CHAPTER FIVE

TERRITORY: ACQUISITION, APPROPRIATION, AND THE POLITICS OF SPACE

The present chapter aims to explore the politics of territory production in select texts of colonial travel and expedition in northeast India with a specific focus on the ideological apparatuses implicated in such discourse. Given that (a) within colonialism the production of territory almost always begins with acts of imagination and (b) that the same is almost always textually reproduced, colonial administrative texts are instruments and participants in the politics of territorializing. In keeping with these premises, the present chapter aims at exploring the ideology of territory production in Francis Jenkins' *Report on the North-East Frontier of India* (1835), Robert Boileau Pemberton's *The Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India* (1835), John M'Cosh's *Topography of Assam* (1837), and T. T. Cooper's *The Mishmee Hills: An Account of the Journey made in an Attempt to Penetrate Tibet from Assam to Open New Routes for Commerce* (1873).

Generally speaking, territorialization is the demarcation, establishment, consolidation, and subsequent maintenance of space as a bounded unit subject to a given or specified administrative logic and jurisdiction. In other words, the production of a territory is the conceptual and cartographic organization of existing spaces into juridico-political or administrative units. By its very design, colonialism is a territorial practice thriving on the appropriation of pre-colonial spaces into grids of newly designed territorial spaces defined along Eurocentric ideologies. It is also important to note that these pre-colonial spaces do not always fit into the definition of a territory endorsed by the colonizers. Although territorialization is an attribute common to almost every form of social existence, what distinguishes colonial territoriality is (a) its radical obsession with exclusivity, fixity and finality and (b) its desperateness to construct absolute, immutable and discontinuous territories. It explains why the construction of colonial territories always moves along a radical negation or at least a systematic bypassing of pr-colonial territorialities.

It can be suggested that colonial territoriality best illustrates (a) the instrumentalization of colonized space, (b) a regular bypassing of existing territorialities in favour of hegemonic rationalizations and, (c) the regular use of ideological tools to back instrumentalization of space. It is important to note that the politics of territory or for that matter the production of a territory is not always confined to institutional notifications. In other words, the transformation of space into a territory does not necessarily coincide with its formal institutionalization as territory. In fact, the material realization of a territory is often preceded by imaginative appropriation of space. In other words,

territorialization as a material practice always comes through moments of visualization that can be historicized in the context of tactical territorial projects like colonialism. Finally, although the most apparent facets of colonial territoriality are military and economic, it also involves other less apparent facets such as cultural or symbolic. From this perspective territorialization in colonial situations has less to do with construction of clearly evident territories than with oblique geographies of power.

As a rule, the production of territory as a legitimate, sacrosanct interior is inevitably founded on the construct of a deviant exterior. In short, imagining territory is the condition and consequence of a transgressive imaginary-especially deviation, seen or imagined in the other. In fact, deviation could easily be condensed into the idea of transgression. In *In Place/ Out of Place,* Tim Creswell suggests that it is necessarily through the trope of transgression, more imagined than realized, that Eurocentric territorial projects such as colonialism function. It is important to note the regularity with which the architects of imperial space exploit the threat of potential transgressions as a territorializing tool. Creswell's idea is therefore central to this investigation. It is also important to note that within colonial discourse, race is only one of the metaphors used to corroborate the fiction of transgression and to prepare the ideological pretext to territorialize.

Moving into the texts, it is important to note that three of them are reports of extensive survey operations in the northeast, undertaken by their authors under the patronage of the colonial state. Hence, these are best viewed as what James Hevia terms as colonial "precision-knowledge" (86). Captain Robert Boileau Pemberton (1798-1840) served as Joint Commissioner of Manipur. His narrative is an extensive survey of existing and potential routes between Assam and the states of Burma (the present day Myanmar) and Bhutan. Francis Jenkins (1793-1866) served as Agent to the Governor General and Commissioner of Assam. He, in a way, pioneered the development of tea cultivation in Assam which, to a large extent, was a colonial project. In fact, his reports and recommendations could be viewed as prelude to the transformation of Assam into the tea-garden of the Empire. His narrative, therefore, is an important site to explore the territorial designs of the British Empire in the early nineteenth-century northeast India. Like Pemberton's, his is also a report of survey and reconnaissance. It is not unusual that his report sketches out a range of military and remunerative geographies for the Empire. John M'Cosh (1805-1885), joined the Bengal Army as an assistant surgeon in 1831 and

extensively traveled in the north and southeast of India. His report is best viewed as a narrative of statistical information. The fourth text included in the chapter is written by T. T. (Thomas Thornville) Cooper (1839-1878). Cooper's expedition to the Mishmi Hills (in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh), is often seen as a pioneering colonial attempt to explore and open up possible trade-routes between Assam and Tibet. His narrative bears testimony to the thesis that the colonial traveler often acts as diplomats or political actors.

Of the three texts discussed here, the first two are dominated by what is perhaps a strategic territorial vision. In Pemberton, it is the production of economic territories whereas in Jenkins visions of military territories predominate. It is important to note that Both Jenkins and Pemberton travelled extensively in the northeast. Jenkins surveyed of the entire northeast frontier in 1832 under the orders from Lord William Bentinck. Pemberton surveyed the Eastern frontier –Manipur, Assam, Arracan, Kingdom of Pong, Cachar, Jaintia and Khasi hills. Jenkins on the other hand proceeded to Cachar via Sylhet and reached the Barak valley in November 1832. From there he travelled to different places in the Brahmaputra valley. On the other hand, M'Cosh's *Topography of Assam* is best viewed as a report on topography. It is arguably implicated in the project of territorializing, and any claims to impartial knowledge-production are at once fraught and questionable. Cooper's text goes beyond the act of surveying or mapping territories, and actively participates in the production of imperial political-diplomatic spaces in the northeast.

This chapter argues that designs of territorialization in the text are pursued through a three-fold rhetoric: (a) a rhetoric of appropriation disguised as rhetoric of appropriateness (b) a rhetoric of transgression disguised as rhetoric of security (c) a rhetoric of empire disguised as a rhetoric of utility in the studied texts. In other words, it explores the space-clearing propensities inherent in these discursive instruments of territory production.

I

What makes Jenkins' *Report on the North-East Frontier of India* an appropriate entry-point to examine the production of colonial territories in the northeast is the fact that it not only derives from but also significantly participates in a gradually unfolding territorializing vision of the Empire in the region. The narrative is a road-map to organize the newly acquired Brahmaputra valley and the adjoining areas into a grid of colonial

administrative territories. Apart from exemplifying how the production of territories in the colonial northeast is, to a large extent, determined by colonial military and commercial interests, the narrative also illustrates how these projects often employ narratives of fear and desire. To this extent, the present chapter argues that projects of territorializing in the narrative are regularly embedded in narratives of fear and desire and corresponding rhetoric of security and improvement.

As suggested earlier, Jenkins' narrative both derives from as well as reinforces a gradually consolidating territorial vision of an Eastern frontier. By its very design, a frontier is an open and unsettled space. In fact, the very idea of it is a colonizing one, always suggesting potential expansion and occupancy. It explains the regular use of the idea, very often metaphorical, within spatial imaginaries of colonialism. Jenkins' *Report* is an attempt to transform the northeast into a military and economic frontier between British India and the Burmese Empire. It is not unusual that the narrative is replete with instances of territory production.

Insofar as the production of territory in the text, what invites immediate attention is the frequent use of parables of transgression as a pretext to territorialize. Often, the text refers to an unfriendly or hostile exterior signifying transgression. Leaving aside the material foundations of such a fear, it is possible to suggest that the regular foregrounding of a possible transgression acts as a prelude to colonial territory production.

One of the important trajectories of territorializing space in the colonial contact-zone is the formulation of military space. The most obvious attempt at territorialization in Jenkins' text is the visualization of the northeast as a military frontier with Burma. It could be illustrated by looking at the way Suddiya, the easternmost station of the British Empire in the Brahmaputra valley is envisioned as a military garrison in the text. It is also appropriate because in the narrative the construction of territory begins with reflections on the station of Suddiya (2). It helps to explore how the agenda of territorialization is often pursued through acts of strategic imagination and colonial territorializing more so. The instance also illustrates the way strategic imagination are not only aided but also often overtaken by an ideological agenda. The production of territory in such instances could be seen to be pursued through an exaggerated rhetoric of

fear and stereotypes often disguised as strategic imperatives. In other words, a rhetoric of expansion is masqueraded as arhetoric of security and civilization when Jenkins writes:

> Whether Suddiya is considered with reference to the *possible recurrence of hostilities with Ava* [present day Myanmar] or to its position in the *vicinity of the barbarous and numerous tribes of Singphos* [a tribe in Upper Assam], the only people which have *disturbed* the peace of Assam since our possession of the country or to its immediate vicinity to and command over the Moamorias, the only *warlike race* of the Assamese, it appears to me, to yield to no post in Assam in *military importance*. (2; emphasis added)

Referring to the difficulties of navigating the Brahmaputra upwards and the want of roads between it and the stations below, Jenkins recommends that "*Suddiya should be placed on such a respectable footing* as regards its military establishments to…*punish aggressions of the neighboring tribes* and be able to repel independent of support from Lower Assam" (2; emphasis added). This is followed by recommendations to keep "*a strong detachment* at Suddiya as its position does not render it incapable of almost immediate employment in any part of Assam below, for the descent of the Burhampooter may be made with a facility in proportion to the difficulty of ascending it" (2; emphasis added). The passage highlights the strategic importance of the Sadiya as an advanced military position, whether with reference to the possible transgressions by the Burmese or its vicinity to supposedly barbarous hill-tribes. It is important to note that the narrative conceptualizes the place of Suddiya primarily as a "post" or a "station" (2). From this perspective, the place is already postulated as an occupied territory. In other words, the very designation of the place as a post or station confirms its appropriation into the territorial grids of the Empire. Later instances illustrate how, in the narrative, projects of acquisition are disguised as a rhetoric of security. These instances illustrate how colonial travel and expedition writing makes use of certain ideological tools to facilitate the production of colonial territories in the northeast.

Apart from persistently playing out the trope of Burmese threat, the text also vigorously and regularly employs images of civilizational otherness, namely, the barbarous hill tribes of the frontier. For instance, reiterating the stereotype of the barbarous hill-man, and correspondingly the need to discipline him, Jenkins writes:

> The Luttora Gam [a tribal chief near Sadiya] suffered so severely that no repetition of such an inroad is likely to be again attempted whilst we retain a tolerable detachment at Suddiya. To attack them no doubt originated from the smallness of our force posted at Suddiya and the consequent misapprehension on the part of these *barbarians of our strength*. The Luttora Gam is now, I understood, convinced of his mistake. (4; emphasis added)

It could be argued that the very myth of tribal inroad draws from a notion of exclusive territoriality. An inroad is essentially an act of transgression and designating an act of military ambush as inroad makes the marking of territories a necessary obligation. Interestingly, these instances also show how an ideologically conditioned rhetoric of civilizational otherness is made to reinforce colonial territory production.

The text regularly exploits the trope of an anticipated Burmese inroad to back claims of acquisition of spaces in the northeast. Highlighting the need to militarize the region, Jenkins writes:

> The Burmese except that came in great force would not I conceive ever attempt the invasion of Assam by this route knowing that at Suddiya there was a detachment of our troops ready to meet them, and it is very improbable that they would venture to detach a large body of their army to undertake a journey which under the most favourable circumstances their troops were more than 100 days in performing from their capital, knowing much exposed their southern and western provinces are now to our attacks…it would therefore, seem quite practicable for the Burmese Governor in communication with the Singphos of either border to invade Upper Assam with any provincial army of Irregulars that he may have at his disposal and to be at Suddiya or to enter the Moamoriya country before succor could reach from Bishenath. (2-3)

This instance suggests the degree to which the parable of tribal transgression is exploited to back designs of territory production in colonial northeast. Jenkins' narrative could be viewed as an imperial vision to transform of the region into a frontier terrain. It is already suggested that visualizing a particular place as terrain is a move to territorialize space since it entails assertion of strategic control and jurisdiction. From this perspective, formulating the northeast as a strategic terrain, namely a frontier to the heartland of

Bengal is a strategy in Jenkins to incorporate the region into colonial cartographies of power.

To the extent that the production of a territory is best viewed as the commencement and assertion of institutionalized jurisdiction over space, Jenkins' text participates in the construction of military territories in the colonial northeast. It is predominantly along a military gaze that Jenkins' narrative pursues its politics of territorial appropriation. For instance, in the beginning of his narrative, Jenkins firmly rationalizes moves to militarize the station of Suddiya. It is interesting that he exploits the parable of transgression to rationalize the proliferation of colonial territories. For instance, he writes:

> The Dupha Gam [a tribal chief near Sadiya], another of that confederacy, has made overtures of submission *but it was supposed* he was prevented from coming into Suddiya to tender his formal allegiance *by the intrigues and jealousy* of the Bisa Gam occupying the intermediate country who apparently wishes to reserve for himself the medium of intercourse between us and the Singpho tribes. (5; emphasis added)

This passage not only illustrates the ways spaces were transformed into territories in the colonial northeast but also shows how spatial imaginings in writings of colonial travel and expedition always travel along certain ideologically determined trajectories. This also illustrates how designs of territorialization, in the text, function in the guise of strategic knowledge. One key dimension of visions of territorialization, as seen in the text, is the regular use of ethnicity as an instrument to territorialize. Jenkins' narrative illustrates how the construction of territories in the colonial northeast often fall back on acts of manipulating supposedly natural ethnic difference. For instance, after recommending the reward of arms to the Khamtis as aides of the British Empire (12), Jenkins recommends the same for the Singphos:

> Believing there is little or no danger to be apprehended from the few masquets of ours in the hands of Singphos and that they are greatly useful to them in the way above mentioned, I would not recommend withdrawing them and I would not refuse to grant a few to each Gaum that offered submission to us or to give more to any that complied with our desire in opening roads or to other request we may have to propose. (13)

Likewise, he writes:

> The fealty of all these frontier tribes I should now only put entire confidence when our force kept amongst them was so strong or so well secure as not to tempt them to the hope of overcoming it by surprise. The benefits we have in our power to confer upon them will gradually bind them to us by other ties…though very rude and will become valuable allies under good management. (13)

The passage illustrates the strategic manipulation of ethnicities by the architects of colonial space. In an obvious instance of mapping such potential economic territories Jenkins writes: "The principal clans of Singphos *interposed* on *this road* between the Khamtis [a tribe in Upper Assam], of the Burhampooter and those on the Irrawady [a river in Myanmar] are the Luttora Gam on the Tengapani and the Dupha Gam on the Duphapanee and Noa-Dihing rivers" (4; emphasis added). The narrative often classifies tribes of the region either as a potential ally or an enemy of the Empire. It could be viewed as an attempt to transform people as strategic apparatus of the Empire. Such a classification is often immediately followed by arguments favoring subjugation and extension of disciplinary apparatuses into these identified ethnic territories: "It seems to be greatly desired that these chiefs should be encouraged to communicate with us and to respect our paramount authority" (5). On another occasion of formulating pathways of Empire Jenkins writes:

> After placing Suddiya on a proper footing as regards its military establishment, the opening of roads to Beesa and to the cultivated tracts of the Busenapatty's country should be objects of attention; in either instance I contemplate only the clearing away of the jungle (at least at first) sufficiently to enable troops with elephants to travel with tolerable convenience. To make the roads good for the wet season there would be an undertaking of labour and expence and in the dry season the soil is sufficiently firm to render any causeway necessary. (15)

Although for the most part the politics of territorialization in the narrative proceeds along the stated imperative of preempting transgressions, it is in no way confined to it. In fact, the narrative makes overt proposals to initiate acts of transgression. For instance, visualizing espionage and foray over potential territories, Jenkins writes:

> It is to be wished that we had some later information of the state of the province of Hookoom and Magaung through which the commerce traverses not only on furtherance of traffic between Assam and them but with a view to acquire military information and if the rest apprehend no danger of exciting the jealousy of the Ava Government, he might by the dispatch of an occasional intelligent messenger to the Political Agent Upper Assam make us better acquainted with those provinces which are by their position every way of importance to us and smooth the way for the removal of any objections there may at present be to the journey…if these provinces are capable of supporting a division of an army and their population is as little affected to the Burmese Government as there is reason to believe that in the event of war, this might become one of the most vulnerable points of the Burmese Empire. (6)

It is important to note that the commencement of a territory is often preceded by a discursive rationale involving the marking of strategic priorities as well as suggestions at maintaining boundaries. It is obvious that Jenkins proposes to develop Suddiya into a garrison township. For instance, he writes:

> Keeping in view the practicability of the Burmese invading Assam or of our invading Ava by this route and that the Singphos are the only people who are likely to disturb the peace of Assam…Suddiya rises in political importance over any other in Assam and should therefore propose measures that appeared requisite to place this post beyond any probable attempt of the Singphos or the provisional levies of the neighboring province of Ava or that should tend to improve the resources of this part of Assam so as to allow of military operations on our part without difficulty. (7)

The narrative of transgression is obvious here. On a similar occasion, emphasizing the need to militarize the frontier, Jenkins writes:

> Under the circumstances in addition to what is there stated I have only to observe that it seems to be a general impression that *there were great difficulties interposed to the transit of merchandize as well as to the escape of slaves* through the Beesa Gaum country and also that the accession of the Dupha and other Gaum was prevented from the difficulty of communicating with us by the *jealousy* of that chief. (17; emphasis added)

Similarly, justifying moves to occupy, Jenkins writes:

> The remedy for this appears to be to post Subadar's party of the Assam Light Infantry at Beesa, *a measure of preservation* otherwise *required to watch the frontier* and *guard* against the *intensive quarrels of these Chiefs*. The communication such a party so placed would necessarily keep open with Suddiya and the knowledge it would acquire for us of the country and dispositions of the people could not but be highly advantageous to our interest. (18; emphasis added)

Furthering the pretext to intervene, Jenkins writes:

> There is the better opportunity of doing this as the Beesa Gaum has been continually spreading reports of apprehensions of being affected by other tribes of Singphos and has made his fears the grounds of an application to erect stockades for his defence. Such rumors…call for our peremptory interference for their prevention. (18).

Justifying the establishment of a military post in the Singpho territory, Jenkins writes:

> There is only one very small detachment on this frontier and I should deem it inadequate to *intimidate these savages into a respectful forbearance from inroad*; these small parties on our frontiers almost tempt to surprise and disturb the tranquility, our policy seems to be to maintain respectable parties on these exposed points and *to follow up any violation of boundaries by immediate and condign retribution on the offenders.* (23; emphasis added)

These instances illustrate how colonial travel and expedition writers look at the northeast through strategic eyes, bypassing pre-colonial geographies in favour of strategic interests. Interestingly, this politics also involves a rhetoric of appropriateness and utility. For instance, Jenkins writes: "I cannot however doubt that by *proper and easy arrangements* the state of the districts inhabited by the Singphos and Khamtis might be so greatly *ameliorated* that at a period not remote every article of necessity for a division of strength might be abundantly supplied from these local resources" (7; emphasis added). On this occasion, the rhetoric of charity, appropriateness and utility collaborate to participate in geography making.

Interestingly, in Jenkins, military defence is the first consideration while commenting on a place. Suggesting measures to "improve" the station of Suddiya, he writes: "The first step to effect this improvement should be in my opinion by the augmentation of the Department of the Assam Light Infantry to at least 3 companies under a couple of European Officers, the senior of whom should be entrusted with limited political powers" (7). The imperial agenda of territorializing space through increasing militarization is quite obvious here. From this perspective the passage illustrates how the politics of territoriality in the text under investigation is predominantly about the transformation of space into something that is beyond its physical attributes. For example, space is transformed into a strategic operational terrain, or a landscape of confrontation. These geo-strategic imaginations constantly back visions of occupancy. For instance, Jenkins writes:

> The remote distance of Suddiya always remembering the difficulty of the upward navigation makes it essential that the store of ammunition with the department stationed there should be ample and its magazine good and well received by a timber stockade. I do not advocate the erection of any masonry posts. I think a stockade of strong timber an adequate defence, but I would give it corner bastions in which should be mounted on mounds of well-beaten clay for Carronades. (8)

He continues to postulate:

> The present stockade of such small denominations that the guard house has been erected outside it a very objectionable arrangement. The stockade should be in my opinion not only sufficient to contain the magazine but of a capacity to admit of the families of the sepoys and the merchants of the place with their valuable property. The fort is also I think badly located being so near the banks of the Koondil that an enemy could skulk up under cover within pistol's shot … were it thrown further back about 300 yards to the north, it would occupy higher and more commanding ground and be free of any apprehension from the inundations. (8)

It is obvious that Jenkins transforms the place as a site of possible military confrontation. In other words, he appropriates the existing place into grids of imperial military vision.

The very next paragraph also continues to paint out cartographies of control and extension of jurisdiction. For instance:

> I am led to understand that no boundary has been defined for the Cantt. of the department stationed at Suddiya and the Government is aware that the whole of the surrounding countries has been granted away to the Khamti Chiefs; it will be necessary therefore to *settle with them a line of demarcation*. Our troops are stationed south of the confluence of the Koondil Nullah and Burhampooter.(14; emphasis added)

Proposing another series of subsidiary military arrangements, Jenkins writes:

> Immediately above our station or about 400 yards from it is a thriving village of Dooms attached to the *Dawk* and other establishments connected with the troops and below the station on the Burhampooter at about the same distance is a village of the Meerees, who supply the troops with firewood and small articles and furnish Coolies for various purposes. Both these villages should be included and an ample piece of ground beyond them to admit of the enlargement to leave room for the erection of a fort and for the great increase of the *Bazar* and to afford room for vegetable cultivation and the grazing of cattle. (15)

The text makes similar propositions to convert the valley of Manipur into a military frontier. For instance, Jenkins writes: "Another measure of defence is the rendering the distant outpost of Munipore almost impregnable at least defensible until reinforcements could be brought up from Assam provided possible roads to either province previously prepared" (29). Similar proposals are made to develop the place of Biswanath as the principal military station of the province (31-33). Likewise, visualizing Goalpara as an occupied territory, Jenkins writes:

> The growing importance of Goalpara as the *great commercial mart of Assam* and of the country intersected by the Monas river is a sufficient ground of itself for placing a Dett. of our Regular infantry there. The Marwari Shroffs already located at Goalpara have brought considerable wealth to the town, but I should hope to encourage the settlement of much more numerous and affluent giving them a more adequate military protection. (56; emphasis added)

Goalpara is also imagined as an important military position. However, Jenkins is disappointed due to the fact that the place is not in the flourishing state which might have been expected followed by extensive proposals to intervene and initiate projects of infrastructure building.

It is obvious that Jenkins' narrative incorporates the northeast into a strategic imperial cartography, almost entirely overlooking existing social geographies in the region. The narrative also illustrates that a territory cannot be always equated only with military spaces and could better be viewed as any space over which jurisdiction and control is exercised. One foremost mode of territorializing space, as seen in the text, is that of commercial or economic territories. Despite its focus on surveying military spaces Jenkins' text regularly looks for potential economic zones in the northeast. For instance, visualizing the transformation of Suddiya as an entrepot of trade and commerce, and hence extending jurisdiction over it Jenkins writes:

> Suddiya seems of no less importance from a commercial point of view and the imports are articles of value amongst which I may enumerate Musk…and its communications are with the Lama country, Ava and through the Shan provinces to China. There are already three or four Marwari *Kootees* established at Suddiya, one at Beesa and I understood an agent of these most enterprising merchants had last year been pushed on the Hookom valley with a view to open *koote* there. (3)

This is important in light of the fact that places like Sadiya or Goalpara are often imagined in the text, as strategic military outposts. Situated at the easternmost part of the Brahmaputra valley and the junction of what is presently known as the state of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Burma Sadiya is one of the key colonial positions from which most of the colonial expeditions are carried out. Similarly, lying at the foothills of what is presently known as the Garo hills, in the state of Meghalaya, Goalpara is often seen as an advanced military position to contain Garo inroads. It is also important to note that the Garo hills produced a good quantity of cotton, a key interest of the Empire.

Imagining the establishment of channels of commercial intercourse, Jenkins writes:

> Khamtis of Suddiya are a tribe of Shans and in point of civilization I should consider them little at all inferior to Mugs or Burmese, whose written dialects they read and through them original country of Borkhamtis and occasional

> intercourse is kept up with the Shans beyond the Irrawaddy. This communication would without doubt be frequent and be intended through all the vast countries of this widely spread and very mercantile people, if the Khamtis possessed the tract of country between their present and former settlement and the commerce continued to increase in the manner it at present promises to do. (3)

It is obvious that the traveler is always fascinated by the prospect of military or economic incentives for the Empire. Visualizing the indigenous population, in this instance, the Khamtis-as an instrument of cross-border commerce is an obvious attempt to transform space into a remunerative geography. Looking at the Khamtis as ambassadors of cross-border commerce, Jenkins envisions new commercial territories between Assam and Burma. He writes:

> The tract of country they possess in Assam bordered by the Dibong West, the Burhampooter south and hills north and east is of considerable extent and it is of surpassing fertility both from the nature of the soil and the peculiarities of climate. A very small portion however is now cultivated…the condition of this tract is rapidly improving; *the sway of the Khamtis is mild* and an immigration from all quarters into their territory has been taking place since the cessation of the troubles in the neighbourhood and *its progress may be expected to be quickened as the measures* taken by us tend to the *permanent security of property to conciliate the inhabitants* and to *the promotion of their prosperity* by *improving the interchange of friendly communications* between Assam and the bordering countries and so *rendering their country the great entrepot* for commerce its natural position indicates its capability of becoming. (10; emphasis added)

The passage illustrates how the imperial eyes transform a plot of land or a place into a remunerative geography. Jenkins regrets that only a small portion has been utilized. In a way, this is a prelude to potential intervention. In an instance of transforming people into assets, he writes:

> An influx of the same races from the Chinese and Burmah countries would gradually follow on the intercourse of traffic and the merchants of Hindoostan who have already began to establish themselves at Suddiya would be drawn

> thither…the development of the resources of Suddiya would tend to advance those of all the other parts of Assam.(10)

This passage makes it obvious that colonial projects of transforming space into territories often instrumentalize a rhetoric of improvement or welfare. It goes without saying that pre-colonial places are appropriated into macro visions of imperial cartography. Jenkins' narrative presents many instances of such visualization. In fact, throughout his narrative, Jenkins reiterates a rhetoric of improvement which almost always as serve as prelude to colonial intervention and subsequent transformation. This is a trick to transform spaces in the northeast into cartographies of power. The trope of transgression often takes over and the imperative to occupy is reiterated:

> The frequented road however between the Khamtis of Suddiya and of Borkhamtis unfortunately lie through a part of the lands of the *Singphos not acknowledging our authority* lying on the banks of the Noa- Dihing and Tengapani rivers. These districts formed the settlements of the Khamtis until they were driven in before the singphos, but since their expulsion from them the communication depends upon the goodwill of the Singphos and *cannot be considered available for extensive traffic until the later people submit to our paramount authority*. (4; emphasis added)

As suggested earlier, one important dimension of the politics of territoriality in the narrative is that the space of desire and fear also extends to that of individuals and collectivities. For instance, the Khamtis as a rule are always represented in a favourable light whereas the Singphos are a constant object of repulsion. For instance, Jenkins writes: "The Khamtis are in my opinion decidedly the first race in Assam in spirit, intelligence and moral character" (10). Again he writes: "The Khamtis are a proud and warlike race" (11). In fact, Jenkins mulls over elaborate plans to deploy them as a subsidiary territorial force to meet acts of transgression not only by Ava (12-13), but also by other ethnic groups.

The politics of territorialization in the text does not remain confined to rhetoric alone. In fact, the traveler eagerly pushes for colonial interventions to bring forth the transformation of space into material realities. In a way, the text eagerly participates in the production ofspace as a material project. Probably one of the most crucial projects of the material transformation of space that the Empire undertook in the northeast is the

commencement and expansion of roads. It goes without saying that it is also predominantly shaped by the military and economic interests of the Empire. Jenkins' text offers extensive proposals towards the materialization of roads. For instance, he writes: "Under whatever circumstances a war with the Burmese may recur, it must be desirable that *all our advanced posts should be connected together by practicable roads* and that *all known passes between our possessions and there should be equally available to us as to them*" (28; emphasis added). Similarly, there are enthusiastic proposals to revive the existing causeways as military and commercial lines of communication (41). Similarly, he writes:

> The old road which goes through the entire country to Dhunsiri from the deserted state of the lands immediately below the Mikeer Hills, but in opening a communication with Bishenath it would be essential to clear the road so far east as to pass all the mouths of the Kullung and which would bring the road out to the great river a little above that station. (42)

What is important to note is the collusion of colonial military and commercial interests that go into the formulation of territories: "The distance from Suddiya to Beesa is from 35 to 40 miles. There is now a footpath along the banks of the river, the navigation of which upwards is so difficult as to render the improvement of the road for commercial and military purpose a desideratum of the moment" 16).

It is also noteworthy that in the narrative roads are visualized not only as a means of convenience but also as a panoptic and disciplinary tool to safeguard colonial territories. For instance, in the following passage Jenkins proposes clearing out jungle and opening out passages as an instrument to discipline and surveillance over what are seen as potential territories:

> Between Suddiya and the Senaputty's cultivation, there is a belt of jungle of about fifteen miles, I believe through which it is very desirable that there should be practicable road as the supplies for Suddiya are mostly drawn from that country and a knowledge that there was a ready access to the heart of his country would greatly tend to confirm that Chieftain in good behaviour and from our first acquaintance with him, his conduct has been, I understand far from satisfactory. (16)

In the above instance a clear insistence on ensuring good disposition by an architect of a panoptic territorial dispensation. Although not explicitly referring to good behaviour, the following passage illustrates the colonial disciplinary rhetoric:

> The continuation of the road from Bishenath to the eastwards as far as the Dhunsiri the boundary of Lower Assam is indispensable on military grounds and probably it is the part which should be first commenced upon as giving our troops ready access to Poorunder Singh's territory in case of emergency. (42)

As usual, here also an extensive vision of territorial appropriation makes its way:

> I have already alluded to the *extreme fertility* of the country occupied by our tributary Khamtis. The tract possessed by the Singphos is not inferior. The united back possesses *very great capabilities*, the soil of the flat land is of the richest description and is intersected by several *navigable streams*. The Dibong, the Dihong…are all either navigable upwards nearly to the foot of the hills or are capable of floating their produce downwards. (18; emphasis added)

The narrative not only transforms the colonized land into economic and social territories, even envisions colonization of the rivers of the region as well. Constructing the rivers as potential pathways of commerce and also of the Empire, Jenkins writes:

> The Noa Dihing [a river in Upper Assam] is navigable 10 or 15 miles above Beesa, whence the Singpho villages of the Dupha and other Gaum stretch up about 25 miles along its banks within the hills and from their most eastern village of the Borkhamtis of the other side of the ridge between the waters of the Burhampooter and the Irrawady the absolute distance is not above 40 miles. (18)

In what could be seen as an attempt at constructing larger territories in the region, Jenkins explores the possibilities of linking up the Brahmaputra in the northeast and the Irrawady river in Burma entirely as an imperial asset. He writes:

> The country between Borkhamtis and China, although of such limited breadth is intersected by two branches of the Irrawady, by the Meking [a river in Burma], which there is every reason for supposing it the northern branch of the Salwin or Mortal river, by the Meking or river of Cambodia and by the Kiang or the great river of China which empties itself into the sea below Nankin…all of them would

> appear to be navigable and as it is certain that population of the neighboring countries chiefly extends along the waters of these rivers, they must be great high roads of trade and the opening of a communication with the country of the Khamtis and through Borkhamtis with the channels of these rivers seems to me a fairer prospect for the extension of commerce of Assam. (20)

It is important to note that even the rhetoric of utility is mandatorily enmeshed in the meta-narrative of otherness and transgression. It is illustrated by the fact that Jenkins looks at the extension of commerce primarily as a counter-dose to "constant incurring occasions of insurrection, inroads and oppressions" or so to say, transgressions (21). It substantiates the view that the production of territory derives from parables of transgression.

Jenkins frequently employs the rhetoric of progress as a pretext to territorialize. Highlighting the need to "watch" the Khamtis, Singphos and other hill dwellers it classifies them into friends and hostiles: "The Merees are an agricultural and therefore a highly valuable race…the Abors are very rude hill tribes and have been occasionally troublesome" (22.) Stereotyping the hill-men of the frontier assumes more visible forms when playing out the trope of transgression, Jenkins writes:

> Of all the tribes along the northern frontier of Lower Assam, the Duphlas are considered I believe the *most rude and most troublesome*, but the Bhooteahs from their *established character for treachery* and their comparative civilization, combination and numbers are the most to be apprehended in regard to serious inroads. Here is as elsewhere along the whole frontier the provision of occasional strong and well stockade guards may prove the cheapest policy that we can adopt. (39; emphasis added)

Likewise, proposing the establishment of ammunition depot at Biswanath Jenkins emphasizes the savagery of the hill-tribes:

> Under this statement of the distance the policy of keeping a depot in Assam fully supplied…and the small body of troops to which this extensive frontier is entrusted and surrounded as it is everywhere by *barbarians* on which faith we can have but very slight reliance, there would seem to be little occasion for

> urging the expediency of providing a safe place for the custody of our depots. (30; emphasis added)

It is obvious that the text transforms the natural topography of the region into geo-strategic utilities. It is the most obvious in the ways the rivers are viewed as strategic territories and accordingly brought under military occupation. For instance, the traveler proposes the raising of military posts along the banks of the rivers:

> Had we retained Upper Assam, I should have recommended the strongest manner that military posts should have been established at the mouths of all the rivers on the South bank of the Burhampooter…for the purpose of protecting merchants and encouraging the formation of villages along the great river, that travelers of all kind might obtain the supplies and assistance they might stand in need of. (24)

The text offers ample evidence to suggest that the traveler appropriates natural spaces in the northeast into strategic use. These spaces are almost readily transformed into occupiable territories, often, as instruments to safeguard the Empire. For instance, in an act of visualizing occupation, Jenkins writes:

> I visited all these rivers and conceive they offer very great advantages for settlements; the banks found to be of clay in contradiction to the soil on the northern bank of the Burhampooter which as far as I visited is everywhere alluvial of recent formation and continually liable to change. The streams in the dry weather, at some distance above are insignificant, afford good havens for boats of any size at all seasons…the immediate mouths of the rivers have been apparently abandoned owing I suppose to the liability to the plunder and oppression. (24)

Once the trope of transgression is played out, claims to territorialize follow:

> I should be disposed to consider it expedient to stipulate for the location of a strong division of our own troops either at the mouth of the Disung or Booree Dihing. It would be in a line placed nearly intermediately between our stations of Bishenath and Suddiya and besides the confidence it would give to traders and the parties of Assam militia that may be placed in the other positions it would without creating jealousy operate as a check to any disturbance between the subject of the Senaputtee and of Rajah Poorunder Sing.(25)

The traveller-surveyor often reiterates the trope of transgression and subsequent proposals to territorialize the region. For instance, envisioning the appropriation of the rivers, Jenkins writes:

> Of the two sites, the mouth of the Booree Dihing I should conceive to be the more eligible. It is above the separation of the great river into two branches forming the Majowlee Island and it is nearly opposite the mouth of the Sisi River upon which we have always found it necessary to maintain a small post to keep peace between the Abors and the large Meree population of that part of country. The Boree Dihing is also a much larger river and the boundaries between the countries of the Senaputtee and Rajah Poorunder sing; it also communicates with the country occupied by the Singphos and on its left bank is the old fort and capital Jypoor. (25)

In another instance of appropriating space, Jenkins writes:

> The fort of Jypoor would be one of the most commanding positions for a military force that could be selected with reference to an expected invasion from Ava, but the country is now so totally desolate that it would not at present be practicable. I understand to support a detachment there, a post however at the mouth of the river would be an approach towards that desirable locality and by the protection it afforded lead to the resettlement of that part of the country and our obtaining the means of reestablishing the fort.(25)

Continuing the territorial appropriation of natural territories as political markers as well as the commencing of territorial jurisdictions Jenkins postulates a set of boundaries in the area (27). What is interesting is that these arrangements are almost always designed in ways that enhance the scope of further territorialization, but are disguised asa rhetoric of charity. For instance, mulling over the allocation of territories between Assam and Manipur, Jenkins writes:

> I should have expected that also the Munipoorees, so settled having an abundant tract of fertile land about them, would have availed themselves of these favourable circumstances and converted the two unprofitable wastes into cleared and cultivated lands and upon them created *a mart for interchange of the hills*

> *and the plains*. A *communication fit for military purposes* would have gradually been established without effort. (26)

Visualizing roads, Jenkins writes:

> The first attention in restoring the roads should be to secure a continued line of road on one side of the Burhampooter and there would seem to be reason to prefer the Southern side as thus the great towns of Goalpara and Gowhatty would be connected through the very populous district of Nowgong, with the important station of Bishenath and there would be much fewer streams to cross than on the northern side on the districts of Kamroop and Durrung. (41)

Mapping is often followed by extensive proposals to revive the existing and also set up new roads for military and commercial use (41-43). These instances illustrate how the production of territory in the colonial northeast is predominantly determined by the military and economic interests of the Empire.

An important component of territoriality is the construction of boundaries. Appropriating natural landmarks as territorial signposts, Jenkins writes: "I should have had no hesitation in proposing the make over the Doab of the Dihong and Dhansiri to Rajah Gumbheer Sing and to constitute the latter river and the Jeeree the boundary between Cachar and Munipore" (26). Visualizing boundaries, he writes:

> As the tract in advance of the hills 60 miles between the two rivers now under *consideration everywhere a forest*, it seems to me that there can by no possibility be any objection to declaring the forest between the Dheong and Dhansiri to be the boundary between Assam and Munipore. The whole of the hills between these rivers would then be included in Munipore…*the Nagas of these hills are, I fully believe, in no way connected with or dependent on Assam.* (27)

This is an obvious instance where imperial territorial designs hurriedly bypass existing lived geographies and arrangements in order to formulate new territorial configurations.

Given that a territory is not merely a physical fact and is more of a social space, it is important to explore dimensions of colonial territories other than the military in the text. In other words, it is important to look at ways the text reflects the initiation as well as the extension of jurisdiction over existing spaces as well as the ideological construction of

colonizable territories. For instance, it is possible to look at the construction of certain categories of land as "waste" and its corresponding appropriation into the colonial expansionist design. For instance, visualizing new territorializations Jenkins writes: "As the settlement of Englishmen of capital on the *wastes on* these frontiers seems to me to offer a better prospect for the *speedy realization of improvements* than any measures that could be adopted in the present *ignorant* and *demoralized state of the native inhabitants*" (36; emphasis added). What is important to note is the persistent presence of a rhetoric of otherness to sponsor colonizing claims.

To sum up, Jenkins' text highlights how the production of territories in the colonial northeast derives from the expansionist military and commercial interests of the Empire. At the same time, it also reflects the instrumental role played by the discourse of otherness and anticipated transgression in facilitating the establishment and furtherance of colonial territories over existing territorial arrangements. It also brings in focus how imperial traveler- surveyors tend to undermine pre-colonial spaces in the northeast.

II

Like Jenkins' text, Pemberton's *The Eastern Frontier of India* (1835), is primarily a survey report prepared in the early days of British colonialism in the northeast. For the most part, it consists of observations and suggestions of strategic nature, made on the basis of extensive surveys across the Manipur-Burma frontier undertaken by Captain Pemberton. To this extent, like that of Jenkins, this narrative is also viewed best as a report of colonial reconnaissance. However, its importance for the present study derives from, more than anything else, the visions of territorial appropriation it offers. The narrative is an extensive survey of the existing as well as potential lines of communication between Assam and Burma. It is very obvious in its stated mandate to formulate grids of new territorial passages between Assam and Burma, and for that matter, to explore the possibilities of commencing larger territorial configurations, both material and social, primarily for the extension of the empire. In other words, the narrative is a discursive road-map towards the formulation of colonial territories in general and economic territories in particular. In other words, although to a great extent similar to the narrative of Jenkins, what distinguishes Pemberton's is that, (a) whereas Jenkins is primarily focused on the Brahmaputra valley, the focus in Pemberton is Manipur and its adjoining territories and (b) whereas Jenkins' vision is principally

guided by the military concerns, in Pemberton visions of trade and commerce predominate.

Pemberton's text is best viewed as a road-map to transform the northeast into a colonial resource frontier. As seen in Jenkins, the politics of territorialization in Pemberton's text also primarily operates through (a) regular attempts to objectify, commodify and transform natural spaces in the region into instruments of economic or military utility and (b) enumeration and labeling of natural territories essentially as aids or hurdles in furthering the expansionist agenda of the Empire. As expected in a narrative of reconnaissance, the construction of territories within the text is basically in the form of proposals. What marks the politics of territorializing in the text is its strategic and regular use of the tropes of transgression. It is also important to note that the narrative of transgression in these visions is not always explicit and very often operates as layers of sub-textual insinuations.

The most obvious instances of the production of territory in Pemberton are his visions to transform the region into a resource frontier in general and occupiable terrains in particular. In other words, the production of territories in the text is primarily carried out through visions to transform the natural geography of the region into that of a strategic terrain. The very first instance of such appropriation is the enframing of the mountain chain of the eastern frontier in terms of the strategic metaphor of a military barrier to protect the possessions of Assam and Manipur. Pemberton writes:

> In the following Report upon the countries on the Eastern Frontier of the British Territories, it is proposed in the first place, to give a general description of the *great chain of mountains*, which, running from the southern borders of the Assam Valley, in lat. 26 deg. 30', extends to Cape Negra is, the extreme southern limit of our possessions in Arracan, in flat 16 deg. North; and forms a *barrier* on the east, along the whole line of the Bengal Presidency, from one extremity to the other. (1; emphasis added)

Apart from illustrating the appropriation of natural topography into a territorial marker or a strategic tool of military defence, the passage also reflects on the commencement of larger political or for that matter, geo-strategic territories. Pemberton writes:

> *The mountainous chain which forms our eastern frontier* may be considered a ramification from that which, sweeping round the south-eastern border of the Assam valley, stretches nearly due west along the *northern frontier* of the Sylhet district, and terminates at the great southern bend of the Burhampooter river, in longitude 90 degree east. (4; emphasis added)

The passage highlights the instrumentalization of existing topographies in favour of colonial military and economic inerest. The instrumentalization of space in this passages often manifest as extensive administrative visions to institute cartographies of control around the natural topographies. It should be noted that the very mandate of the text is to- first, explore potential pathways of empire or functional territories consisting of (a) the mountain passes (b) both other land and riparian routes (1).

As suggested above, the text offers an extensive range of visions to transform the northeast into a resource frontier. The text transforms the topography of the region into a cluster of strategic and utilitarian space. The rivers in the region find an important place in this expansionist spatial imaginings. In an attempt to convert a river into a military utility, Pemberton writes: "The rivers which flow from this mountainous tract of country on the east and west, though numerous are, with few exceptions, of but trifling importance; the *navigation of them, except during the rainy season, being extremely uncertain and precarious*" (5; emphasis added). It is not unusual that the narrative offers an elaborate survey of the rivers in the northeast. For instance:

> The principal of those which flow into the Burhampooter, is the Soormah or Barak river, whose sources are in latitude 25 degree 30' north and longitude 94 degree 20' east, among the lofty peaks of the chain of mountains which form the central barrier between Muneepoor and Assam. This stream, after flowing for upwards of 180 miles, through a mountainous country, only becomes navigable for boats of any burden about 20 miles above Banskandee. (5)

Similarly, he writes:

> The second or Kosseearah river [in Bangladesh]…is the principal *emporia of trade* carried on between the inhabitants of the surrounding districts: to these points, boats of 1000 maunds burthen annually repair, laden with the produce of the more western districts, and principally carry off in exchange the surplus rice

> of Cachar and Sylhet, and the timber, bamboos, and grass, which are abundantly produced in the forests on their eastern and southern borders. (6).

Pemberton continues his extensive survey of the entire range of rivers in the region flow between Cachar, Manipur and Burma (6). The primary focus, however, is always the potential of these rivers to operate as colonial utilities such as vehicles of military or commercial transport. It explains the eagerness on the part of the travelers to map even the minutest of the strategic details, especially, those pertaining to navigability through these rivers. For instance, mapping the routes of interior navigation Pemberton observes:

> The Aeng river is navigable during the spring tides, up to the town or village of that name, which stands on its left bank, but all other periods, boats of large burden are compelled to stop about five miles lower down, and transfer their cargoes to the light description of canoe already noticed, for conveyance to Aeng, which is about 45miles distant from the mouth of the river and connected with Talak by cross road. (8)

Similarly, mapping potential harbors in the region, Pemberton writes: "The river of Goa, which falls into the sea a short distance below the village of that name, *possesses a very good harbor*, but the entrance is rendered intricate and difficult by a bar of sand" (9). Similarly: "From TekMyoo south to Combermere Bay, their mouths are protected from the severity of the sea by *numerous low islands*" (10; emphasis added). Pemberton formulates an extensive cartography of riparian tracks of commerce framing the river-space as economic commodities (5-12). Jenkins identifies some rivers as valuable and others as unimportant depending on their ability to fit into colonial military or commercial designs.

The expansionist design of the traveler-surveyor becomes obvious in the way he forays the natural resources in the region. For instance, surveying the geological structures of the region he comments:

> *Petrifications of the different species of woods* growing on the borders of the *Nullahs* are very numerous. Among the central ranges west of Muneepoor *limestone* has been found cropping out from the banks of the streams: the rocks found in the hills between the Muneepoor and Kubo valleys are, on the Muneepoor side, composed of different varieties of sand-stone and slate, more or

> less compact in its structures: on the Kubo side hornblende and iron-stone are found; large masses of agalmatolite, used by the inhabitants…for *writing pencils* and fuller's earth are dug from the ground not far from Moreh [in Manipur]. (13; emphasis added)

The foray extends to geological resources:

> Crossing the Kubo Valley [in Myanmar], we reach the Ungoching Hills, where *lignite coal is found in large detached masses*, occupying the bed of Nullah which flows nearly centrically through these hills, and fragments of considerable size have been extracted from the face of hills immediately east of the Nullah, clearly *proving the site of the mineral to be in the vicinity: brown, yellow, and red sand-stones compose almost all the rocks* which form the bed of the streams. (13; emphasis added)

Gazing at potential mining spots, the traveler-surveyor writes: "The coal already mentioned has been traced to the opposite bank of the Ningthee, where it again rises to the surface; it abounds in this part of the country" (13). Similarly, he observes: "That coal exists, though not discovered by him in that locality, is rendered extremely probable by the inflammable gases which escaped from apertures in the ground at two places not far from Chittagong, on the north"(14). On another occasion, Pemberton writes:

> On the summit of the Aeng pass [in Mynamar], clay-slate is found, and lower down, towards the sea-shore, sand-stone formations again prevail; while on the opposite or eastern side, the bed of the Man rivers is filled with blocks of basaltic rock, and the *petroleum wells are known to exist between it and Memboo, on the right bank of the Irrawaddy*[a river in Myanmar]…Coral and shell-lime abound in every part of the coast, furnishing an *inexhaustible supply for building purposes*.(14; emphasis added)

These instances illustrates how colonial travelers and agents server as capitalist vanguards in the northeast. These also substantiate the view that travel and expedition writings eagerly participate in the mapping of resources in the region. It is not difficult to see that often the visions of acquisition are quickly and subtly extended to other resources as well. For instance, speculating on the utilization of the flora of the region, Pemberton writes:

> The timber found in different parts of this mountainous chain is, as might have been anticipated from its extent and elevation, most various and abundant. On the lofty summits and ridges around the Muneepoor valley, Oak and Fir of very superior growth are procurable-on the heights around Kubo, Teak alternates with the Fir and Bamboo and the *valley itself is entirely filled with magnificent forests of the Sal, Gurjun and Keo tree…*the same valuable description of timber is found along the whole western face of the chain, as low down as the sources of the Kuladyne river, where Teak again appears. (15; emphasis added)

After laying out an elaborate cartography of prospective economic territories along the mountain chain of Eastern frontier (1-20), the traveler-surveyor moves on to survey potential territories in Muneepoor. Like in the earlier instances, here also the territorial gaze of the traveler-surveyor ranges from minute reconnaissance of navigable streams (24-26), agricultural resources (27), timber (27-28), minerals (28-30), livestock (33-34) and other articles of manufacture (34-35). It goes without mentioning that the imperial eyes are often driven by the desire to occupy and appropriate.

Pemberton's text participates not only in the construction of economic territories but also the construction of military spaces in the colonial northeast. Like Jenkins, Pemberton also reiterates the need to maintain occupation over Manipur for strategic concerns. He writes: "Their country is to be regarded principally as an *advanced military position* for the defence of the eastern frontier, and its utility must of course entirely depend upon its natural resources and the efficiency of its military force" (50). The text makes extensive proposals of improving military arrangements like raising of force (50), augmentation of cavalry (51) or other corresponding arrangements (52). The traveler also extensively surveys possible military routes to Burma (53). Highlighting the strategic nuances of the routes between Sylhet, Cachar and Manipur, Pemberton writes:

> The Kala Naga route, from Banskandee via Kowpoom, to Lumlangtong, is 82 miles, of which not more than 17 miles, or two easy marches, pass through the forest before mentioned, and in a part infinitely less intersected by streams and swamps, than that traversed by the more northern route of Aquee; this route has also the great advantage of crossing the Jeree at a point not more than eight miles distant from its mouth, up to which the Barak is navigable for boats of 500 maunds burthen. (53)

There are similar reflections on other routes to Burma (54-55). Apart from mapping out the existing infrastructure, the narrative often visualizes new strategic infrastructure. Highlighting the need of a new road, Pemberton writes:

> Between this route and that of Kala Naga, there is a *line of country* however, across which I am led to think that a road superior to any we present possess, might be constructed at a very trifling expence. *It would commence at the mouth of the Jeree river and pass over inferior heights, to the site of the village of Pendow on the Mookroo range of hills; from hence it would descend to the Barak …affording every facility for the formation of a depot, and most conveniently situated as a halting place for troops or cattle* passing between Cachar and Manipur. (55; emphasis added)

These instances illustrate the strategic role played by the parable of a likely transgression by Burma in the production of colonial territories in the region. Often anticipations of an inroad operate as a prelude to territorialize. For instance, Pemberton proposes an extension of military routes in the region as an imperative to contain the Burmese:

> Further south through the Anal and Mueeyol tribes of Nagas, several other lines of communication are shown in the map, by which the southern extremity of the Kubo Valley might be entered, if necessary, from the hills; but they are all so much more circuitous than those already described, that they could only be usefully employed by troops destined to make a flank movement against a Burmese army already in possession of Kubo. (58)

It is important to note that these mappings transform space either into deterrents or into potential assets such as the conveyance of baggage, potable water and other similar means of sustenance (62- 65). For instance: "It is a most convenient point of departure, the Jummoona river *affording every facility for the conveyance of baggage in small canoes*, and the path rarely deviating for any considerable distance from its banks" (64; emphasis added). The traveler looks out for space as strategic assets:

> By this pass, the Burmese army…both advanced, and effected the conquest of Assam; and *it is by this route only, that we can ever expect to make any impression from Assam on the northern Shan provinces* of the Burmese empire, should war ever render such a measure necessary, or that we can hope to establish

> a commercial intercourse from it, with the populous and wealthy cities of Mogaung and Bhumo, and the country around them. (67; emphasis added)

Commenting on Upper Assam as a strategic territory, Pemberton writes: "The Noa Dihing [a river] which skirts the road the whole way, *affords a convenient line of water communication for the conveyance of supplies* in the small canoes of the country" (67; emphasis added). Another instance of transforming space into military zones is the visualization of camps:

> Beesa [a village near Sadiya] which is the principal village and the residence of the head of the Singpho tribe…on the banks of which *good encamping ground is* found 16 miles from Beesa…the Numroop [a river in Upper Assam] flows between these hills, and the Nunnun falls into it a short distance from the *second encampment; there is but little jungle in the vicinity of the encamping ground: which has space sufficient for a tolerably large body of troops.*(68; emphasis added)

Pemberton's visions, it is possible to suggest, replicate Jenkins' proposals to transform spaces in the northeast into military and economic territories. While doing so, the narrative transforms the northeast from a pre-colonial space to a series of exclusive and discontinuous, political territories. The following passage is an obvious instance of the transformation of space to political territories, namely administrative divisions:

> The division will comprise of whole of Upper Assam, or a tract of country extending from the mountains on the east, as far as the Dhunseeree river, which separates it from Northern Cachar; on the south, it is bounded by the foot of the inferior heights stretching from the great water bent, which has been before mentioned as dividing Muneepoor from Assam; and, on the north, by the hills inhabited by the independent tribes of Meeree, Abor and Duphla; the western limit on that side being formed by the Borroee or Gallowah river, east of Bishenath. (69)

The narrative offers multiple visions of the transformation of spaces in the northeast into new territorial arrangements. What is remarkable is that, almost on every occasion, comments on places inevitably involve vision to occupy. It is important to note that territorializing moves are often masked as urgency to contain transgression. For instance,

commenting on the supposedly unreliable disposition of the Moamorias, Pemberton writes:

> No reliance can I think be placed upon the fidelity of this chieftain, except it is insured by the continued presence of a superior force at Suddya: he was strongly suspected by local authorities, of having connived at the Singpho invasion…and *his position on the borders of the principal passes leading to Ava, would enable him, if so inclined, to do us much mischief* in the event of another invasion of the Burmahs. (71; emphasis added)

Reiterating the parable of transgression Pemberton writes:

> The military force stationed here, has been considered necessary to overawe the numerous *powerful and restless* tribes by which the post of Suddya is surrounded, and who *until our occupation of the province, had been accustomed to carry on a war of extermination against the more peaceable inhabitants of the valley* (73; emphasis added).

The rhetoric continues further: "This force is quite sufficient to preserve the province from internal tumult, and from the *doubtful fidelity* of our *Singpho, Moamoria, and Khamti allies*" (73; emphasis added).In a way Pemberton's text reiterates and complements the parable of transgression, initiated by Jenkins's text. In other words, both these texts collaborate in the politics of space-production the colonial northeast. From this perspective, the construction of the Singphos as barbarians and the proposals to discipline them could be viewed as a trope.

An important dimension of travel and expedition writings in the colonial northeast is the transformation of the region into a series of separate, monolithic ethnic territories. These writings played a crucial role in visualizing the northeast as a series of separate and fixed territorial spaces. It is obvious in the narrative of Pemberton. He views the region as a cartography of disjointed political territories peopled by independent tribes. For instance: "The Singphos, whose villages occupy the level tracts of country extending east from the Moamorias borders across the Noa- Dihing [a river in Upper Assam], and Tenga Panee [a river near Sadiya]; and in the mountains, to the heads of the Dupha Panee [a river in Upper Assam], and Dihing river; are divided into twelve principal tribes or Gaums"(71).

It could be suggested that the fixation ofa particular ethnic group to a particular territorial space is an exercise in formulating disparate or exclusive ethnic territories in the region. It is important to note that the visualization of and subsequently, the real transformation of the northeast into a landscape of discontinuous territories substantially helps the Empire in materializing further political negotiations. As discussed in the previous chapters, the northeast as a pre-colonial space had not lived along such notions of fixed and exclusive territories. It is possible to relate it with the parable of transgression used almost readily in the studied narratives. In short, fixing a supposedly nomadic population to a particular territorial enclosure served important strategic interests of the Empire.

That visions to territorialize, in the narrative, not only derive from but also reinforce expansionist visions of the Empire is corroborated by the narrative itself when it proclaims as its mandate, the selection of a "line of operation against Ava" (152). Correspondingly the narrative elaborately reflects upon strategic advantages and hurdles in carrying out operations against Burma by the four major lines by Assam, Muneepoor, Arracan (a division in British Burma), and Rangoon highlighting travelling distance, time, modes of conveyance, supply of food-grains and salubrity (153-170). Similarly, postulations of transforming space to economic territories are made. For instance: "The central situation of Muneepoor, its peculiarly fine climate, and its present intimate connexion with the British government, mark it as a spot peculiarly fitted to become the entrepot of a trade between the northern provinces of Ava, and the northern districts of Bengal" (174). It is followed by more elaborate justifications in favour of extending the Empire's sphere of influence:

> *If we continue to retain an influence in Muneepoor* , by having one or more officers permanently resident there, we can hardly doubt that it will *in time become an entrepot for trade between two countries* which but for the existence of this beautiful valley, would have been separated by an almost impracticable chain of mountains. *British goods which could be brought to the Muneepoor valley* free of the exactions with which the trade at Rangoon is burdened, would, I had not a doubt, be profitably sold there to the Shans of the Ningthee [a river in Myanmar], at prices below the rates demanded for similar articles at the same spot, which have run the Gaunt-let of extortion from Rangoon to Ganduh [in Malayasia]. (175; emphasis added)

Visualizing larger trans-border economic zones, Pemberton writes:

> Were it *possible to open a more direct line of communication higher up* the Irrawady, through the country of the Khakoo Singphos, to old Beesa, the intercourse between Yunan, Sechuen [in China], and Assam could be relieved from many of the extortions practiced by all the Burmese officers in charge of important commercial posts; but a certain marts of trade already exist, it is an object of primary importance, to endeavour to connect them with our territories. (176)

As discussed in the next chapter, subsequent travelers and empire builders like A S Reid continue to pursue further these projects of transforming space to capital assets. Pemberton makes similar proposals for opening up avenues of trans-border or bilateral commerce with countries like Bhutan and Tibet (177-184). Towards that he marks out spots in Cachar, Khasi, and the Jyntea hills such as potential military and commercial transit camps. Here also, it is important to note that subsequent travelers, i.e., Cooper and Hamilton continue the project of converting these visions into a material reality.

It is important to note that the negativization of the tribes of the northeast extends to the visualization of space as assets. The imperial traveler looks at the indigenous tribes as deterrents in projects of development. For instance, visualizing the conversion of the hill-passes as corridors of communication, he writes: "The mountains through which they lead were known to be inhabited by *fierce and unconquered tribes*, whose *aggressions* on the inhabitants of the subjacent plains had led to the payment of a species of black-mail" (3; emphasis added). Similarly referring to the commercial routes between Assam and Manipur being violated by the Nagas, he writes:

> The intercourse between Muneepoor and the more flourishing countries to the westward…they were subjected to such extortions by the Kupooee tribe of Nagas, occupying the hills of the intervening tract, and incurred such serious risk of life from the *lawless habits and fierce passions of these irresponsible savages*, that the journey from Muneepoor into Cachar, *which is now accomplished with perfect security,* was an undertaking of the most serious nature. (174; emphasis added)

These instances substantiate the view that the rhetoric of conquest is often complemented by arhetoric of civilization in colonial travel and expedition writings. Pemberton's narrative is a classic instance of this collaboration.

III

John M'Cosh's *Topography of Assam* (1837), is an important text to explore the construction of territories in nineteenth-century colonial discourse in the northeastern frontier. Besides highlighting the relatively obvious discursive mechanisms of territory-construction, it also reveals other understated but important strategies employed by colonial travel and expedition writers to carry out such projects of territorialization. In other words, the narrative illustrates how projects of transforming space into territories, as they are pursued in travel writing, could not always be seen as explicit military and economic visions. M'Cosh's text offers important clues into the transformation of space into civic territories such as settlement spaces. In other words, if the construction of territory and for that matter extension of colonial jurisdiction proceeds in Jenkins along with a predominantly military vision and that in Pemberton through an economic one, in M'cosh the same is pursued through both visions and rhetoric of civic improvement. It is important to note that M'cosh also regularly exploits the parable of transgression as a political trope like his predecessors Jenkins and Pemberton. The textual manifestation and ideological imperatives of transgression are implicit throughout.

It is important to situate the text within the larger argument developed in this chapter so far by placing it alongside the narratives of Jenkins and Pemberton. M'Cosh's narrative is similar to the narratives of Jenkins and Pemberton in that it is also a survey report. What distinguishes it from theirs is the fact that (a) for almost the entire length of it, the narrative focuses on Assam and especially on the Brahmaputra valley and, (b) it exploits arhetoric of improvement to transform spaces into territories. To this extent, it moves away from explicit imperial visions of military and economic expansionism, as seen in Jenkins and Pemberton.

M'Cosh's narrative makes regular use of the strategies of territorialization employed by Jenkins and Pemberton. Their narratives suggest how colonial travel and expedition writings visualize the northeast as a series of independent political territories. M'Cosh's text offers multiple instances of the attempts by the colonial traveler to transform the northeast into a cartography of determinate territories. For instance, he writes: "Assam is

that extensive tract of the country on either side of the Brahmaputra; stretching on the north shore from the river Monash opposite Goalpara and on the S. from Nugurbera Hill, about 16 miles above Goalpara, to the foot of the Himalayan Mountains, close upon the western boundary of China" (3). This is an exercise in transforming natural space into political territories. It could also be viewed as an instance of transforming natural space into territorial markers. In a similar instance of visualizing disjointed political territories, M'Cosh writes:

> On the north it is bounded by a cold mountainous country inhabited by Booteas, Akas, Duphlas, Koppachors, Miris, Abors and Mishmis; the first being most westward, and the others eastward in succession, the Kangtis, Bor-Kangtis, Singphos, and Muamorias, separate it on the extreme east from China and Burma; The Munniporis, Nagas, Mikirs, Cacharis, Kassyas, and Garrows from our possessions in Sylhet on the South. (3)

This argument could be further illustrated by referring to the ways it partitions the newly acquired province of Assam into administrative zones of Upper, Central and Lower Assam. As observed earlier, in this case also the river Brahmaputra becomes the defining marker. For instance, he writes: "Northern central Assam or Durrung or Tezpore, lies entirely on the North side of the Brahmaputra. It is separated from Kamroop on the west by the Bur Nuddi, which flows into the Brahmaputra nearly opposite Gohatti; and from Now-dwar on the east by the river Burli" (93). These instances illustrate the transformation of space into exclusive territories in the text. In other words, they illustrate how places like pre-colonial Assam are transformed into a finite, political with definite boundaries. The transformation of supposedly orderless tracts into marked territorial spaces also marks the commencement of political jurisdictions. These passages also illustrate the appropriation of natural spaces like rivers, hills into territorial or for that matter, political markers of jurisdiction. As the passage indicates, it is not only natural spaces, but ethnicities as well that are transformed into markers of territorial jurisdiction, often bypassing pre-colonial spatialities in favour of imperial models of determinate, discontinuous, and politicized territorial spaces. To this extent, these instances illustrate the transformation of natural space to instrumental space into colonial travel and expedition discourse.

The production of territory in the text does not remain confined to the partitioning and appropriation of existing spaces. This regularly involves the imagining as well as establishment of new territorial markers. In fact, this plays an important role in supporting the colonial visions to territorialize the region. In M'Cosh's narrative, it is important to explore references to newly envisioned administrative entrepots like Sudder stations. M'Cosh writes: "The sudder station was formerly at Durrung; but from the position not being central, from being situated in a low country liable to inundation and great sickness, as well as from the encroachments of the Brahmaputra, the Head Quarters were in 1835 removed to Tezpore, much farther up the river" (93).

Like in the narratives of Jenkins and Butler, in M'Cosh also, the production of territory derives from a vision of economic expansion. For instance:

> There our territory of Assam is situated in almost immediate contact with the empires of China and Ava, being separated from each by a narrow belt of mountainous country, possessed by barbarous tribes of independent savages, and capable of being crossed over in the present state of communication in 10 or 12 days. From this mountain range navigable branches of the great rivers of Nankin, of Cambodia, of Martaban, of Ava, and of Assam derive their origin, and *appear designed by nature as the great highways of commerce between the nations of Ultra Gangetic Asia.* (133; emphasis added)

Almost replicating the expansionist visions of Jenkins and Pemberton, M'Cosh visualizes the transformation of the northeast from a natural topography to an Economic frontier: "There are numerous passes into Bootan along the frontier, some of which lead direct to the capital. Land Routes to Tibet and Water routes to China for trade were traversed by Captain Wilcox through the Noa-Dihing" (11). Similarly, he writes:

> Considering the small extent of land that intervenes between the navigable branches of the Brahmaputra, and the sources of the great rivers of Ava…*an overland communication by means of a good road would be mutually beneficial to the three great nations…would open a direct inlet for the importation* of all the valuable productions of Northern Central Asia. (12; emphasis added)

It is remarkable that the imperial traveler almost always looks at the topography of the Northeast as potential instruments towards the production of larger military and

economic territories. For instance, rivers and passes in the region are always visualized as occupiable territories or assets.

M'Cosh not only visualizes the topography of the northeast as a cluster of economic territories but also makes proposals to transform the region from a cornucopia to imperial assets. He writes: "There are some districts of primitive soil far above the reach of inundation, and fit for crops of all kinds. Of these high plains, those at Biswanauth, Chardwar and Chottegah are the most considerable" (4). Commenting on the types of soil, the capitalist vanguard gazes at prospective occupancies: "The allures and logic of the soil upon the hills is universally composed of red rich loam, with a sprinkling of particles of quartz or tale; and if we may judge by the exuberance of the brushwood, they would also well remunerate the cultivators" (6). Similarly, the text offers an extensive inventory of agricultural, forest and mineral resources of Assam (29-62). It is quite obvious that it involves regular proposals to improve and colonize. For instance, M'Cosh writes: "Assam, with all its wastes and jungles however much neglected and abused by man, has not altogether been forgotten by nature in her distribution of the good things of this life. *Articles more precious than silver and gold grow wild upon its mountains, uncultivated, and till only late uncared for"* (31; emphasis added). Likewise:

> The tea tree grows as favorably *upon the mountains possessed by the dependant Hill tribes of the Kangtis, Singphos and Mattucks*, as in the adjoining provinces of China itself, and it only requires the same attention to be bestowed upon its culture and manufacture, to secure the same blessing to our country which has for such a series of years so materially added to the revenues of the Celestial Empire. (3; emphasis added)

Similarly:

> Coffee could be turned perhaps no less advantage than tea, and would require less care and attention. *On all the lowland hills of Assam* it grows abundantly; and continues in blossom a great part of the year…in its present *wild state it is not very fruitful, bringing but few berries to perfection; but by proper gardening, it might be made much more productive*. (33; emphasis added)

These instances show that the imperial traveler does not always look at the northeast as a geography of fear. In fact, he seems to be more interested in converting the region into a

resource frontier. As seen in the narratives of Jenkins, Pemberton, and M'Cosh, travelers often act as capitalist vanguards. It is important to note that visions of territorialization are sometimes implicit. However, it often draws from the parable of transgression. For instance, commenting on the fauna of Assam, M'Cosh writes: "Wild elephants are plentiful, and are *very destructive* both to the crops and to human life; entering villages in day light, and *plundering granaries*" (44; emphasis added). It is possible to view the passage as an instance of the imperial desire to control, possess and discipline. Instances like this bear testimony to the layered nature of imperial travel texts as well as the politics of space production in these.

Following the footsteps of Jenkins and Pemberton, M'Cosh also readily exploits the parable of savagery to prepare the pretext to intervene and improve:

> It would also tend to *civilize the Hill Barbarians* who inhabit these regions: and enable a force to penetrate into the centre of their country whither they can at present retreat before a superior force with comparative impunity; and in the event of its ever becoming necessary to take vengeance on the Chinese, an armed force embarking on the Brahmaputra could march across the mountains and enter Yunan, one of the richest provinces of the empire. (12; emphasis added)

This could be seen as instance of the employment of transgression as a trope to territorialize space, as seen in the narratives of Jenkins and Pemberton. It is not difficult to see the co-optation between the rhetoric of conquest and the rhetoric of civilization.

It is important to note that like Jenkins and Pemberton, M'Cosh also transforms the northeast into a differential geography, or in other words, a dichotomy between hills and valleys. The aura of mystery function as a trope in the construction of the hills as the 'other' to the spaces of civilization. Hills and hill men of the northeast always appear as fierce, warlike, savages in those colonial accounts. For instance, M'Cosh writes: "The mountains through which they lead were known to be inhabited by *fierce and unconquered tribes*, whose *aggressions* on the inhabitants of the subjacent plains had led in many instances to the payment of a species of black-mail to procure exemption from their attacks" (2; emphasis added).The parable of transgression that is central to the production of territories in the texts is most obviously employed in the construction of the hills.

M’Cosh comments on the transformation of Goalpara into a civic urban space. He employs notions of hygiene and salubrity to mark out space as colonizable or otherwise.

> Towards the improvement in the healthiness of Goalpara I would recommend that a marsh or jeel marked in the chart, be either drained, or converted into a tank. This is… in fact a perfect marsh, and must be a great source of disease. I would next suggest that the hill be kept free from jungle. (81)

The traveler also marks some places as salubrious or unhealthy, often proposing some kind of intervention. Postulating similar visions for improving the station of Guwahati, M’Cosh writes:

> True it stands upon the banks of a noble river, but this is comparatively of little advantage as the prevailing wind is obstructed by a high range of hills…instead of being purified by a long passage along the water, blows direct from the jungles impregnated with whatever unhealthy miasmata. Another cause of unhealthiness; is the proximity of dense wooded marshy jungle, and the multitude of old tanks throughout the station, perfect quagmires and marshes; the very hotbeds of disease. (89)

This is an instance of imperial desire to intervene and transform. In fact, there are multiple proposals to intervene such as clearing away “obnoxious”, pestilential jungles to sanitize colonial settlements (98, 99). It could be suggested that visions of territorialization in the given instances involve the marking of space as friendly or hostile and the same is solely determined by its suitability within imperial territorial design than anything else. It is important to note is that it is not always human hostility that consist the trope of transgression in colonial discourse, but other factors such as climate and salubrity which also regularly determine the value of a place as imperial utility. These apparently non political values that go into the formulation of a new geography of fear subtly back implicit claims to territorialize. It is important to note that throughout his narrative M’Cosh refers to Assam primarily as a “jungly country” (44). This could be viewed as a subtle trope employed towards the construction of particular set of places as unfriendly or unhygienic. In the light of these instances it is possible to suggest that the both the rhetoric and fantasy of improvement is underscored by the sub-text of territorialization.

In light of the above discussion, it is important to look at other subtle ways the pretext to intervene and improve is prepared. The most obvious ways it is done is by playing around the fiction of the lazy native. It is usual that the tone is set by regretting the unutilized state of the resources: “Immense tracts of country are lying waste that might be under profitable crops, and little cultivation exists but in the vicinity of the principal towns” (29). It is fortified by constant reminders of the impoverished and inferior quality of resources like rice, sugar cane (29), tea (31), coffee (32). It is followed by reiterated reflections on the inefficiency of the local population:

> Yet strange it is, the inhabitants don’t avail themselves of this provision of nature, to raise themselves above the reach of the floods, when they might do so without trouble, expence or inconvenience. They will sit still on the low ground till the water encompasses their huts and drown the fires upon their hearths, rather than live comfortably on high, dry ground; when the inundation has risen too high for them to wade from one house to another or even to stand upon their own floors, they paddle out of their houses in canoes or roost on scaffolds high as the thatch itself, with the frequent calamity of their children falling out of their nests and being drowned. Such is the influence of superstition (5)

It could also be corroborated by looking at the way the narrative makes repeated reference to the uncultivated state of the country (6). It illustrates the ways the northeast is not always framed in dystopian lights in colonial travel writing. M’Cosh’ text frames the frontier as an unattended cornucopia. This is a strategy to claim and possess the northeast.

IV

The last text picked up for discussion in the chapter is T T Cooper’s *The Mishmee Hills: An Account of the Journey made in an Attempt to Penetrate Tibet from Assam to Open New Routes for Commerce* (1872). The text narrates the expedition undertaken by Cooper in the year 1862 to explore the possibilities of opening up a trade route from Assam to Tibet through the hills of what is presently the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. In so far as the transformation of space is concerned, it begins with the vision of an economic asset, namely, a trade route, which the expedition tries to realize. From that perspective, it is possible to view the narrative as a text that marks the transition from territory to assets.

As suggested above, the narrative begins by highlighting the importance of tea-trade between Assam and Tibet as well as by envisioning a diversion of the existing trade between Tibet and China to Assam (3). Cooper articulates his desperateness to begin the expedition metaphorically: "I found myself already impatient to *begin to attack* Thibet on the side of Assam, hoping that the espionage of the Chinese might be evaded, and the *way prepared for such intercourse* between our *Indian tea garden* and Thibet as might hereafter result in an extensive trade" (3; emphasis added). However, as evidence in the text suggests, the construction of space in it extends to other dimension as well.

That Cooper's travel carries out projects other than commercial is illustrated by his emphasis on the need to pose as travelers while undertaking expeditions to supposedly hostile regions. Emphasizing the need to avoid parading of organized expeditions and favors posing as traders he writes: "Let the trader go first then the influence of his government, and then the teaching of the Missionary" (36). Similarly: "The little baggage and articles of value that a traveler will carry…to the covetousness inherent *in every Savage*" (51; emphasis added). Such preludes to the proposed expedition suggest the possibilities of some hidden agenda behind his travel.

The narrative starts with usual descriptions of ennui and boredom. "The scenery on either bank was *most uninteresting,* the view *being shut in by a* line of trees growing down to the water's edge, the forest occasionally giving place to *extensive plains of tall reed-like grass* (51; emphasis added). There are regular descriptions of places as ruinscape. For instance, to comment on the declined state of the natives he regularly refers to sights like broken bunds, and bridges (54). Similarly he writes: " Behind a large hill, *twenty miles* inland from the right bank of the river, there stand in the centre of a large Bheel or lake, surrounded for miles in every direction by dense tree jungle, *the ruined arches* of a bridge, which formerly spanned the Brahmaputra (54; emphasis added).

In an instance of asserting control over space by practicing hunting, Cooper writes: "We were detained all day in the nullah… so that we were glad to while away the weary hours by a *little practice* at the numerous wild fowl, which from time and time flew over the vessel" (61; emphasis added). Similarly: "We threading our way among the reedy islands, formed by the waters entering these nullahs, *our rifles were often brought to bear upon the large herds of wild buffaloes* making their way from the islands to the

main bank of the river" (62; emphasis added). Giving a detailed account of the way a wild Buffalo is shot by him on one occasion, Cooper writes: "It seemed a pity to destroy him, but *wild buffaloes are so numerous in Assam, and so destructive, as to be an absolute pest to the cultivators* and owners of tame herds" (62; emphasis added). These instances need to be seen in the light of the thesis that in travel and expedition writings, hunting is often seen as a strategy to assert authority over colonized landscapes.

However, the most important dimension of the narrative, so far as its participation in the project of space production is concerned is that the traveller actively initiates and pursues political negotiations with supposedly hostile tribal villages primarily with the intent to transform the same into imperial assets. That the traveler is well informed of the political geography of the regions is illustrated by looking at the way the traveler marks out natural spaces as political signpost:

> With the first dawn of day we left Larkong, and commenced the ascent of the *boundary mountain*, a long steep ridge, rising to a height of over 5000 feet. The range runs almost due east, and forms a well defined limit between Assamese and Thibetan ground". (213; emphasis added)

As he proceeds further towards his destination, the traveler continues to reiterate his mission to transform tribes viewed as hostile to the Empire to amicable allies:

> As we turned to descend the counter slope of the boundary mountain, I took one last glance at the *peaceful plain of Assam*, recalling many a happy evening spent with kind hearted friends, and continued the steep descent which led to the *grand but hostile regions before us*. (215; emphasis added)

As subsequent instances reveal, the diplomat- traveler succeeds in his mission, namely, in transforming these geographies of hostility to allies of the Empire. The narrative offers similar instances of coveting the indigenous people into instruments of the Empire. For instance:

> Having personally tested the working of the Chinese system among the tribes, along her western frontiers, I should be glad to see the tribes along our hills on the north of India converted into a guard after the same manner, instead of being, as they are at present a source of constant annoyance and danger. (132)

As later instances reveal, the traveler materializes a series of negotiations to fulfill imperial visions of transformation.

It is important to note that despite being driven by diplomatic interest, the imperial traveler cannot refrain for long from playing out tropes of savagery and otherness. For instance: “ spent New year’s eve of 1870, surrounded by a tribe of savages, feared for their treachery, and still almost red-handed with the blood of two poor missionaries who, save myself were the only Europeans who had ventured to trust themselves to their hospitality” (231). Similarly: “Our new host, Sengsong, was a fine specimen of savage, standing over six feet; he was erect as his own spear-shaft, though over sixty years of age”. These instances show that projects of space production in colonial texts of travel and expedition is inevitably embedded in a discourse of otherness.

The traveler carries out negotiations with the Mejus (a tribe of the Arunachal hills). It is remarkable that it involves diplomatic initiatives to expand the Empire to spaces which lie beyond its reach. For instance, Cooper persuades the Mejus to visit the colonial agent at Sadiya. He writes: “This was the first mention I had made of a deputation of Chiefs being sent down to Sadiya” (246).Congratulating himself on the completion of the project, he comments:

> It had been said before starting on the expedition that this tribe would form one of the great obstacles to our trading with Thibet through their country, while the impossibility of finding a way through their hills was also quoted as another fatal obstacle. Now, however, the enmity of the Mejus need no longer be feared. (247)

It is obvious that Cooper’s expedition has significantly countered the deterrence in that had so far affected the pursuit of colonial military and economic interests in the Mishmi hills. In other words, the expedition creates conditions to materialize projects of asset building. As the final part of his narrative tells us, Cooper succeeds in winning over the hearts of the Mejus and Mishmis, tribes often framed as warlike, blood thirsty savage. Commenting on the conversion of people in instruments of the Empire or imperial assets he writes:

> I gave the Mishmee and his followers large presents of brass-ware, blankets, beds, pen-knives, salt, and rupees, on the receipt of which the Chief presented me

> with his fur-cap, and his men, kneeling on the steps of Major Nowell's bungalow, declared themselves subjects of the Queen. (266)

It is remarkable that the traveler-diplomat directs the goodwill generated by his travels towards enticing the supposedly ruthless savages to the Empire. It is also important to note that an expedition which starts with visions of exploring trans-border trade -routes ends up with diplomatic deals. Seen in this light, Cooper's narrative is a classic instance of the collaboration between projects travel writing and Empire-building.

V

The texts under investigation clearly mark a transformation of space from landscapes into territories. In other words, they illustrate the transformation of the northeast from a cluster of perceived spaces to a strategic cartography of power and resources. It is substantiated by the extensive visions of intervention and modification of spaces into occupied positions. Whereas the framing of the northeast as a landscape in colonial-era travel and expedition writing is marked by traces of uncertainty and unease, its transformation into territory is marked by certainty and assertiveness, on the part of the colonial traveler-surveyor.

These texts also mark a transition in terms of strategies of space production, employed by the travelers. The politics of metaphorization, to a certain extent, is taken over by actual politics of space. The traveler-surveyor often participates in the marking and classification of spaces into assets and liabilities, visualizing larger geographies such as military or economic frontiers. From possible or desirable geographies, space is transformed into concrete, specific and more importantly, into planned geographies. It is important to note that there is a resolute assertion of ownership.

The production of territory, in the texts under investigation, draws strength from parables of transgression. To this extent, the project of territory production is similar to the coding of space as landscapes. What distinguishes the use of transgression for converting landscapes into territories is that the potential transgressor is clearly identified. The overwhelming and all-pervasive air of fear and unease is replaced by clearer visions about potential transgressor or enemies as well as allies. Eventually, in these texts, the northeast is transformed from a symbolic geography of desire and fear to a clearly

marked colonial instrument, a geopolitical space, thereby preparing the conditions for the transformation of territories into assets.