahom–Mughal friction, the Bhutias attempted to conquer the entire fertile plains south of their hills, all the way to Gohain Kamal Ali.³³

The reign of Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-1663 AD) witnessed the control of the Darrang Duars transferred to the Bhutias as far as Gohain Kamal Ali in view of an annual tribute.³⁴ The Ahom king delegated to the Raja of Darrang the responsibility of collecting tribute and managing transactions with the Bhutias.³⁵ Besides, it was agreed that the Darrang Duars would be surrendered to the Ahoms for four months each year from Ashar to Aswin (July to November) in accordance with the terms of the agreement.³⁶ However, until then Kamrup was not under the jurisdiction of the Ahoms, and several wars were fought between the Mughals and Ahoms for control of the Kamrup. However, in 1639 A.D., the signing of the treaty between the Ahom general (Momai Tamuli Barbarua) and the Mughal Commander (Allah Yar Khan) fixed the boundary between Ahom and Mughal territories at Barnadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and Asurar Ali on the south bank of the Brahmaputra near Guwahati. Since then, the Mughals. In 1658-59, the Ahom King Jayadhvaj Singha expelled the Mughals from Kamrup. But in 1662, the Mughals recaptured Kamrup because the brief Ahom occupation prevented the Ahoms from paying attention to the Kamrup Duars.³⁷ Subsequently, the Manas River became the permanent boundary between the Ahom and the Mughal territories after 1681 A.D.³⁸

When the Ahoms reclaimed Kamrup, they discovered the Bhutias in control of the Kamrup Duars and the plain districts all the way to Gohain Kamal Ali. However, the Bhutias were never able to take complete control over Assam Duars of Kamrup and Darrang as they had of those of Bengal, but they harassed the Ahom Princes with border outrages and

incursions to the point that the Assamese were obliged to buy security by handing over the seven Duars to the Bhutaneses in exchange for an annual payment.³⁹ In exchange, the Bhutias furnished the Ahoms 2400 rupees in cash along with 24 tolas of gold dust, 24 pieces of musk, 24 cow tails, 24 daggers, and 24 blankets. The value of which was estimated to be worth 4785-1 Narayani rupees.⁴⁰ The Kamrup Duars remained permanently under Bhutanese control as long as the tribute was paid.⁴¹ However, the agreement proved to be a source of constant disputation between both governments. Furthermore, the Bhutias were not consistent in paying the tribute, and the Ahom government was too weak to compel the Bhutias to pay tribute.

The Ahom King Gadhadhar Singha constructed a line of forts along the Darrang Duars to keep a close eye on the Bhutias. This measure assisted in preventing Bhutias incursions. But, taking advantage of the anarchy caused by the Maomariya rebellion, the Bhutias encroached on Ahom territory and carried away a large number of subjects as slaves.⁴² As a result, the Ahom Monarchy was forced to consider retaliatory measures, but Purnanda Burhagohain persuaded a conciliatory policy and decided to send an embassy to Bhutan in 1802. The embassy was well received by the Deb-Dharma Raja, who sent two Zinkaps (Bhutanese Priests or Nobles) to the then Ahom king Kamleshwar Singha. The Zinkaps alleged that the officers of the Ahom kingdom had been committing acts of oppression on the Bhutan frontiers despite the payment of stipulated tribute. However, an investigation by Barphukan revealed that the Bhutaneses were guilty of encroachment and raids on the border people. The Darrang Raja Samudranarayan was instructed by the Ahom king to take all necessary measures against the Bhutias, and he was successful in pushing the Bhutias back to their original boundaries.⁴³

1.2 History of British intervention in Assam

The history of British relations with Assam dates back to the period before the East India Company assumed power in Bengal. After the invasion of Mirjumla in 1662, Assam, a country with great economic potential, became well-known among Europeans and Indians.⁴⁴ In addition, Jesuit missionaries, particularly Stephan Cacella and T. Cabral, who visited Assam in 1626, left behind many exciting accounts of Assam.⁴⁵ However, many European merchants visited Assam before the annexation, including Jean-Baptist Chevalier (agent to the French East India Company), who came to Goalpara to trade in salt, and Paul Richard Pearkes, who was the chief of the English factory at Patna, came to Jogighopa and

established a factory. John Robinson and Hugh Baillie soon followed him, the latter being the agent of Henry Vansittart.⁴⁶

After establishing herself as a political force in Bengal, the East India Company came into contact with Assam. However, regular trade contacts with Assam were established after 1771. The East India Company directed its agents to gather information on trade opportunities in Assam and Bhutan after Hugh Baillie instilled optimism in the Company's officials about the lucrative trade opportunities in Assam and Bhutan. As a result, Hugh Baillie was sent to Goalpara with a license to trade in salt. The Company's interest grew further after Raja Dharendranarayan of Cooch Behar sought the help of the E.I.C in 1773 to secure his territory from hostile incursions by Bhutanese.⁴⁷ The British made their first contact with Bhutan at this time.⁴⁸ The British troops led by Captain John Jones not only drove the Bhutanese invaders, led by Deb Judhur, but also signed treaties with the Raja of Cooch Behar and Bhutan on April 15, 1774, and April 25, 1774, respectively.⁴⁹ The treaty granted the Bhutias duty-free trade in the Company's territory and permission for their caravan to visit Rungpore on an annual basis.⁵⁰ Warren Hastings, taking advantage of Lama's declared friendship, dispatched George Bogle of the Bengal Civil Service on a mission to Bhutan and Tibet in May 1774, with orders to report on the feasibility of establishing trade relations with Assam, Bhutan, and Tibet. Bogle reported that *'the Brahmaputra river's year-round navigability makes it feasible to trade. Assam is a large open country, well cultivated and populated, with many valuable articles. Bhutan, Nepal, and Lhasa provide gold and silver to Assam. People from Brahmaputra's northwest trade regularly with Assam. Bogle estimated the annual trade at nearly seven lakhs. Bogle wanted Assam and its bordering regions to be part of a British-run free trade zone. He recommended keeping an eye on the situation until an opportunity to build strong ties with the rulers arose.'*⁵¹

However, until then, the Company had no relations with the ruler of Assam. Besides, the outbreak of the Maomaria Rebellion in 1769 prevented the establishment of trade relations with Assam. The prevailing Maomaria Rebellion provided the Bengal government with the privilege to investigate the potential of the Assam trade. At the same time, several free merchants and interlopers took the opportunity to trade with Assam on their own or on behalf of their employers. However, the differences in the payment of Bengal merchants' dues and the refusal of Assamese merchants to trade with them led to constant frictions. The situation was saved by the then Governor-General Warren Hastings, who penned down a

letter to the Assam King in July 1780, stating that the commerce should continue for the mutual benefit of both kingdoms.⁵²

In 1786 the East India Company resolved to open trade with Assam.⁵³ But the first authorized visit of the British was made in 1792 when the deposed Ahom king Gaurinath Singha sought the aid from the Company, to suppress the marauding depredations of the Bengal Burkendazes.⁵⁴ The Governor-General Lord Cornwallis (1786-93) after a good deal of calculation decided to send an expedition under Captain Thomas Welsh to Assam.⁵⁵ Captain Welsh defeated the Maomariyas near Gauhati on 29th November 1792 and Darrang rebels on 6th December.⁵⁶ Captain Welsh helped Gaurinath Singha successfully in consolidating his position. This helped Captain Welsh to conclude a Commercial Treaty with Gaurinath Singha on February 28, 1793.⁵⁷ The treaty stated “*a reciprocal and entire liberty of commerce between the subjects of Bengal and Assam for all singular goods and merchandise,*”⁵⁸ and also managed to collect information on the commercial relation of Assam with the neighbouring tribes and countries.⁵⁹ Captain Welsh penned to the Governor-General, that the restoration of peace and order in Assam would bring great benefits to the company, including the sale of at least 100,000 lbs. of salt in Assam.⁶⁰ However, Captain Welsh together with the army was recalled in May 1794 by Sir John Shore, who succeeded Lord Cornwallis as Governor-General. With the departure of Captain Welsh, confusion, anarchy and darkness sank on the scene.⁶¹

Meanwhile, with the dawn of the nineteenth century, Great Britain (England) witnessed the Industrial Revolution, which resulted in the transformation of mercantile capital into Industrial capital.⁶² The ever-increasing production in industries required raw materials and markets for their goods. Therefore, Britain embarked on a policy that witnessed an alteration of their previous policy of mercantilism to free trade and then to finance imperialism.⁶³ The transformation of mercantile capital into industrial capital and consequently development in the production of industrial goods since 1760 in Great Britain impacted a major shift in industrialization, overseas trade and commerce, and empire-building. With the ever-increasing growth of industrial production, an industrial country like Great Britain, besides being the buyers of colonial products also became a seller of machine-made goods in the colonies and became involved vigorously in the search for captive markets for the growing volume of their industrial products at home.⁶⁴ Thus herald a new beginning in favour of Great Britain.

In Assam soon after the departure of Captain Welsh, the court of Ahoms under Chandrakanta was split into two hostile camps, the king and his family and the cohorts of Purnanda Buragohain.⁶⁵ Meanwhile, the Burmese court had been looking to Assam and taking interest in its internal affairs with a view to establishing a base at this moment, a request for help came from the Ahom king Chandra Kanta Singha (1811-17) through Badan Chandra Phukan, the Burmese Emperor Badawpaya (1781-1819) considered it a god-sent opportunity and immediately responded to it by sending armed assistance.⁶⁶ The consequences led to the Burmese invasion of Assam and subsequent occupation of Assam from 1819 to 1824.

The British Government of Lord Amherst on March 5th 1824, declared war on the Burmese.⁶⁷ Colonel Innes effected the expulsion of the Burmese from Cachar, and Captain Pemberton similarly ousted them from Manipur, in addition, the Burmese had also met with reverses in the war waged in Burma.⁶⁸ At last, peace was concluded on 24 February 1826.⁶⁹ In 1826, by the Treaty of Yandaboo, Assam was ceded to the East India Company.⁷⁰ The Burmese invasion of Assam changed the complexion of the Company's relations with Assam. Gradually trade relations took the form of political governance. The colonial government soon after the annexation of Assam discovered that the region lying on the Northern frontiers of Assam i.e., Kamrup and Darrang districts shared a boundary with Bhutan. Assam Duars contained seven Duars connecting hills to the plains. During the Ahom period, the Bhutias enjoyed exclusive control of the Duars in Kamrup and partial control over Darrang Duars for a fixed amount of tribute. Bhutan's economy was very fragile as the people were almost completely dependent on these Duars for their livelihood. This made Bhutan's position extremely vulnerable to coercion if there was an economic blockade by an adversary. The existing arrangements with Bhutan regarding the Duars even when the British occupied Assam.⁷¹ However, it soon became apparent that conditions on the frontier were far from satisfactory. Theoretically, the governor of eastern Bhutan, Tongsa penlop, was in charge of the Duars. But for all practical purposes, these were controlled by a few frontier officials. In addition to indulging in lucrative personal trade, these officers indirectly encouraged plundering raids into neighbouring villages with an eye on the share of the loot. Thus, completely lawlessness prevailed on the frontier.

The British on assuming the rule of Assam, adopted the relations then existing between Assam and Bhutan, however, the arrangements about the Duars were confirmed and renewed.⁷² The genesis of trouble with Bhutan was especially over the payment of tribute in

kind for Assam Duars. The British publicly auctioned the articles of the tribute collected from the Bhutias. These articles of tribute being sold at auction hardly ever realized the value at which they were appraised by the Bootanese, and as each year's tribute in consequence fell short of the fixed amount, a constantly accruing balance was shown against them.⁷³ The arrears accumulated over time and the demands for payment were answered through violence and aggression on the frontier. The Deb Raja wrote to the Governor General's Agent stating that *'you are most likely not awake to the explanation for the arrears of our current tribute; it's, therefore, necessary to administer some clarification. it absolutely was customary after we initial decreased to gather our revenue to gift you with the multicolored horse, and after with others, however with none regard to the worth of them, as conjointly gold, knives, musk, and chowries. We should essentially represent arrears because you sell these articles for such a low price.; the Ryots in consequence are abundant laden. You're not aware that others have currently the possession of our Talooks, and reap their edges, though we've to pay the Kurrun; Chanroo Mookee can draw your attention to the current subject, to that you may be happy to administer your thought and restore them to us, taking the correct Kown for them. You need to grasp that the Assam Raja has us these Dooars for Pan Tamool for the Dharma Raja.'*⁷⁴

The Agent to the Governor-General in reply to the explanation made by Deb Raja on the arrears of tribute wrote that *'the explanations you offer for the arrears of tribute; I even have to look at that the horses currently sent are such inferior animals that they're scarcely vendible at auction and that I am inclined to suppose they have to be modified on their manner here; this is often the reason behind arrears.'*⁷⁵

The demands for payment of arrears were met with aggression, plunder and abduction of the subjects residing in the frontier. The first serious outrage attack occurred on 22nd October 1828 at Chatgaree under Durrung Zillah, by the Doompa Raja of Booree-Goomah Duar. Doompa Raja with a force of 280 men treacherously attacked one of the frontier outposts, where a party of 80 sepoy was stationed and killed some sepoy and a Native officer, and a number of women and others were carried off as captives. The Agent of the North-East frontier demanded the release of the captives and the surrender of Doompa Raja but the Bhutan government paid deaf ears to the demand and finally the release of the captives was affected by a Jemadar and a party of Sebundies.⁷⁶

The British government thereafter occupied the Boree-Goomah Duar. Despite Deb Raja's repeated requests for the restoration of the Duar, the British government paid deaf ears because the Bhutan central government did not act quickly enough on the British government's demands for the release of the captives. The perpetrators were eventually declared dead by the Bhutanese government. But as the British government asked for evidence, they failed to produce it. However, after year witnesses were sent to testify that the Doompa Raja, who had been imprisoned in irons in the palace at Poonakha, had died in a fire that had destroyed the structure, and that his chief accomplice had drowned while supervising the construction of a chain bridge.⁷⁷ The British Government on the statement of witnesses regarding the death of the offenders decided that the Bhutias were allowed to reoccupy Boree-Goomah Duar on the payment of a fine of Rs.2, 000, in 1834.⁷⁸

Not a year had been passed another incident of fresh outrage by the Bhutias took place in Bijni Duar. Wherein the armed force attacked and carried off ten persons to Bhutan from the village of Nowgong. Moreover, the Booteah officers refused to pay the current tribute as well as the arrears of tribute leading to the threats of further attachment. However, the attachment was not carried out at that time. But the enrollment of Assam Sebundy Corps for frontier defense proved that the Government was gradually being driven to the conclusion that energetic measures of repression or retaliation might be shortly called for.⁷⁹ While the Bijni outrage was under deliberation, a fresh outrage took place in the District of Darrang by the Bhutias of the Kalling Duar; a large amount of property was plundered under the orders of Gumbheer Wazir, who was the chief Booteah officer of the Kalling Duar.⁸⁰ The Magistrate of Durrung, apparently knowing the uselessness of making demands, advanced up to the frontier with sixteen men of the Assam Sebundy corps, the promptness of the proceeding so frightened Gumbheer that he came into Captain Mathie's camp, and delivered over to him thirteen of the offenders who had been engaged in the outrage.⁸¹ The pressure induced by captain Mathie on Gumbheer Wazir, obliged him to surrender another twenty-seven criminals and information on the gangs of Frontier robbers protected by the Bhutias.

A couple of months after elapse of the Bijni outrage another two incidents of outrages occurred in the District of North Kamrup through the Banska Duar. Wanton incursions from the Banska Duar into North Kamrup in 1836 led to the attachment of the Duar and ultimately to the armed collision with the Bhutias, in which the hillmen suffered heavy loss.⁸² The central government of Bhutan, with its local representatives, speedily made submission, and the attached lands were again given up.⁸³ But the frontier dilemma with Bhutan continued.

Therefore, in 1837 with the belief that there could be a central authority in Bhutan with whom the peace negotiations could be secured the Calcutta Secretariats deputed Captain Pemberton to the court of the Dharma and Deb Rajas, to settle the terms of commercial intercourse between the states, and, if possible, to effect such an adjustment of the tribute payable for the Duars as might diminish the chances of misunderstanding arising from that source.⁸⁴ Accordingly, Captain Pemberton accompanied by Dr. Griffith, and an Escort of twenty-five Sepoys of the Assam Sebundy Corps under the command of Ensign Blake left Guwahati for Bhutan on the 21st of December.⁸⁵ But the Pemberton's mission proved a failure, and the mission was neither able to get a satisfactory settlement of the tribute nor in securing efficiency in the administration of the Duars, nothing to speak of achieving peace and tranquility on the frontier.⁸⁶

The failure of Pemberton's mission made the East India Company consider that the only solution of protecting the frontiers from aggression was to annex Assam Duars, consequently, the British government re-attached Kalling, Boreeguma and Ghaukolla Duars. This measure was carried out in 1841; the rationale for the annexation of Assam Duars was the non-payment of prescribed annual tributes to the company and the atrocities on the frontier by the Bhutias of Bhutan.⁸⁷ These measures contained the Bhutia raids within the British frontiers of Assam.⁸⁸ The British agreed to pay a sum of rupees 10,000 annually as compensation to Bhutan for the loss of revenue of Assam Duars.⁸⁹ This sum was estimated to be one-third of the revenue from Kamrup and Darrang Duars. In addition, there was no written agreement regarding the arrangement.⁹⁰

However, in 1854 the Bhutanese Durbar sent intimation that the compensation paid for the loss of Assam Duars was insufficient and must be increased.⁹¹ On being refused by the Indian Government to comply with the demand the Bhutanese started raids in Assam. The then Governor-General of India directed Tongsa Penlop to notify the Durbar that the value of property plundered would be deducted from the sum annually paid for Assam Duars, and threatened to annex the Bengal Duars permanent if they continue further outrage. But the threat did not impede the Bhutia outrages. Over the year fresh outrages occurred and the government at last was obliged to take an action by annexing the estate of Fallacotta in 1860. But before taking a decisive decision of annexing Bengal Duars, the Governor-General decided to send intimation to the Durbar to enlighten the reasons for the annexation of the Fallacotta and to an arrangement for better relations between two States. Accordingly, a native emissary was dispatched in 1862 to Poonakha, to make preliminary arrangements for a

mission followed by Honorable A. Eden, Secretary to the Bengal Government, in August 1863. Eden reached Punakha on March 15, 1864, and after waiting for a day or two a couple of meetings with the Deb Raja and the Darbar officials were arranged.⁹² Moreover, the draft treaty that was given to Eden to have an agreement signed was never considered by the Darbar; instead, Eden was subjected to humiliating treatment.⁹³ on March 24, in a meeting the Tongsa Penlop and a few other officers of the Darbar chose to rub Eden's face with a piece of wet dough, pulled his hair and slapped him on the back, this was done in the presence of the entire Darbar.⁹⁴ The Wangdiphodrang Dzungpon was also reported to have spat on Dr. Simpson, when the Envoy thought it better to depart, the Tongsa Penlop called out, '*I want nothing but Assam Duars, and if I don't get them it is better to have war than treaty*'.⁹⁵ Moreover, Eden was obliged by the Tongsa Penlop to sign a treaty agreeing that the British were surrendering all Assam Duars to Bhutan. But Eden an astute diplomat scribbled two words beneath his signatures on the Treaty: "*under duress*" the meaning of which Tongsa Penlop could not eventually understand and on March 29, 1864, the mission left Punakha on the return journey.⁹⁶

The failure of Eden's mission charismatically led to the rupture with Bhutan.⁹⁷ War with Bhutan followed, and the allowance paid on account of Assam Duars including Ambari Fallacotta was stopped, after a campaign, which if not uniformly satisfactory was in the end entirely successful, the Bhutias were obliged to make a humble submission.⁹⁸ A treaty of peace (Sinchula) was concluded on November 11, 1865.⁹⁹ The Government of British India for the annexed Duars and other tracts of Bhutanese territory paid an annual grant maximum of rupees fifty thousand to Bhutan. But, for the first year, i.e., immediately on the fulfilment of all the conditions by Bhutan, like the submission of guns etc., the amount payable was Rs. 25,000/- which was to be increased to Rs. 35,000/- in the following year, to Rs. 45,000/- the year next and finally to Rs. 50,000/-.¹⁰⁰

After the Sinchula Treaty, the Bhutias were obliged to hand over the Duar areas of Ripu, Guma, Sidli, Chirang and Bijni, and were formed into an independent district under the banner of Eastern Duars and placed under the charge of a deputy commissioner, whose headquarters sited at Datma.¹⁰¹ However, the District of Eastern Duar was incorporated into Goalpara in December 1866, and the Eastern Duar, along with the Goalpara district, was transferred to the Chief Commissioner of Assam in the same year.¹⁰² Assam became an independent province in 1874, governed by a commissioner, and the Eastern Duars were permanently attached to Bengal. However, the settled portion of Goalpara and Eastern Duars

was under the command of a single officer until 1905. But in 1912, the Bengal portion was abolished once more, and Goalpara and the Eastern Duars were returned to Assam.¹⁰³ The boundary line between British Indian territory and Bhutan from Monass (Manas) river on the west to the Deosham river on the east was laid down in 1872-73.¹⁰⁴

The British after concluding the Treaty of Sinchula (1865) followed a pacification policy toward Bhutan. This policy towards Bhutan was dictated by political and economic reasons since Bhutan formed a barrier to the Indian frontier in the north commercial penetration to Tibet and then to Central Asia demanded the command over the route through Bhutan.¹⁰⁵ In 1866 the struggle for power renewed immediately after the resignation of the Deb and the Tongso Pilo was elected the Deb in 1869, but in 1873 he was driven out as a result of revolution by his brother Jigme Namgay. Another outbreak of revolution followed in 1877 but was ruthlessly suppressed by Jigme; Angdu-Forung Jungpen was killed, Tongso Pilo was imprisoned and Paro Pilo took refuge at Kalimpong.¹⁰⁶ In 1879 Deb Jungpen headed a revolution but was suppressed by Jigme and he established himself firmly in 1880. The British government remained merely an observer in the domestic dissensions of Bhutan.

By 1890 Ugen Wangchuk was instated in Bhutan and the British Indian Government in their ardour to fulfil the objective of securing clout over Tibet established cordial relations with Bhutan and revised the treaty with Bhutan in 1910.¹⁰⁷ This revised treaty called the Treaty of Poonakha cemented the British control over the external affairs of Bhutan and more importantly, the treaty also proved instrumental in restricting the Chinese influence on Bhutan. Ever since the Treaty of Poonakha in 1910, the relations between the Bhutan and British India remained cordial until the Cabinet Mission's plan of 16 May 1946 paved the way for the transfer of power.¹⁰⁸ India's independence from the colonial power in 1947 resulted in the signing of a fresh treaty in August 1949 between India and Bhutan

1.3 Importance of Assam Duars

Assam Duars because of unique geographical characteristics play an important role in the history of Assam and India. The northeastern parts of India are connected to the rest of the country by Assam Duars. Historically, Assam since the days of Ahoms shared a boundary in the Northern direction with the Himalayan regions of Bhutan and Tibet.¹⁰⁹ Under the Ahoms, Assam had extensive frontier trade relations with the neighbouring territory Bhutan through Assam Duars. *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* a historical work of the thirteenth-century records

that there were as many as thirty-five passes between Tibet and Kamrupa.¹¹⁰ Lieutenant Rutherford also stated that prior to the Burmese invasion of Assam the Khampha Bhoateas or Lhasa merchants had brisk commercial intercourse with Assam.¹¹¹ Pratap Chandra Choudhury's work "*The History of the Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*" affirms that through Bhutan, Assam conducted trade relations with China and Tibet.¹¹² Besides, Tavernier, a French merchant also affirms the trade connection of Assam with the countries of Bectaria and Kabul through the mountain passes of Bhutan.¹¹³

The Duars under Bhutan were divided into small principalities administered either by 'Subbas,' who were chosen by the Dharma Raja of Bhutan or by the native Zamindars or revenue collectors.¹¹⁴ The fertile tracts of land called Duars are not merely a passageway through which the Bhutias ascended to the fertile plains of Assam, in fact, the regions of Assam Duars were a vital area for the procurement of essential commodities of consumption. Whilst, for the Ahoms monarchs the trade in Assam Duars apart of being a source of lucrative revenue¹¹⁵ simultaneously served the purpose of maintaining diplomacy and relations with the neighbouring regions.¹¹⁶ Ever since the pre-colonial period, Assam under the Ahoms witnessed lively trade relations with Bhutan through Assam Duars. The Ahom monarchs set up trade fairs and haats in the advantageous areas for the trading of products in the Duars.¹¹⁷ Each of the Duars had attached markets wherein the trade was dealt and approved through the Duars. Besides the periodical markets, annual trade fairs were held at important sites of the Duars.¹¹⁸ At these markets and trade fairs, the people of the plains (Assam) and hills (Bhutan) disposed of their excess productions and purchased required commodities.¹¹⁹ Transactions in markets and trade fairs were mostly conveyed through the medium of barter or the use of cowries.¹²⁰ One of the most vital commodities that the Bhutias traded with the people of Assam was salt. Salt was one of the rarest commodities found in Assam and was produced in Sadiya and Borhat.¹²¹ This was accessible only to the Royal family, therefore, the value of salt was considered equivalent to gold and unlike other articles of trade salt was not sold by the Bhutanese it was bartered for vital commodities.¹²² The principal commodities of imports were rubber, wax and ponies and the exports were cotton cloth, yarn and silk.¹²³ Besides, the Duars region possessed expensive timbers, fertile lands and other valuable articles. In fact, the trade fairs and haats or marketplaces set up in the Duars were responsible for the initiation of affairs between hills and plains. Bhutan also provided passage for the Assamese traders to trade with Tibet and China.¹²⁴ But the Burmese invasion of Assam discouraged the trade relations between Assam and Bhutan and the trade

fairs that existed in Assam Duars were halted due to the atrocities of the Burmese. On the atrocities of the Burmese Edward Gait wrote that '*the Burmese oppressed the people to the extent that no one could be sure of their wealth, reputation, or life. They not only robbed everyone of anything worth taking, but they also set fire to villages and even temples, violated the chastity of women of all ages, and executed a large number of innocent people.*'¹²⁵

But the advent of the British on the soil of Assam changed the complexion of the trade relations. Assam Duars' drew the attention of the British because of her natural resources, economic potential, and strategic importance.¹²⁶ The annexation of Assam resulted in direct physical contact with Bhutan through Assam Duars.¹²⁷ The British in their quest for political dominance over Bhutan restored trade fairs in Assam Duars and to promote European products began the arrangement of annual trade fairs in the sub-montane zones. These trade fairs besides being an influencing aspect in the upholding of economic relations with Bhutan also played a pivotal role in the collapse of autarky of the local inhabitants. Besides, after the cessation of trade fairs in the last decade of the nineteenth century the colonial government gave a boost to the establishment of haats or marketplaces which proved instrumental in upholding the trade relations with the Bhutias.

1.4 Statement of the problem

The colonial government coupled with the policy of imperialism and colonialism made their way into Assam. The Colonial Government after cementing her hold over Assam gradually endeavored to fulfil her long-cherished desire of expanding her commercial interest in Central Asia. Therefore, in order to secure a passage through Bhutan, several commercial missions were dispatched only to be denied by Bhutan. The denial of Bhutan to provide passage for the establishment of trade relations with Tibet and China led to the introduction of a policy of frontier trade fairs in Assam Duars. These trade fairs, haats or marketplaces proved to be an effective weapon against Bhutan to exert socio-economic and political influence. Besides, the policy of trade fairs enabled the British to open up Bhutan for British trade and the Sinchula Treaty (1865) signed with Bhutan propelled the British to use the strategic position of Bhutan to extend their trade to Central Asia. These trade fairs, haats or marketplaces became an important hub of monetization and a new market for British goods.

The present research work attempts an in-depth study into Assam-Bhutan frontier trade relations especially covering the British policy of trade fairs, haats or market places.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the present research work “Assam-Bhutan Frontier Trade Relations during the British Colonial Period (With special reference to the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang)” are as follows:

- To study the intention of the colonial government behind the reinstatement and establishment of trade fairs in Assam Duars.
- To highlight the various places of haats and market places that emerged as a result of trade contacts with the Bhutias in the vicinity of Assam Duars.
- To examine the impact of frontier trade on the people living in the vicinity of Assam Duars.

1.6 Research Question

1. What were the objectives of the British behind reinstatement and establishment of trade fairs in Assam Duars?
2. Why haats or marketplaces were opened by the British?
3. What were the socio-economic impacts of the trade fairs and haats in Assam Duars?

1.7 Methodology

In the composition of the present study historical method is applied. The historical method is scientific research wherein a comparison of the historical phenomenon is applied to understand various stages of historical processes.

Data related to the topic are collected through primary and secondary sources to get a broader picture of the “Assam-Bhutan Frontier Trade Relations during the British Colonial Period (With special reference to the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang)”. The primary sources are collected through interviews, public diaries, documents of the colonial government, and European reports available in form of travelogues, military reports etc. While, secondary sources have been collected from books, magazines, souvenirs, journals and others. Moreover, Government gazetteers, census reports, and unpublished thesis are also consulted for the composition of the study. Visits to Assam State archives and libraries have also been undertaken.

1.8 Survey of the Literature

For the present study Assam-Bhutan Frontier Trade Relations during the British Colonial Period (With special reference to the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang) the relevant works surveyed are divided into three categories. The first category includes the work related to Indo-Bhutan, the second category includes the writings based on Assam and the British colonialism and the third category is based on Assam-Bhutan.

Karma Phuntsho, *The History of Bhutan*, Gurgaon, (2013), Penguin Random House India, this is the most comprehensive book on the diverse aspects of Bhutan's history. The work also discusses the various missions sent by the British to the Himalayan nation, as well as the policies advanced by the British to control Bhutan economically and politically.

Nagendra Singh, *Bhutan: A Kingdom in the Himalayas*, Thomson Press Limited, New Delhi, 1972 deals comprehensively with the history of Bhutan, from its physical aspects to the foundation of Modern Bhutan. The author has primarily dealt with the history of British political relations with Bhutan in Part I when Cooch Bihar sought the aid of the East India Company against the Bhutias. The author has also discussed the British political missions sent to Bhutan beginning with George Bogle in 1774 to the Ashley Eden in 1863. Furthermore, the author has provided information on the problem in the Duars following the annexation of Assam and subsequently the commencement of the Duar war and the signing of the peace treaty of Sinchula in 1865, which established the British political influence over Bhutan.

Nirmala Das, *The Dragon Country*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1973 covers the history of Bhutan from its inception to the establishment of political relations with independent India. In her brief work, the author discusses the beginning of political relations with the East India Company in 1772, the annexation of Assam, and the troubles and disputes surrounding the Duars, all of which culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Sinchula in 1865. In addition, the work discusses the British interest in Tibet and the signing of the Punakha Treaty with Bhutan in 1910, which provided a boost to British aspirations for Tibet.

Manorama Kohli, *A Study in Interrelations 1772-1910*, New Delhi, 1982, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. provides valuable insight into the relationship between the British government and Bhutan. In addition to direct trade and commercial relations, the

report describes the British desire to establish relations with Lhasa and, through Lhasa, with Peking (China).

Arabinda Deb, *A Study of Frontier Political Relations (1772-1865)*, Firma K.L.M Pvt., Ltd., Calcutta, 1976 the work covers the period from the beginning of British political relations with Bhutan in 1772 to the signing of the Sinchula Peace Treaty in 1865. The author also focuses on British commercial missions to Bhutan, intending to establish trade relations with Bhutan and thence to Tibet. However, for three-quarters of a century, the British commercial missions failed to secure trade privileges. The Sinchula Treaty (1865) allowed British India to realize her dreams of free trade with Bhutan and, from there, Tibet and Central Asia. In addition, the treaty also secured the British political authority over Bhutan.

Madhu Rajput, *Indo-Bhutan Relations through Prism of History, New Delhi*, (2011), Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd, ISBN 978-81-7831-259-0 is a comprehensive work dealing with the history of the Indo-Bhutan relations from the inception to the post-independence era. The work also comprehends the various British missions sent to Bhutan to establish commercial ties, as well as the impact of the Treaty of Yandaboo, which led to border disputes between colonial Assam and Bhutan. Additionally, she has dealt with the Duars. Which was inhabited by the Kachari and Mechs and governed by the Bhutanese Jangpens.

Kapileshwar Labh, *India and Bhutan*, Sindhu Publications Ltd., New Delhi, 1974 is a comprehensive work dealing with the Indo-Bhutan relations covering the period between 1858-1910. The author of the work has primarily discussed the commercial interest of British India towards Bhutan and subsequently the policy of British India to counter the Chinese interest in Tibet. Moreover, the work also includes the political relations of Bhutan with the native states of India during the British rule including Nepal, Sikkim, and Independent India.

Mathew Joseph C, *India-Bhutan Relations: An Overview* (2007), an article describes the incident of Cooch Bihar in 1772 that brought the East India Company in close political relation to Bhutan and the aspiration of East India Company to establish trade relations with Tibet and China. But since the old route through Nepal was closed the British had to search for an alternative and in the process, Bhutan and Chumbi valley gained importance as a strategic route to Tibet. Moreover, the annexation of Assam brought the British further close to Bhutan on the affairs of the Duars. The disputes between British Assam and Bhutan on the arrears of payment of tribute for the Duars resulted in growing differences between the British Assam and Bhutan and the border incursions of the Bhutias resulted in the Duar war

and subsequently came to an end with the signing of the Sinchula treaty on 11 November 1865. This treaty proved to be a landmark in the British and Bhutan relationship as the treaty granted the British the political authority over Bhutan. The beginning of the 19th century witnessed the changed policy of the British towards Bhutan, the British altered their policy towards Bhutan in an effort to counter Chinese influence in Tibet. This resulted in a mission of Francis Younghusband to Lhasa in 1903-04. The establishment of a hereditary monarchy in Bhutan afforded the British the opportunity to revise the Sinchula Treaty on 8 January 1910 under the Punakha Treaty. This revised treaty provided the British with political control over the external relations of Bhutan. And ensured the security of the North-East Frontier of India from external aggressions.

Suranjan Das and Shantanu Chakrabarti, *India and Bhutan: The Case of a Symbiotic Relationship?* (2007), in an article describes the early relations between the colonial government (Britain) and Bhutan. The early colonial government viewed Bhutan as strategically significant due to its proximity to Tibet. The treaty of Sinchula (1865) not only secured the territory of the frontiers known as Duars but also granted access to Tibet via Bhutan. The growing Chinese presence in Tibet and the subsequent invasion of Tibet in 1910-12 drew Bhutan and the British to satisfy their mutual interests. Besides, the treaty of Punakha in 1910 not only reasserted bilateral relations between British India and Bhutan but also prepared the framework of the future relationship between Bhutan and independent India.

Gunnel Cederlof, *Founding an Empire on India's North-Eastern Frontiers 1790-1840*, New Delhi, (2014), Oxford University Press, ISBN-13: 978-0-19-809057-1 is an important work that comprehends the aspects of the commercial intercourse of East India Company in North-Eastern India. The work also provides valuable insights into the periods before the colonial conquest of Assam and subsequently the colonial policies framed by the East India Company in an attempt to control the age-old trade routes in order to establish trade links and ties with Burma and China.

Jayeeta Sharma, *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, (2011), explores how the annexation of Assam under British rule initiated colonial capitalism and modernity and transformed colonial Assam's social and economic life. She describes how tea discovery in Assam resulted in massive land grabs for tea plantations and a shift in the province's demographics including how colonial authorities

used migrant labour to turn the valley into a surplus-generating and economically feasible region. Additionally, the author also depicts social changes in colonial Assam and the exclusion of the Nagas, Khasis, and Garos from the Brahmaputra Valley's socio-economic processes. The book demonstrates how various threads of colonial racial theories interacted to produce radical social and cultural shifts.

Heramba Kanta Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier 1822-42*, Volume-I, Lawyers Book Stall, Gauhati, 1970 deals comprehensively with the events related to the Burmese invasion of Assam, Anglo-Burmese war, Annexation of Assam. The author has also discussed the problems faced by the British in administering Assam and the policies followed by the British towards the Bhutias and the safeguard measures adopted to protect the northern frontiers of Assam from the raids. The work has also covered the events related to the occupation of Assam Duars by the Bhutias and the growing differences between colonial Assam and Bhutan which resulted in the annexation of Assam Duars by the British.

Priyam Goswami, *Assam in the Nineteenth Century: Industrialization and Colonial Penetration*, Guwahati, (1999), Spectrum Publications, ISBN 81-85319-99-5 is a commendable work detailing the colonial intrusion of the Brahmaputra valley in the nineteenth century and the effects of the industrialization in Assam. The author focuses primarily on the tea, coal, and oil that contributed to the consolidation of British control in the region. In addition, she has provided information on the relations of the Ahoms with the neighbouring country of Bhutan and the imperialistic designs of the British toward Bhutan.

Heramba Kanta Barpujari, *Early British Relations with Bhutan 1825-1840* (1951) an article describes the condition of Assam Duars on the eve of British occupation. He describes the British interest in retaining an agreement made by the former Ahom government for Assam Duars and how the arrears in the payment of tribute on the part of the Bhutias led to growing tensions between the two governments. In addition, he describes the Bhutias' raids on British territory, which prompted the British to dispatch a mission led by captain Pemberton in 1837 to settle the terms of commercial transactions between British Assam and Bhutan and to resolve disputes over the payment of tribute. In 1841, however, as a result of the failure of a mission and the continuing Bhutia raids on British territory, the British government annexed Assam Duars.

Pratap Chandra Choudhury, *The History of civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Guwahati, (1987), Spectrum Publications, is a comprehensive study of

the early history of Assam. Additionally, the work provides useful information regarding the ancient trade routes in Assam and also the economic condition of Assam during the period.

Heramba Kanta Barpujari, *The Comprehensive History of Assam-Volume III*, Guwahati, (2004), Publication Board Assam, is a commendable work that provides important information on the internal and external commerce of medieval Assam. The work also provides a piece of important information on the trade relations with Bhutan during the period of Ahom rule. Moreover, the work also provides information on the important trading sites of the Duars that had relations with Bhutan and also the name of the Ahom officials responsible for carrying out trade transactions with Bhutan.

Swarna Lata Baruah, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, New Delhi, (2015), Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, ISBN 978-81-215-0015-9 The work has covered the various aspects of trade relations within and outside the frontier of Assam from the genesis of Ahom rule to the consolidation British rule in Assam.

Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, *Early British Relations with Assam*, Guwahati, (2013), EBH Publishers, ISBN 978 93 80261 79 9 provides information about the history of British relations with Assam. The works also provide valuable insights into the trade activities of the British and subsequently their interest in establishing trade relations with the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan.

N.N. Acharyya, *North-East India on Historical Perspective*, New Delhi, (2006), Omsons Publications, provides valuable information on the growth of ancient towns and cities as a result of trade and commerce, which was made possible in large part by the accessibility of various types of goods and the availability of transport and communication. Besides, the work also provides useful information on the external trade relations of Assam and the medium of transactions used in trade with China, Burma, Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal through the Duars.

Heramba Kanta Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North East India (1836-1900 A.D)*, Guwahati, (1986), Spectrum Publications deals with the role of American Baptist Missionaries in the socio-economic development of North-Eastern India is discussed. Aside from this, the work offers valuable insights into the socio-economic lives of the Assam hill tribes, their crafts, industries, and produce.

N.N. Acharyya, *Assam and Neighbouring States Historical Documents*, New Delhi, (2013), Omsons Publications this book is an indispensable companion for the study of the political and economic aspects of relations with neighbouring states. It also provides valuable pieces of information on the treaties signed by the British Government.

I.S. Mumtaza Khatun, *External Relations of the Ahom Government 1228-1826*, New Delhi, (2014), Akansha Publishing House, ISBN 978-81-8370-401-4 is a comprehensive study of the external relations and interactions of the Ahom government with independent and subordinate foreign powers. The work also provides useful information on the trade policies and the political relations of the Ahom government towards Bhutan.

Priyam Goswami, *The History of Assam from Yandabo to Partition 1826-1947*, New Delhi, (2012), Orient Black Swan, ISBN 978-81-250-4653-0 is a commendable work that covers the periods of the colonial Assam. The author of the work has compiled information on the region's economic potential, which enticed the British to occupy Assam, and the rapid social, political, and economic changes brought about by the introduction of colonial rule in Assam and the surrounding hilly regions. In addition, the work provides information on the strategic location of Assam, which shares a border with Bhutan, Tibet, and Burma and subsequently the interest of the British towards opening the gates of Bhutan for commercial interest towards Tibet.

Smriti Das, *Assam Bhutan Trade Relations: 1865-1949*, Delhi, (2005), Anshah Publishing House, ISBN 81-8364-004-4 is a valuable book that, sheds light on the history, character, and mutual trade relationship between Assam and Bhutan since the Ahom period.

Sailen Debnath, *The Dooars in Historical Transition*, West Bengal, (2010), N.L Publishers, ISBN 978-81-86860-44-1 is a significant work that illuminates the historical transition of the Duars. The work covers the history of the Duars and different dynasties that rule over the Duars in different phases of the period.

Birendra Chandra Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam*, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, (1964) – the author in Chapter VIII, deals with the Bhutias, beginning with the annexation of Assam Duars in 1841. The author has briefly discussed the border outrages of the Bhutias in the northern frontiers of Assam and the measures adopted by the British to halt the raids of the Bhutias. The author has also provided information on the growing influence of the Chinese in Tibet, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal and the mission sent

by the British under Pemberton in 1864 to establish commercial and political relations with Bhutan, and finally, the events following the treaty of Sinchula which led to a commercial contest between the Chinese and the British for the establishment of supremacy in Tibet, Bhutan, and Sikkim. Finally in brief the author has discussed the commercial relations between Assam and Bhutan and Tibet.

Chandra Mantche, *Cross Border Trade of Assam with Special Reference to Trade Fairs during the Colonial Period* (2020) in an article describes the changes introduced by the British in the mode of trans-Himalayan trade after the annexation of Assam. The author also notes that the British had definite aims and ambitions for the restoration of the trade fairs of Udalguri, Doimara, and Sadiya. He also mentions the British ambitions to expand their commercial relations with Tibet. To entice the Bhutias to attend trade fairs, the British organized various games and sports and distributed Posa and gifts to the Bhutia Chiefs during these trade fairs. In an effort to popularise European goods among the Bhutias, the British distributed wine, broadcloth, handkerchiefs, etc., which had negative effects on the Bhutias, and the introduction of European mill-made clothing resulted in the destruction of indigenous productions. As a result, a small quantity of Indian and European clothing made its way to central Asia via Bhutias who traded with neighbouring nations.

The survey of the above books and articles provides information on the trade relations between India and Bhutan and Assam and Bhutan including internal trade in the province of Assam. Despite the fact that the extension of British trade to Tibet was a major aspiration of the British Assam in maintaining relations with Bhutan, the British policy in restoring trade fairs and the role of haats or marketplaces in maintaining trade relations with Bhutan, on the whole, need to be investigated.

1.9 Utility of the Study

The study will contribute toward understanding British policy adhered to the organizing of trade fairs. Moreover, it will help restore missing information on haats or marketplaces held and organized in Assam Duars. The work will significantly help scholars and researchers who intend to enrich their knowledge on trade fairs, markets or haats in Assam Duars.

1.10 Area of the Study

The investigation of my research work Assam-Bhutan Frontier Trade Relations during the British Colonial Period (With special reference to the Duars of Kamrup and Darrang) is primarily based on the erstwhile Assam Duars of Kamrup and Darrang Districts of Assam.

1.11 Chapterisation

Chapter: I- Introduction of Assam Duars.

Chapter: II- British Intervention in Assam Duars

Chapter: III- Trade Fairs in Assam Duars

Chapter: IV- Haats and Bazaars in Assam Duars

Chapter: V- Socio-economic impact of the frontier trade in Assam Duars

Chapter: VI- Conclusion

The first chapter, **Introduction of Assam Duars:** This chapter highlights the introduction of the Assam Duars, History of Assam Duars, History of British intervention, Importance of Assam Duars, Objectives of the study, Statement of the Problem, Methodology, Review of literature, Utility of the study, Area of the study and Chapterisation.

The second chapter, **British Intervention in Assam Duars:** This chapter deals with the various policies undertaken by the British for the economic exploitation of Assam Duars of Kamrup and Darrang district after the annexation of Assam.

The third chapter, **Trade fairs in Assam Duars:** This chapter discusses the various trade fairs held in the vicinity of Assam Duars and the role played by the colonial government in organizing and re-instating trade fairs and, subsequently, the objectives of the colonial government behind the restoration of the trade fairs.

The fourth chapter, **Haats and Bazaars in Assam Duars:** This chapter attempts to highlight various haats or market places held in the vicinity of Assam Duars, which were instrumental in the maintenance of frontier trade relations with the neighbouring country of Bhutan.

The fifth chapter, **Socio-economic impact of the frontier trade in Assam Duars:** This chapter discusses the effects of frontier trade on the inhabitants of Assam Duars, especially after the involvement of the colonial government and various policies implemented by them in Assam Duars.

The sixth chapter, **Conclusion:** This chapter deals with the concluding remarks on Assam Bhutan frontier trade relations, findings, and further research prospects.

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