

CHAPTER SIX

ASSETS: FROM SYMBOLIC GEOGRAPHY TO PRODUCTIVE SPACE

This chapter explores how spaces in the colonial northeast are mutated from metaphors into materialities in select colonial travel and expedition narratives on the region. It contends that narratives of expedition and travel in the colonial northeast not merely mirror the transformation of the region from pre-colonial spaces into territories or assets but also eagerly participate in projects of the material transformation of these spaces. The chapter also argues that the act of coding spaces as landscape and the politics of space as territory is essentially a prelude to the conversion of spaces into remunerative geographies or capital assets. In other words, spatial metaphors and visualization of space, in colonial situations, often give way to strategic interventions into space made by colonial travelers and agents with the not-so-implicit motive of wealth-generation.

Towards exploring the active participation of colonial travellers, explorers, and military agents in the transformation of space into imperial capital assets, the chapter picks up John F. Michell's *The North-East Frontier of India* (1883), Adam Scott Reid's *Chin-Lushai Land* (1893), Angus Hamilton's *In Abor Jungles of North-East India* (1912), Frederick Marshman Bailey's *China-Tibet-Assam* (1945), "The Unpublished Tour Diary of Captain John Butler, the officiating Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills" (1870), and "The Unpublished Tour Diary of W J William, the Officiating Inspector General of Police" (1878).

It is important to note that the order in which the texts have been placed above does not reflect the actual chronology of tours narrated in them. For instance, Bailey's narrative, although published in the year 1945, recounts an expedition that was undertaken in the year 1911. The texts also to some extent vary in terms of their focus and objectives. Whereas the texts by Reid and Hamilton are accounts of military expeditions undertaken to punish tribes accused of trespassing into colonial territories with an explicit mandate to subjugate spaces and people that defied or resisted imperial dictates by daring to trespass colonial borders, the narrative by Michell is a survey of already completed and continuing projects of asset-building in the colonial northeast. Bailey's travel, on the other hand, is an attempt to find out military routes between Assam and China. His expedition is best viewed as an extension of the expedition undertaken by T. T. Cooper, who is discussed in the previous chapter. Interestingly, Cooper also in a manner somewhat similar to that of Bailey, tries to penetrate Tibet through the hills which presently are in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Cooper begins his expedition from Sadiya in the year 1873 whereas Bailey takes the opposite route, setting off from

Peking, or what is presently known as China, enters Tibet and from there climbs down the hills of Arunachal to reach Sadiya. Bailey travels as a colonial secret-agent and his is best viewed as a geopolitical or military gaze of the Empire. Cooper, on the other hand, cites trade concerns as the motive. However, his narrative often belies this claim and lets it out that his travel is also a disguised military project. The tour diaries by Captain Butler and W. J. William, both important civil employees of the Empire, provide useful clues into the production of administrative spaces or imperial assets in the colonial northeast.

Despite these apparent variations, all of these travelers exhibit a regular and powerful urge to transform geographies in the region into imperial assets. It is important to note that capital assets, in these instances, refer not only to physical assets such as roads, buildings, etc. Capital assets of the Empire incorporates, in general, apparatus of wealth-generation such as new modes of taxation and revenue. In other words, the idea of capital assets as used in the chapter is broad and is inclusive of the colonial arrangement of generating wealth in its entirety.

I

The first narrative picked up for investigation is Adam Scott Reid's *Chin Lushai Land* (1893). The narrative recounts a series of punitive expeditions to Chin-Lushai Land (at present corresponding to the Indian state of Mizoram), carried out during the years 1870-1871 and 1889-90. However, the focus of the narrative remains the expedition of 1889-90. Reid participates in these expeditions as a medical officer. Reid begins his narrative by recounting the history of trespasses and raids carried out by the Lushai (Mizo) hillmen into the colonial territories of Cachar, namely, the tea-gardens. As suggested earlier, travel and expedition writings on the colonial northeast often exploit transgression as a trope to back moves to territorialize space. As analyzed in the previous chapter, the parable of transgression is cited not only to corroborate the myth of the hill men's savagery but also as a prelude to territorialization. Whereas in the texts discussed in the previous chapter the parable of transgression is employed to back territorializing moves, texts examined in this chapter illustrate how the trope of transgression is further exploited by the imperial traveller as a rationale to actively intervene in the geo-polity of the colonial northeast. Reid's is not an exception to this. Evidence from his narrative help to argue, that: (a) travelers and explorers not only code or politicize space but also

intervenes into it, and (b) the political coding of space as landscape and the visualization of space as territory are better viewed as overtures to the transformation of space into military and economic assets with direct intervention by the colonial traveller.

As a campaign narrative Reid's text is obviously implicated in the expansionist design of the Empire, the very campaign being a move to incorporate the supposedly unruly Lushai hills within the British Empire. To this extent, Reid's account is an obvious participant in the project of Empire-building in the region. In other words, a traveler-campaigner like Reid is better viewed as a traveler cum Empire-builder. As suggested above, the trope of transgression operates throughout the text. It falls back on the myth of hillmen's savagery to rationalize the campaign. For instance, Reid writes: "The outrage which soon followed exceeded in magnitude and ferocity all that had gone before. Raids, almost simultaneous in date but emanating from different tribes, were made on Chittagong Hill Tracts and Manipur" (9). It is obvious that the traveler-campaigner eagerly draws on the parable of transgression to rationalize moves to expand colonial territories in the region.

Reid presents the campaign as a justified retaliatory move to contain trespasses by the hillmen into colonial territories. The narrative begins with a description of the landscape of the Lushai hills employing powerful images: "It embraces every variety of physical feature and climate, from the dense and deadly jungle below, through the tangled mazes of which the ponderous elephant and rhinoceros push their way, to the invigorating summits, crowned with pines, where the sheen of the pheasant's wing catches the eye" (2). However, the rhetoric of repose is quickly followed by the rhetoric of otherness:

People this region with dusky tribes owing *no central authority*, possessing *no written language*, obeying the verbal mandate of their chiefs, hospitable and affectionate at their homes, *unsparing of age and sex while on the warpath*, *untutored as the remotest race in Central Africa*, and yet endowed with an intelligence which has enabled them to discover the manufacture of gun-powder.
(2; emphasis added)

It is obvious that a symbolic geography is immediately devised to reinforce the view of the hills as a transgressive or deviant geography. Subsequent instances illustrate how this symbolic or imagined geography is regularly forced to campaign in favour of imperial

visions to transform the northeast into a strategic asset of the Empire. For instance, Reid writes:

Such in general outline is the Chin-Lushai country, and such were its inhabitants three years ago they were *touched by the transforming wand of civilization*. The world moves rapidly in these times, and, before many decades shall have passed, the descendants of Lienpunga[a Lushai chief] and Jahuta [a Lushai chief] may perhaps be seen peacefully wending their way along roads, formerly the lines of “Kuki” paths, and used principally *for murderous raids*, but now leading to *trim railway stations*, whence the *powerful engine and pioneer of progress* conveys them to Rangoon or Calcutta s candidates for University degrees and Government appointments. (2; emphasis added)

Interestingly, the rhetoric of progress that goes into the framing of space in this passage, in a subtle way, campaigns for the entry of capital assets such as railways in the region. In other words, both the rhetoric and vision of progress act as prelude to projects of space-building, undertaken during the campaign. The passage also makes it obvious that the Empire has already carried through the project of transforming space into a productive asset. These transformations manifest often as the subjugation of groups, realization of negotiations and the marking of territorial jurisdictions.

Apart from being viewed as a colonial traveler-campaigner, Reid is also better viewed as an instrument of the Empire. This is evident in the eagerness he displays in pioneering the conversion of unmapped or nonrevenue paying spaces in the northeast into tax-yielding zones or assets. Later instances will illustrate this view. As he begins his narrative, Reid promptly calls in the trope of transgression:

The theoretical frontier laid down by Mr. Edgar [the erstwhile Deputy Commissioner of Cachar], and acquiesced in by Sukpilal [a Mizo Chief], was not recognized even by the subjects of that chief, and, on the present occasion, the alleged grievance of the Lushais was that the tea-planters cleared forests on the Cachar frontier, under the promised protection of the civil authorities, in tracts which were claimed by the former as their rightful hunting grounds, although regarded by us as well within the newly defined line. (11)

It is obvious that the Empire is already on the way. The traveller not only territorializes new spaces but also resolutely defends the existing territorial markers, namely, the boundaries of the Empire. Reid suggests that it is the violation of supposedly inviolable and exclusive territorial arrangements, often imposed by the Empire, makes military retaliation a justified recourse. Reid writes, “The surrender of the chiefs known to hold British subjects in captivity was to be demanded rigorously, and in the event of non-compliance, their houses and property were to be unhesitatingly destroyed” (16). As he mentions: “The design is to show the Lushais that they are completely under the British, to establish permanent friendly relations with them, and ensure commercial expansion” (17). As suggested earlier, an extractive vision is an integral part of colonial military visions.

It is possible to look at the campaign as a space-building project even otherwise. As they move on, the traveler-campaigners push for the installation and development of strategic assets, such as railways. They continue to exploit the parable of transgression as a pretext to invade and territorialize spaces in the region. Interestingly, they also succeed, to a large extent, in successfully installing strategic military apparatuses in a strategic region and thereby transform it into a subjugated and surveilled imperial geography. Subsequent instances show how an extensive range of capital assets are established in the Lushai Hills during the campaign. One of the initial instances is the visualization of the campaign-route as a possibility before the campaign, and its subsequent realization of this vision during the campaign. Reid writes:

It was known that this chief dwelt far within the hills to the south-east of Tipai Mukh [in Manipur], the trijunction point where Cachar, Manipur and Lushai Land join their boundaries. The line by which he had to be reached lay therefore to the extreme east of the district of Cachar and up the course of the Barak river, which there runs northwards from the hills. (14)

It is interesting that during the campaign, wherever a territory is occupied, it is promptly transformed into an asset. This is very evident in the way the expeditionary force sets up military infrastructure like camps, garrisons, and posts during the campaign. Referring to the extensive arrangements made to secure the passage of the troops, Reid writes: “The whole southern frontier of Cachar stretched westwards from the column’s right flank and had of course, to be properly protected. This was done by stationing strong guards at the

points where the ordinary Lushai routes debouched on this district” (15). The Empire at this point can be said to have started its project of transforming portions of spaces into military utilities. In other words, space is transformed from territories to capital assets. To this extent, the passage is better viewed as an illustration of the transition of the northeast from a perceived or conceived space to a productive space in narratives of colonial travelers and military agents.

Interestingly, the actual interventions made in space by the traveler-campaigners are often preceded by the marking of space as either an impediment or a resource. Reid writes:

For *fourteen miles* or so from the station of Silchar, the troops had a *fair track* due east to *Luckeepore*, where the river takes its great southern bend; but here *the difficulties of the road* commenced, and the troops had actually to begin their pioneering labours one day’s march from the headquarters. At the *frontier post* of *Mynadhar* the force was fairly on the verge of *the wild country*, and from *the depot* here established the *stores* required in front were regularly dispatched thereafter. (17; emphasis added)

He writes further: “The second grand *depot* was at Tipai Mukh, on the junction of the Barak [a river] and the Tipai [a river flowing through Cachar], between which and Mynadhar were four distinct *stations or camps*” (17; emphasis added). It is not difficult to see that a range of capital assets such as guard houses, camps, depots, supply lines, etc. are set up during the campaign. These could be viewed as an attempt to convert topographies into what Lefebvre terms as “dominated” or “dominant” spaces (*Production* 164). It is important to note that dominant space refers to spaces mediated, and transformed by ideologies as well as technological intervention.

The campaign does not remain confined to the establishment of new infrastructure. The Empire-builders also transform natural topographies of the region such as river-beds into strategic use. For instance: “For all that portion of the journey which lay between Silchar and the first Lushai villages it may be roughly said that the force had to follow the course of the Barak” (17). This passage illustrates how the traveler-campaigners cum Empire-builders convert a river, on this occasion, into a military asset or support system. This, in a way, could be viewed as a fuller realization of the visions of acquiring space, germinated in Major John Butler, Johnstone, etc. and consolidated in Jenkins, Pemberton

etc., to exploit the local topography as strategic assets. Similarly, Reid comments: “Up to this point water carriage was to some extent available, though the river was rapidly falling and not to be depended upon” (17). In fact, the narrative always looks at the topography of the region as a strategic asset. This needs to be seen in the context of larger colonial visions of transforming the northeast in a strategic military and economic frontier, visions initiated and consolidated in narratives discussed in the previous chapter. To this extent, the production of space in this text is a logical corollary to visions articulated by architects of space like Jenkins and Pemberton.

Reid’s campaign not only converts rivers and tracks into military assets but also transforms villages into military infrastructure such as camps. Whenever an offending village is punished, it is immediately taken over. On one occasion rationalizing the move to occupy a village, Reid writes: “Had they remained quiet, we should merely have marched into their villages, interviewed their chiefs, and settled our relations for the future. As it was, the village was taken with a rush, fired, and its granaries destroyed” (19). On another occasion, he writes: “Another village, a mile further along the ridge, was occupied as a camp, and a third village at the summit of the mountain was captured and burnt before evening closed” (19). These are instances of military confrontation that do not anymore seek justification from the rhetoric of otherness but from the materiality of danger and hostility in the form of villages and villagers. Spaces are transformed, in these acts, into places. The expedition regularly transforms spaces to places, and vice versa converts space into imperial utilities, say from a village to a camp or a river to a passage. It is more obvious in the fact that a series of military camps are set up along the route. Reid writes:

On the 6th of January [1871], the force advanced from the Tuibhoom east by south towards of Tuitoo, another affluent of the Tipai, crossing the intervening ridge at a height of 3,400 feet. Thence, almost due south over a *difficult road* they marched to the village of Pachnee, the *ninth station* out from Mynadhaur. (21; emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes: “On the 13 [January 1871] the force made preparations for its onward march. It was two and a half miles from Pachnee down to Tipai, but it gave two wings of the 42nd and 44th hard work to *clear a road*. *So steep* was it naturally in places

that the Lushais had been wont to let themselves down by ropes of cane” (21; emphasis added). The campaign carries out multiple projects of asset-production.

As already suggested, the traveler–campaigner Reid gazes at spaces in the northeast as a cluster of strategic assets. Throughout the expedition, the traveler-campaigner marks out spatial impediments only to convert these to strategic military infrastructure. For instance: “There was much to do here in the way of *building hospitals, storehouses, and stockades*. But *they were now close upon the Lushai fastness*, and it was deemed expedient to show the enemy without delay what the force was capable of effecting” (18; emphasis added). Reid is disappointed with the fact that there is no convenient road leading to the destination. However, the party makes immediate arrangements to overcome the deterrence and move on. Reid writes: “The General pushed on the Sappers and a wing of the 44th to a camp five miles out, and commenced there from the ascent of the Senvong range through the fine timber forest, encamping ultimately at an elevation of 4,000 feet” (18). The campaigner continues to survey enemy positions and other strategic details from hill-tops only to push forth the territorial march of the Empire. In a way, this instance is a reminder of the superiority of colonial resources and also an ideological justification of the campaign.

Reid’s account entices places entirely to visions of utility:

The great advantages possessed by the right column as compared with the left was, that it had the sea or rather Calcutta as a tolerably convenient base, and that it had water carriage up to a point in the almost immediate vicinity of its active operations. The Karnafulee [a river in Bangladesh], which cleaves the north of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, is navigable by river steamers up to Rangamati [in Bangladesh], a distance of seventy one miles; thence to Kasalong [a river in Bangladesh], seventeen miles further up, light country-boats of 18 inches draught could go; and beyond that twelve miles further on to Lower Burkal, small boats and canoes, carrying about five maunds each, could very well be used. (30)

Like the instances discussed above, this passage also illustrates the transformation of colonized spaces into military assets by the travel-campaigner. As suggested earlier, this regularly involves the exercise of marking space as impediments or assets. The narrative is full of such calculus of facilities and limitations involved in the transformation of space into imperial assets. For instance, reflecting on the rivers as possible tools of

military transport, Reid writes: “The course of the Karnafulee above this place is broken at intervals by dangerous rapids, the first of which is situated between upper and lower Burkal... at Burkal it takes a sudden northward turn, and above the rapids is found a clear, deep, sluggish stream navigable by boats for nineteen miles to the rapids of Ootan Chutra” (31). There are regular attempts of convert natural spaces such as rivers to military and commercial utilities such as transport-channels.

It is argued here that colonial travel texts directly participate in the conversion of space to assets. This often involves projects of imagining and establishing links between existing spaces. For instance, Reid writes:

By dint of great labour boats were dragged up the Burkal falls, and a *river service established* on the reach of the above ... Canoes, it was found could be got up the Ootan Chutra rapids as far as Demagiri [in Mizoram]. It was well indeed that this *boat service* between Burkal and Demagiri was possible, for the land route between those places was all but impracticable. Only sixteen miles apart as the crow flies, it was a five days’ march of forty one and a half mile to traverse by the *ordinary Kuki path*, two-thirds of which lay along the *beds of torrents*, the rest being through all but *impervious jungle*. By dint of great labour *a road was cut* passable for unladen elephants and coolies, but laden elephants were to the last unable to traverse it. (31; emphasis added)

The passage illustrates how the conversion of spaces into larger territories and the raising of crucial infrastructures bear the marks of intervention made by the colonial travelers and military agents. Once set in motion the traveler-campaigner assumes roles of an architect, engineer, forester, hunter, botanist, mineralogist etc.

Reid’s text constructs the Lushai hills as a landscape of confrontation. Interestingly, the narrative also transforms the hills into a symbolic geography of otherness. Towards this end, Reid subtly exploits the strategy of negative or anti-aesthetic which in the narrative operates through the trope of savagery. In what seems like echoes of Butler and Woodthorpe, Reid narrates how the troops march through threatening demonstrations of yelling Lushais. “From its lofty camp on the Senvong the little party descended by a long day’s march towards the confluence of the Tipai and Tuibhum, crossing the former stream by a weir, in spite of the *yells and threatening demonstrations* of a crowd of armed Lushais” (18;emphasis added). The attempt at negativization is obvious here. In a

similar attempt, describing a scene where a village submits to the traveler-campaigners, Reid writes: “Assured that it was not the wish to continue hostilities which we had not begun, he *climbed up a tree*, and from its summit emitted an *unearthly yell* that echoed from the surrounding peaks, put a sudden stop to the dropping fire in the jungles and brought in the Lushais in crowds to fraternize with their late opponents” (21; emphasis added). Such instances illustrate the instrumental role negative aesthetic plays in the production of space in narratives of travel and expedition in the colonial northeast.

As suggested earlier, the campaign does not remain confined to the goal of punishing a few offending villages. Eventually, the traveler-campaigner converts the entire Lushai Hills into a cluster of capital assets. As already suggested, wherever a village is brought to submission during the expedition, it is converted into tax-yielding assets and villagers to fiscal subjects. Narrating an encounter with some of the Lushai villages and their submission to the traveler-campaigners, Reid writes: “He was *warned* that a heavy *fine* of hill oxen and other things, with complete *submission*, could alone condone his rash resistance and that his village would all be burned unless he came in” (24; emphasis added). Likewise, he writes:

On the neighbouring dwelt the widow of Vonolel [a Lushai chief], herself a powerful and wise old woman, who had in vain urged her son to submissions. From her, a fine was levied of war-gongs, oxen, goats and such likes, which she did not refuse to pay. Besides this, it was stipulated that three headmen should return as a hostage to Tipaimukh; that they should receive government agents in their villages when required. (27)

It is evident that the campaign does not limit itself to punishing a few offending villages. More importantly, it also brings these villages into the purview of colonial fiscal or revenue systems. In a way, the traveler-campaigners facilitate the appropriation of non-fiscal spaces into fiscal territories. Reid’s comments on the achievements of the expedition illustrate it better:

It was ninety-two days since the headquarters of the expedition had left Cachar. During the time that had been constantly on foot, cutting the roads by which they advanced over lofty mountains, ridge after ridge, crossing and re-crossing numberless streams, scaling fastnesses of hostile tribes, burning their villages and destroying their crops when punishment was demanded. (27)

Similarly, he writes: “By noon on the 10th of March the last man had left the station, and the column withdrew to Cachar leaving behind it *some hundred miles of mountain road* to testify to the perseverance and pluck of the gallant corps who had cut and blasted a path from Mynadhar [in Cachar] to Champai [in Mizoram]” (28; emphasis added). The self-congratulatory tone which marks Reid’s assessment of the expedition, in a way, encapsulates the achievements of the campaign. The traveler-campaigner celebrates the transformation of what is viewed as a defiant and transgressive geography in the eastern frontier into a cluster of accessible, manageable, and, more importantly, taxable assets.

The expedition of 1889, as recounted by Reid in the second part of his narrative, also gives helpful insights into the transformation of the northeast from a pre-colonial space into a network colonial capital assets. Similar to the expedition of 1871, the expedition of 1889 is also a punitive expedition to retaliate Lushai raids into British territories on the plains of Cachar. The immediate pretext, as cited by Reid, is to punish villagers accused of murdering colonial survey officers (39). However, unlike the previous expedition, the expedition of 1889 is also mandated with the setting up of capital assets such as all-weather advanced posts, posts that are available for use during all the seasons in a year (50). Interestingly, the campaign is also directed to establish, what could be viewed as a trans-border infrastructure, namely, a road linking regions in Burma (Myanmar) to the northeast.

As a prelude to the expedition, the traveler-campaigner narrates the incident of the murder of the colonial officials by the Lushais (40-46). He frames the incident in ways that amplifies the already instituted myth or view of the hills as a geography of fear and hostility. In other words, it enriches the view of the hillmen as savages, that most of the tribal people in the northeast have a natural fondness for bloodshed and mindless killing. However, this chapter focuses more on the ways this trope serve as a prelude to colonising moves that eventually culminate in the transformation of space into capital assets. To this extent, the expedition of 1889 replicates most of the strategies of space-producing strategies employed during the expedition of 1870-71. For example, the traveler-campaigners mark out, link up, and reconfigure existing topographies as strategic assets. Reid writes:

To the *frontier post* of Demagiri, the route to be followed was almost identical with that taken by the right or Chittagong column of 1871-72, viz., from

Chittagong to Rangamatti up the picturesque course of the Kurnafulee river *by steamer*, and thence, for the troops, *by land* in four marches, via Burkal to Demagiri, while *stores* were transshipped to smaller boats at Rangamatti and conveyed to their *destination by water*, *dug-outs* being used for the latter part of the journey. (49; emphasis added)

This passage could be viewed as another attempt to transform the northeast into a cluster of dominated spaces with active interventions on the part of the traveler-campaigners. As already suggested, one of the most readily available spaces for this transformation is roads. Reid writes: “The troops, assisted by upwards of 2,500 Chakma and Bengali coolies, who had been engaged by the civil authorities, were employed in the *construction of a road from Demagiri to Lungleh* [in Mizoram], a distance of *forty-one miles*; the latter place, due east from the former, having been selected as the site for an *advanced post*” (50; emphasis added). Apart from reflecting on the installation of strategic infrastructures in the region by the empire, this passage also shows the utilization of human resources for asset creation. Reid writes further: “The formation of the road was begun on the 16th January and completed to Fort Lungleh on the 11th March 1889, the *result being a solid pathway from four to six feet wide over easy gradients and practicable for laden elephants*” (51). The narrative offers similar instances which suggest the active participation of the traveler-campaigners in the installation of military and civilian infrastructure in the northeast.

Similar to the campaign of 1870-71, the campaign of 1889-90 could also be viewed as an exercise in surveying spaces in the northeast and marking these as impediments and assets, already available in the form of topography. Reid writes: “On the 18th the advance was continued to the koladyne [a river in Myanmar], the mules being left behind and the gun having to be carried by coolies on account of the *bad condition of the road*” (54; emphasis added). Similarly: “The original plan was that Howasata’s [the Lushai chief accused of the murder of one of the officials] village should now be surprised by a night march, *but this idea had to be abandoned on account of the difficulties of the road* and the professed inability of the guides, who had been supplied by Darbilli [a Lushai chief], to find the way in the dark” (55). It is possible to suggest, in light of instances discussed so far, that in due course of time, these bad roads will be converted to useful military or civilian assets. In other words, the marking of a particular space as dystopia is a prelude to intervention and instrumentalization.

Apart from the subjugation of the villages accused of murdering the colonial officials, the campaign of 1889-90 also culminates in the establishment of the much desired advanced post in Lungleh (in Mizoram). This is another example of the ways the Empire exploits the parable of transgression as a prelude, not only to the occupation of territories, but also to establish a grid of military infrastructure to safeguard strategic interests of the Empire in the northeastern region. Reid recounts how a spot is selected for an advanced post and a stockade, with the name Fort Lungleh is established (57). As Reid mentions, the new garrison is equipped with “barrack accommodations ... for 200 men, quarters for officers, hospitals, godowns for stores, magazine and telegraph office” (57). This instance adds to the larger argument made in this dissertation that geographies in the northeast, as these are seen today, are to a large extent, shaped and mediated by colonial strategic interests and travel and expedition writings play an important role in realizing these interests.

The expedition extends to areas that do not belong to the political geography of today’s northeast. They nevertheless provide important insights into projects of space-production. For instance, recounting the Chin-Lushai expeditions conducted in the year 1889-90, Reid refers to the projects of asset-building assigned to it. They are, namely, the construction of a path to facilitate communication between India and Burma, the establishment of posts on the route so as to “secure complete pacification and recognition of British power”, and subjugation of tribes neutral, but brought within the sphere of British dominion (186). For instance, Reid writes: “With the exception of a break of about two miles at the Burkal rapids the troops and stores were conveyed by water to Demagiri, and thence pushed on by land to Lungleh, the most advanced post” (186). It is not difficult to see that the expedition promptly exploits the assets already in place to expand the Empire. Reid writes:

Subsequently, the transference of goods from Peshgiserra, the point of disembarkation, to Burkal was much facilitated by the construction of a *tramway* on the right bank of the Kurnafulee for the distance alluded to. This line was opened on the 12th December, and was worked by a coolie corps of 500 men, who ran twenty five trucks. The transport of the force consisted 2,511 Punjabi coolies, 782 local coolies, 2,196 mules and 71 elephants.(186: emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes:

Major Leach, R.E., Commanding Royal engineers, accompanied by Captain Mulaly, R. E., Field Engineer, arrived at Fort Lungleh on the 29th November, and, after reconnoitering the country, started the trace for the road which was to go on to Haka on the 6th December; a detachment of the 22nd Gurkhas and the Frontier Police clearing the jungle in the direction of Teriat, on the southern slope of which the path was commenced by the 2nd Company Bengal Sappers and Miners. (187)

As suggested above, it is not only the colonial engineers who carry on the projects, but also the indigenous people, now subjugated, and compelled to follow suit. For instance, the act of surrender by the offending villagers is immediately followed by their forced participation in projects of Empire-building. Reid writes:

They were told that these were unconditional surrender, release of all captives, the return of guns and heads taken from our people, and the giving up of chiefs implicated in the murder of Lieutenant Stewart and of the man who had shot a police bugler. *They also professed their willingness to help in cutting jungle on the road to Haka*, and then returned to their village, having been given a fortnight to think the matter over. (189; emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes: “Meanwhile, the Howlong [a tribe] Chiefs were cutting a path for the Northern Column, which was to march due north from Lungleh, following the course of the Dhaleswari [a river in Bangladesh] or Klang river” (189). These instances make it obvious that the transformation of the northeast into a cluster of imperial assets involved forced participation from the local people. These also make visible the materiality of imperial assets. Interestingly, this instance could also be viewed as a classic combination of discipline and punishment. Insofar as the transformation of space, this is best viewed as a conversion of punitive measures into productive assets. The ultimate aim is the growth of wealth assets or tax for the Empire. Describing a scene of forcing an offending village to submission and the detention of its chief, Reid writes:

The monarch was bound by a rope and led along by one of his guards, and in this manner, somewhat suggestive of an organ-grinder’s monkey, he returned to his village ... The terms of the fine were then announced to the Chief, and the fact

intimated to him that until it was paid he would have to partake of our hospitality at Lungleh. The fine consisted of 30 guns, 1 gyal, 10 pigs, 10 goats, 20 fowls, and 100 maunds of rice. (195)

This is another instance when occupied places are quickly transformed into financial assets for the empire, at gunpoint. The narrative also subtly valorizes the moves to transform the region into an imperial asset. For instance, Reid writes: “Lalthuama [a Lushai chief], who appeared to be about 21 years of age, was married to a daughter of Lienpunga, so that he was connected with our enemies on both sides. He arrived at Lungleh on the 19th January, and was *so impressed with the manner, in which we had constructed the road, that he said we were gods and not men*” (195; emphasis added). This is an instance of imperial asset-building.

Reid narrates how colonial infrastructures such as stations for heliographic communication are established at strategic sites such as the hill-tops (202). For instance: “On the 13th April [1890] after overcoming many physical obstacles in the shape of ravines and mountain ranges, the path was completed to Haka. *The telegraph line had been carried as far as the Upper Koladyne, but, in compliance with Government orders, Fort Tregear was now made the terminus*” (207; emphasis added). It goes without saying that on every occasion that a village is subdued, fines and indemnities are inflicted on it.

Eventually, the most important mandate of the expedition, namely the establishment of a road between India and Burma is fulfilled. As Reid writes:

The rationing for eight months of Fort Lungleh and Fort Tregear ended the work which had been assigned to the force. This was finally accomplished on the 2nd and 3rd of May respectively; the former post being garrisoned by the Frontier police and the latter by 200 men of the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Gurkhas Rifles. *A good road of easy gradients had been made from Lungleh to Fort Tregear and beyond the advanced post a fair mule path led to Haka 81 miles, completing the connection between India and Burma.* Two large rivers, the Mat and Koladyne, had been bridged. These bridges, the former 206 and the latter 304 feet long, had to be very substantially built, and were of the crate and trestle type. (208; emphasis added)

This passage encapsulates the politics of space production in the text, especially the use of the parable of transgression as a prelude to transform space into imperial assets. In other words, it illustrates the systemic establishment and subsequent consolidation of the empire not only as rhetoric but also as a material body of capital assets. In sum, the text illustrates the ways the northeast consolidates as the material body of the British Empire, with direct interventions made by travel writers and military agents.

II

Like Reid's narrative, Angus Hamilton's *In Abor Jungles of North-East India* (1912), also constructs the northeast as a landscape of confrontation. It recounts the British military expedition sent in 1911 to some of the Abor (a tribe inhabiting part of what is presently known as the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh) villages. Whereas writers discussed in the previous chapter—Jenkins and Pemberton regularly imagine the frontier as a likely space for military confrontation, Hamilton's narrative transforms it into an actual theatre of war. This text, in a way, reinforces the myth of the northeast as a dystopia, seen in the narratives of Butler, Woodthorpe, and Johnstone. It tries to do so by invoking the percept of the wild in its very title itself. As the title of the narrative suggests, within it, the frontier is primarily viewed as a jungle, a space of fear and danger and hence a space to be conquered, cleared and sanitized.

Like Reid's narrative, Hamilton's account also begins by foregrounding instances of tribal transgression into colonial territories: "For a long time past the Abors have been cocks of the Assam border. *Very independent and quarrelsome*, they had come to regard themselves as the rulers of this far-distant corner of India" (18; emphasis added). It is obvious that a rhetoric of difference is employed to reinforce the myth of racial and cultural otherness of the tribe. For instance, he refers to the food habits, dress, and physical disposition of the Abors:

While the Abors speak with the deliberation of a *typical savage people*, their manners and customs no less reveal their primitive state... they live off the smaller wildlife of the jungle, and favour frogs, lizards, snakes, rats, dogs, monkeys, cats, and mice. An animal that has died a natural death is as acceptable to them as the best butcher's meat. (19; emphasis added).

It is followed by an extensive survey of the social life of the Abors, such as their dress (19), ornaments (20), implements (21), military strategies (22), etc. Interestingly, the traveler-campaigner hurries to employ readily available ethnographic tropes to frame social landscapes. However, he also prepares for the conversion of the place into a strategic terrain. He comments on the organization of the Abor village:

An Abor village is never without its cordon of chutes formed of huge boulders, which are so hidden that they are released by the enemy himself as he advances along a jungle-path...Abors select very inaccessible places for their village. Surrounded with bamboo palisades, or protected by a stockade of tree trunks, the villages present very formidable positions to an attacking party. (22)

This could be seen as an attempt at changing the northeast into a conflict zone. Hamilton often looks at the frontier as a cluster of distinct and determinate ethnic territories or bounded cultural spaces. For instance:

Geographically, they may be said to fall between the eastern watershed of the Dibong river [in Arunachal Pradesh] and the western drainage of the Subansiri [a river in Arunachal and Assam] River, and to extend from the course of the Brahmaputra River in the south to the water-parting in the north which divides Assam from the plateau of Tibet. *Aborland* is only a few hundred miles square, but it comprises between the slopes of the *snow-clad* northern uplands and the *jungle-covered* banks of the mighty river some of the most difficult country in the world for the purpose of war. (13; emphasis added)

The narrative assigns specific cartographic positions to a place, transforming space into legible and manageable cartographic object, thereby transforming the region into a definite political geography. It also often tries to confine a particular tribe to a particular territorial habitat. The narrative not only constructs the northeast as an empty space in terms of infrastructure. It also incorporates the region into grids of imperial military visions. It is perforce with such a vision that it enumerates the Abor tribe into clans (15), and moves on to assign particular territories to each group. For instance:

The Padam [a clan of the Abors] ... occupy a *zone which is bounded* on the south *by a line* from Bomjur on the Dibong River to the mouth of the Yamne River; on the east by the Sesserri River; on the west by the Yamne River. *There is no*

definite line to the north where the Milangs, who are closely allied with the Padams, are found...the clan is reported to have a *fighting strength* between five and six thousand strong. (15; emphasis added)

Apart from illustrating the use of landscape as precision knowledge or military information, the passage also shows how the construction of territories, in colonial discourse, involves the appropriation of natural landmarks and ethnic territories. Pointing out the exact location and territorial extent of the Aiengs, a clan of the Abors, Hamilton refers to instances of violating territories “In a measure, they have encroached upon the territory of the Padams” (15). The passage also illustrates how space production in colonial travel and expedition writings is founded on the notion of absolute, exclusive and disjointed space. The military vision also involves mapping of important military positions and fighting strength of the enemy. For instance, Hamilton writes:

The Komkars control a strongly stockaded group of villages lying between the Yamne and Dihang rivers. *Occupying a central position they do not concern themselves with the affairs of any of their neighbours. Their country accordingly is regarded as a haven of refuge from the more turbulent areas surrounding it.* (15; emphasis added)

Hamilton looks at the northeast as a cluster of isolated, disjointed ethnic territories. He also views a clan or a village as an independent political space or a distinct territorial enclosure, capable of effecting political negotiations with agents of the Empire. However, the focus always remains on the transformation of spaces to military terrains:

The lands on the west of the Dihang [a river in Arunachal] are *low-lying*. The belt between the Dihang [a river in Arunachal] and the Dibong [a river in Arunachal] is traversed by the mountains and contains only an occasional indication of cultivation, and few villages. Beyond Kebang [in Arunachal Pradesh], the valley of the Dihang is *more open*. Between Dijnur [in Upper Assam] and the mouth of the Dibong to the foot of the hills, the *country is flat*, and overgrown with an almost *impenetrable jungle forest*. (14; emphasis added)

The imperial traveler-campaigner reduces and thereby transforms complex lived geographies of the region into simple operational logistics. For instance, complaining of the unavailability of good roads in the region, he writes: “In addition to the dense

vegetation, the region is distinguished by its rivers-at least four being quite large- and by what has been hitherto *an entire absence of roads. Such pathways as did exist were mere animal tracks*, while the best “roads” were the chasms through which the rivers flowed” (14; emphasis added). Complaints such as these, best viewed as rhetoric of otherness operate as prelude to the transformation of space into assets. “From the moment that the clansmen knew that a military force was to be dispatched against them, a *state of wild excitement* prevailed in *Aborland*” (24; emphasis added). Simultaneously, the text highlights the repeated violation of territorial boundaries by the Abors: “By claiming an *alienable right* to all the *fish and gold found in the streams* which flowed from the *Miri lands*, the Abors exercised almost feudal powers over many sections of the *Miris*” (31; emphasis added). Overlooking any other possible reason, the narrative also hurriedly cites oppression by the Abors as the only reason behind the migration of other tribes to British territories. “When efforts were made in 1847 after we had taken possession of Assam, to *establish trading posts* on the Dihang, the Abors objected, and emphasized their objection by *kidnapping* a number of *Miri* [a tribe] gold-washers” (31; emphasis added). By reiterating the inviolable, exclusive rights of the Empire over the northeast the narrative continues to pursue its politics of space-production. Hamilton writes:

For the future, this new line was to be taken as describing, in regard to the former, the area of British administration, and, in connection with the latter, the limits of a semi-independent tribal zone. The tribes between the “Inner” and “Outer” line were within the political jurisdiction of the frontier. By this treaty the great bulk of the Abor tribes came under the British flag. (36)

The text often recounts the violation of territorial boundaries by the hillman. Hamilton writes:

In 1876 as if *tired of their good behaviour*, the Abors began again to cast covetous eyes on the possessions of their neighbours. Five years later the terms of the treaty of 1862 had been so strained that it was found advisable to *establish posts of 300 men at Bomjur and Nizamghat to prevent the Abors from crossing the Dibong into the lands of the Chulikatta Mishmis* [a tribe in Arunachal]. (37; emphasis added)

This passage is another illustration of the way the traveler-campaigner visualizes certain territorial notions, in this instance, enclosures for particular tribes. As argued in chapter

four of this thesis, this could be seen as an attempt at surveillance. Hamilton constructs the northeast entirely as a military terrain. For instance:

Long before September, however, Major-General Bower had intimated his requirements to Army Headquarters, but the impossibility of moving through the *jungles of Aborland* in the rains had necessitated delay. Many difficulties lay ahead of the expedition... that the *early conditions were not unlike those which accompany a river war*. As the *scene of operations* lay across the Brahmaputra, and *supplies were non-existent* in the Abor country, everything had to be carried by water to the water to the theatre of hostilities. (104; emphasis added)

Recounting the construction of a base for the expedition, Hamilton writes:

Until some place on the north bank of the Brahmaputra had been prepared as a *base camp*, Dibrugarh served as the point of concentration for the men and stores that were required for the expedition. Situated on the south bank, and some forty miles down-stream from Kobo, the *little station* soon became a centre of military activity. (119; emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes: “It was no light task to select the point from which the punitive columns should be launched. Where the jungle did not present an insurmountable obstacle to a landing party, the banks of the river shelved into the stream in a way that made them unapproachable by boat” (128). A survey is regularly driven by the imperative to find out friendly geographies: “After careful examination, a spot was found near the junction of the Dihang and Lohit-Brahmaputra, where though the jungle was exceedingly dense, the low-lying mud of the foreshore gave way to strata of sand that at least would be absorbent in the event of rain” (128). The marking of a space is followed by actual interventions. Hamilton writes:

Once chosen no time was lost, and when a space of six hundred yards square had been blazed, the task of clearing began...*order was soon evolved from the chaos of the virgin forest*. While the coolies cleared the undergrowth or chopped their way through the opposing walls of giant bamboo, the Military Police *erected an encircling stockade with look-out towers* at the corners, and a Crow’s Nest, one hundred and fifty feet high in the centre; the Pioneers *bunded the river bank*; the Sappers and Miners *built a landing-stage*... in a very short time a space large

enough to receive a brigade, a big base supply depot, “lines” for four thousand coolies, and a hospital was ready. (129)

The use of jungle typography to aid colonial knowledge formulation is one of the key tools of transforming space to place. Hamilton recounts how the place is prepared as a base camp by blazing and clearing the jungle, making passages, erecting stockade. In fact, the place is transformed into a full-fledged military station (129). Civic markers such as tube-wells, telegraph lines, telephone and other colonial infrastructure dominate the place. Hamilton writes:

As kobo had no previous existence, and there was no village or encampment of any kind near the site, the skill, enterprise and originality exhibited was really wonderful... From so phoenix like a metamorphosis of the banks of the Brahmaputra nothing was wanting; neither fresh water, which was provided from a twenty-foot tube well; nor the telephone, over which Lt. Knight, presided as a signaling officer, while the first telegram, over a *pecially laid line from Kobo to Dibrugarh*, was handed to Major-General Bower (180; emphasis added)

There are other similar instances of establishing military bases (178, 240). It is also important to note that even imperial nomenclature is imposed over newly established places (134). “With corresponding appositeness the Military Police had been given Scotland Yard, and the hospital section Harley street” (134). This is significant, and in line with empire-building. This instance illustrates the transformation of colonial territories in the northeast into capital assets with direct intervention by the colonial traveler-campaigner. In a self-congratulatory tone, Hamilton writes:

The camp-makers were ever at war with Nature, who, *repellent and defiant*, measured her strength, with theirs. At first there was the densely growing screen of bamboo; then the rains, which caused the river to inundate the camp and wash away the works, finally there was the jungle sickness, which spared neither man nor beast, and was most virulent where the virgin forest was being opened out. Beyond the immediate precincts of the camp, *dangerous disease seemed to lurk in the slush of the decaying vegetation*, in the giant nettles, and in the leaves of the palms. (136; emphasis added)

This could be viewed as an instance where the trope of the tropic as dystopia is used. However, it is the rhetoric of conquest that immediately overtakes the dystopian vision. In an act of self-valorization, the traveler-campaigner celebrates the transformation of the place into a colonial territory:

At first the trail of the coolies led only to Kubo [in Arunachal]. Later, it pushed beyond the camp, out into and through the jungle, to the advanced post at Pasighat; stretching through the smoke of the burning undergrowth, through the closely matted thickets of Bamboo, over river torrents and up and down the mountain gorges in one unbroken line of men, patient and plodding, on occasions deviating, but never turning back. (137)

It is within the framework of expedition that the politics of territory production operates in the text. An expedition itself is a territorial exercise. Moreover, in the given context of an expanding frontier, it is the foundation of places in general and military infrastructure in particular that is an effective territorializing strategy. In the text, instances of this are the setting up of infrastructures such as roads, telegraph lines, and posts of various sorts like bases, headquarters, and advanced posts. For instance, recounting the design of laying out roads leading to the theatre of war, Hamilton writes:

For the first mile and a half Lindsay's party followed the road to Pasighat, a wonderful ten-foot affair, which had been built during the July-October rainy season under the supervision of Mr. Watkins... the ten foot gauge was continued for the first six miles of this road, and so imposing a thoroughfare amid the virgin wilderness surrounding it obviously merited a distinguished name. (162)

He further writes: "At a later date the road was carried beyond Pasighat to Yambung, and not only bridged and drained but improved sufficiently to allow its use by mule transport...it was also given the flanking adornment of a military telegraph and telephone line" (163). Similarly, the Sappers and Miners section of the force put up new bridges over rivers (163), and new tracks are hacked out of the jungle (164). There are similar instances of clearing of paths by path-cutters (172, 173). For instance, Hamilton writes: "Though the Sappers and Miners *bridged streams* with astonishing rapidity, and the Pioneers *tunneled their way through the bush*, progress remained slow, daily proving more difficult and damnable than dangerous"(185; emphasis added). Foregrounding the dystopian face of the place, he writes: "Little wonder that the Abors regard their haunts

as inviolable, for dark, mysterious and rising like some evil enchantment before the traveler, the forest presents an impregnable rampart of trees and undergrowth, impassably entangled” (185). This is another instance of the rhetoric of otherness.

It is important to note the way the traveler congratulates himself on the successful transformation of the place into an imperial asset: “In a little the last salute had been given; the last sepoy had filed by and disappeared, and the *forest of nature had enveloped without effort a forest of steel*” (171; emphasis added). This passage illustrates the domination of natural space by the machineries of the Empire. There are similar instances where the travellers continue to clear passages and build infrastructure. “The Sappers and Miners were constructing the advanced post; the Pioneers were busy with Road-making and Bridge-building, while the Military police were acting as escorts to supplies and as guards to standing camps” (226). The materiality of the Empire is visible in instances such as these.

The instances discussed above illustrate the enthusiastic participation of the colonial traveler-campaigners in projects to transform the northeast frontier from a natural topography to a cluster of capital assets. In other words, they illustrate the already accomplished as well as ongoing metamorphosis of the frontier from pre-colonial space to colonial territory or imperial assets. This move could be seen as one from bewilderment with wild jungles and unmanageable rivers, documented by the likes of Butler and Woodthorpe to more specific and authoritative visions to convert the region into a grid of profit-making assets like steamer navigation (106-112), flourishing timber mills (68), well trimmed tea-gardens (119), and extensive railway networks (112).

III

Captain John F. Michell’s *The North East Frontier of India: A Topographical, Political and Military Report* (1883), illustrates the complicity and constant to-and-fro movement between colonial visions of space and territory as well as its conversion to assets. More importantly, it also offers evidence which suggests that the construction of space, within colonial projects, is a continuous project and it continues to operate even after the transformation of space into assets.

Michell begins his narrative by mapping the existing state of infrastructure in Upper Assam. His mapping includes comments on strategic assets such as roads, river

navigation systems, hospitals, etc. Often, the focus is on military assets. Michell writes about the Lakhimpur District:

At the present time, there are the *remains of some fine* roads in this division, but they *have been allowed to go to Jungle* the last thirty years. The northern part of the division is more open to attack, consequently the people have abandoned their farms and villages and settled down close to the great river. In the present day, we see the same state of affairs more to the east, for, two or three years ago, there were flourishing villages on the Lalli island, but these villages suffered greatly from the exactions of the Abors, consequently they were compelled to abandon the Lalli Chappri and settle near Sadiya. (5; emphasis added)

Similarly, Michell writes of the Sadiya-Sibsagar road:

The so called roads in this district are little better than jungle paths, with the exception of the road from Sadiya to Sibsaigar through Dibrugarh and from Dibrugarh to Jaipur. The Sadiya-Sibsagar road is, in many places, un-bridged, and troops would have much difficulty in transporting their baggage, from Dibrugarh in any direction, with the exception of Jaipur and Sadiya. (5)

These passages seem to echo the visions of Butler, Johnstone, and Woodthorpe in their dystopian impressions of the northeast frontier in the early days of colonialism. Reiterating the need for military roads, Michell writes:

The great military wants of the district are- a good road between Sibsaigar, Jaipur, Makum, Beesa and Sadiya, and a road along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra from Poba to the Dirjemo. In former days, there was a road between Jaipur, Makum and Sadiya, but it is now nothing but a track through the jungle most difficult to travel. (5)

He writes: “There is no communication on the north bank between the Poba guard and the Dirjemo, some 50 miles of jungle intervening. In the Lakhimpur sub-division, there are several paths...gone to jungle and is quite un-travelable” (6). The traveller similarly complains about the absence of a good road to Makum and rationalizes colonial intervention to fill up the blankness.

It is evident that the visions as well as proposals to transform the northeast into imperial geographies that germinated in Pemberton and Jenkins have already been materialized. Mitchell comments on the existing state of infrastructure such as roads, and river-guards. “There is a short road, un-bridged, between Sadiya and the Dibong guard and also to Dikrang guard; the other paths on the north bank are mere jungle tracks” (6). Surveying the existing state of river conveyance and also envisioning potential interventions, Michell writes: “Dibrugarh is situated on the Dibro, 4 miles from the Brahmaputra. During the rains steamers can steam up the Dibro to the station, but in the cold weather they are obliged to anchor 3 miles below” (6). This could be seen as an attempt to transform the space into a network of civil and military infrastructure. The fact that Dibrugarh in 1883 was already identified as a major trade and military outpost is significant. The rising importance of Dibrugarh in the future theatre of war cannot be ignored. It is important to note that Dibrugarh was one of the most important airfields of the allied force during World War II.

It is clear that the traveller maps the civil and military assets already in place. For instance, describing the station of Dibrugarh, Michell writes: “The European houses of the station are nearly all built on the bank of the river, while the Church, native infantry lines and a small fort lie further back” (6). It is obvious that the uncertainty and apprehension that regularly haunt visions of the frontier as landscape and territory, as seen in the texts discussed in the previous chapter, have disappeared to a large extent. Whereas the measure of distance in accounts of travelers like Butler and Johnstone are marches, measured paces and days, Mitchell measures distance in miles. For instance: “Jaipur is 36 miles from Dibrugarh and 58 miles from Sibsagar. In former days, it was one of our most important military stations in Upper Assam, but the Singphos and Burmese having ceased to menace our frontier, the military have been withdrawn from this post” (6). It could be suggested that by the time Michell’s report is compiled, the empire has already realized proposals of territorialization put forward by Jenkins and Pemberton. For instance, in his narrative, Francis Jenkins advocates that the fort at Jaipur, built by the previous dispensation should be taken over. By Michell’s time, it is already done. Together these texts indicate an important trajectory of colonial space-production, namely, the movement from the visualization of space to the materialization of spatial visions. Michell writes:

There is a large masonry hospital still standing in the old cantonments, which I occasionally used by a civil officer from Dibrugarh as a Kutcherry. There are also bells-of-arms, quarter guard and artillery sheds all Pucca buildings. The station is situated in the middle of a maidan surrounded on three sides by tree jungle and on the fourth side is the river Dihing... From *Jaipur numerous roads lead to the low Naga hills inhabited by the Namsangia and Borduaria clans.* (6; emphasis added)

The passage also gives unmistakable clues regarding the prioritization of certain spaces in keeping with the strategic interests of the Empire. For instance, the importance assigned to the station of Jaipur is explained by its strategic position as a gateway to the Naga hills. It is noteworthy that the air of certainty and precision also marks the outlining of boundaries.

The text also gives important clues into the politics of constructing boundaries, another important asset of the Empire. “The Buri Dihing, on which Jaipur stands, is the natural boundary between the Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts. *In the rains a steamer can ply up this river as far as the station.* The river can be navigated by small boats, as far as 20 miles east of Makum” (6; emphasis added). It is obvious that the construction of boundaries has achieved a substantial level of clarity in contrast to the uncertainty that marks narratives discussed in the previous chapters. Michell’s reference to the station of Sadiya also substantiates the transition and complementarities between vision, materiality and future visions. For instance:

Sadiya is 65 miles north-east of Dibrugarh, situated on the right bank of the Brahmaputra. *It is the most important outpost on this frontier.* There is an excellent road to Dibrugarh, and water communication by the great river; *boats can reach Sadiya from Dibrugarh in three days and return in one.* Small steamers can run up the river at all times of the year. (7; emphasis added)

Michell’s comments on Sadiya shows how the place has already been transformed into a colonial township, a change agents like Jenkins visualized in their texts. Michell writes: “Sadiya itself is a scattered collection of huts, gathered around the native infantry lines, and a small fort close to the river. There is a police thana, circuit house, a private-bungalow, hospital, and post office, all on the banks of the river” (7). The focus of the passage is assets available in the place.

However, setting up of a place is not an end in itself, and there are visions of further metamorphosis. Almost echoing Jenkins, Mitchell proposes further transformation of space, namely, an extension of the existing infrastructure:

One hundred and fifty yards from the fort there is a masonry quarter-guard, and Major Beresford, commanding at Sadiya, has suggested that the present lines of the fort might be extended, so as to take in this building, *thus affording an additional defence* and making the earthwork large enough to give shelter to both troops and followers in case of emergency. He has also suggested that the *earthwork should be armed with mountain guns*. (8; emphasis added)

Interestingly, the marking and partitioning of space into political units also achieves a decided degree of certainty, precision, and exactitude by this time. For instance, the ambiguity and general metaphors associated with the marking of space into division is replaced by more specific classifications. Mitchell comments: “The district of Sibsagar is bounded on the north by the Brahmaputra; on the east by the Buri Dihing; on the south by the Naga hills; and on the west by the Dhansiri” (9). It is possible to view this as a possible realization of a project that began with Jenkins in 1835. The frequent dialogue between visualization and realization of metamorphosis also marks the narrative’s account of the district of Sibsagar.

The European officers’ houses are built on the banks of a great artificial tank (Some miles in circuit, and containing very pure and clean water). There are the remains of several fine old temples. The native town is composed of a few streets of roughly-built bamboo huts, and the low-lying nature of the land gives the town a very *melancholic and unhealthy* appearance. The Dikhou river runs south-east of the station, and in the rains affords a convenient waterway to the Brahmaputra. At present, it threatens to carry away a great portion of the native town, and much labour has been spent in ‘bundling’ it off. (10; emphasis added)

Mapping the already transformed spaces and also visualizing potential transformation, Michell writes:

From Sibsagar to Jorhat there is a fairly good cart-road 38 miles in length, but a most difficult one to keep in good order; for as it runs about east and west, it is

cut up by the numerous rivers and streams which run from north to south of the district. Sibsagar is quite defenseless and no troops are quartered there. (10)

This is followed by a detailed survey of the existing state of infrastructure and possible interventions (10-11).

It is also obvious that the project of transforming the rivers in the region into commercial and military routes, which consolidate in the writings of early travelers and explorers as incipient visions, has been achieved significantly. The exactitude, precision, and authority of the narrative not only reflect how extensive the river systems of Upper Assam are but also of their mapping as opportunities and impediments (11-22). Suggesting an imperative metamorphosis, Mitchell's narrative runs like this:

The Dihing [a river in Upper Assam] is quite navigable for large country-boats at all times of the year as far as Jaipur; and for small boats to 20 miles beyond Makum. In case we wish to use this river for military purpose, a party of sappers should be sent ahead to clear the snags. This could easily be done with a *few hundred pounds of gun-cotton*. (22; emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes:

The Disang [a river in Upper Assam] is navigable to Borhat, 10 miles from the Brahmaputra. What has been said about the Dihing is applicable also to this river. At the end of November, it is not more than 50 yards wide, but is navigable for boats of from two to four maunds. In case of military operations beyond the Patkai it would be possible to use both the Dihing and the Disang as lines of communication. There is a path from Soongee, on the Disang to Jaipur, on the Dihing, the distance only being 6 or 8 miles. *The stores of an army might be passed up these rivers in the month of September by steamer, and the supply kept up country boats through the cold weather*. (22; emphasis added)

The narrative presents a similar survey of the mountain system of the region only to further illustrate the decided degree to which the project of mapping and transformation of space has moved (22-26). It is obvious that Mitchell eyes at spaces to intervene and transform.

As suggested earlier, the transformation of the region from a metaphor or vision into a material space is more evident in the context of defence or military spaces. Visions of militarizing, quite oblique and nascent in the early texts, are substantially fulfilled. For instance, surveying the military establishment, consisting of soldiers, frontier police performing specific tasks like treasury and jail duties, frontier defence etc., the narrative underlines the theme of ‘northern frontier defence’:

Starting from the Brahmakund, and following the line of the northern frontier, the first post we meet with is Sanpura, a stockade garrisoned by one head constable and 14 frontier police; its support is Sadiya, distance one half day’s march. Continuing to the West, some 6 miles Diphu stockade is reached garrisoned by one head constable and 12 frontier police, its support is Sadiya, where there are 250 troops. (38)

This passage illustrates the substantive material transformation of the region as a military frontier, a fuller realization of visions of the likes of Jenkins and Pemberton.

Another instance of transforming the frontier into a cluster of assets in the text is the installation of military posts in the territory of the Abors. Retracing colonial military engagements with the tribes, the narrative informs us that by 7th of December, 1881 stockades had been erected at Nizamghat, a frontier spot. Furthermore, “communication by heliograph had been opened up with Sadiya and an effective system of patrol established” (70). Also fair-weather paths have been made (70) along with outposts to guard these strategic assets. Surveying the network of outposts Michell writes:

Poba [in Arunachal] guard, at the entrance of the Lalli river is situated between the Poba Nuddi and the Lalli river. It guards the mouth of the Lalli and the Poba rivers, and the principal road of the Abors to the plains, which is by way of the dry channels of the Lalli and Dihong rivers. A glance at the map will show the very peculiar position the stockade occupies. It is cut off from the Sessiri outpost by the Dihong river, is liable to the attack of the Abors who have been allowed to occupy our territory in the low ranges. (71)

Regular patrols are also arranged. For instance:

Two patrols start daily from Sessiri, one as above, to communicate with the Poba patrol on its left flank, and the other two meet a patrol from Dibong about half-

way or 6 miles from its right flank. The Dibong outpost sends the above patrol half to Sessiri on its left flank and have to communicate with a police patrol... daily news is thus obtainable at Sadiya; but in quiet times three patrols a week are considered sufficient. (73)

As in the case of Upper Assam, this also is a vision of potential intervention and eventual metamorphosis of space into a military asset. For instance, there is a detailed mapping of villages as well as routes leading to them with particular attention to the practicability of roads (75-79). What is noteworthy is the assured precision with which the narrative maps strategic topographies. For instance, it exactly pin-points the routes from Assam to Burma: "Bisa can be reached from the Brahmaputra in four days by either the Buri Dihing or the Noa-Dihing, and there are paths to it by the banks of these rivers" (152). Importantly, it also generates a space for intervention. Michell writes: "The first necessity of an advancing army would be a good road to Bisa, which would be our depot on the Assam side, and a road from Bisa to old Bisa in the Hukong Valley, a distance of about 100 miles over an easy country" (153). It is followed by extensive mapping of itineraries along multiple routes to Burma (152-198). These instances suggest how the northeast, in writings of travel and exploration, is increasingly viewed as a linkage to other economic geographies in the region.

Apart from surveying spaces of potential transformations, the narrative also cites actual instances of such pursuits. Referring to the laying out of roads to the land of the Mishmis, and survey sites of stockades, Michell writes: "First march about 12 miles from Sadiya crossing the Koondil in a north-east direction up to the Diphu outpost by patrol-path... lying up the stony bed of the most eastern channel of the Diphu, are very hard marching, especially for elephants and, no water is available" (115). Michell promptly uses the rhetoric of dystopia. For instance, he writes:

The route was very difficult for men on foot, and next to impracticable for laden elephants. Every inch of the way almost had to be cut through the dense bamboo and cane jungles and forests that clothe these lower ranges of hills, hence the shortness of the stages and length of time occupied. (116)

A vision of metamorphosis follows, and the traveler writes: "The actual distance could not be more than that from Sadiya to Bishenagar, and if a good path were constructed lower down at the foot of the hills, it ought not to take more than three easy or two long

marches. Water was obtainable at short intervals throughout the journey” (116). Similarly: “If the old Assamese road said to exist were discovered and utilized, or a good path were cut along the banks of the river, instead of in its bed, the journey ought not to occupy more than two marches”(116). Subsequently, we are informed, “a path was cut by the left bank of the Dibong, and in the cold weather, the journey can be made in two days... there are no difficulties to be encountered on the road, and water is plentiful” (116). It is clear that the monuments such as roads, forts of the previous dispensation are now a part of the colonial cartography of power.

Michell’s *The North East Frontier of India* illustrates the project of space production as a progression from visualization to realization. In other words, it reflects how spatial visions in colonial travel and expedition writings are initially marked by ambiguities and uncertainties only to be consolidated and subsequently morphed into material realities. To this extent, the narrative goes to illustrate the view that the production of space in colonial travel and expedition writings is an ongoing project.

(IV)

Frederick Marshman Bailey (1882-1967), served as a British intelligence officer. Published in the year 1945 his narrative *China-Tibet-Assam* is an account of an expedition undertaken by him in the year 1911. Bailey sets off from the Chinese city of Peking (presently Beijing), reaches up to the Tibetan city of Batang and therefrom tries to reach the Assamese town of Sadiya. As an account written by a colonial intelligence officer it offers important clues into the construction of space in colonial northeast involves dimensions. To be specific, it reflects how the northeast, in colonial travel and expedition writings, develops into an important geo-strategic location of the Empire involving strategic diplomatic interests. In other words, Bailey’s travel shows how the production of space in colonial travel writing no longer remains limited to the agenda of surveying or mapping and eagerly participates in attempts to actively establish and expand what is understood as spheres of geopolitical influence. As a narrative composed in the early part of the twentieth century, Bailey’s text not only reflects the shifting priorities of the Empire but also shows how projects of space-production at times assume multilateral and trans-border proportions.

Despite being guided by the mandate to construct the frontier as a geo-strategic entrepot, Bailey’s travel account cannot refrain from forcing on the place tropes of a negative

aesthetic. For instance, describing his first encounter with the Mishmis, Bailey writes: “Here I saw my first Mishmis, three *dull, morose men with very few clothes and wearing necklaces of dogs’ teeth*, with long hair tied in a topknot on their heads” (121; emphasis added). Similarly he writes: “In contrast to the Tibetans above Rima, who are great snuff takers, these people smoke tobacco in bamboo pipes, as do their *less civilized neighbours the Mishmis*” (123; emphasis added). The text offers other similar instances of vilifying the indigenous people (150).

It is not unusual that Bailey uses the strategy of negative aesthetic to reflect upon the hardships of travel. For instance, he writes: “From here I was to travel over country quite *impassable for animals*. I also anticipated difficulties among the Mishmis and was quite prepared to find it impossible to travel among them, in which case I should have to return and try and find my way to India through Burma” (122; emphasis added). This could be viewed as an attempt to foreground the difficulties faced by the traveler in negotiating the many layers of the place. He adds:

The road soon became atrocious. We had to pass several outcrops of rocks where a slip would have meant a nasty accident in such an out-of-the-way place; later we entered thick forest and had to scramble over moss-covered boulders ... Frequently we would find an enormous fallen tree blocking our path over which rough ladders of notched log led the road. (125; emphasis added)

Similarly, he writes:

The 15th saw me on the road again-but what a road! At first, I went through wet rice-fields, but on leaving the vicinity of the small village I had a foretaste of my next fortnight’s travel. Where the river followed below a cliff, this was negotiated by the notched log and creeper arrangement which I had already experienced on leaving Rima. After a cliff, the track would occasionally be good and flat for some distance, but it was more probable that we had to scramble over boulders at the river’s edge. Sometimes we had to cut our way through dense jungle or we might skirt fields of maize, millet or other crops strange to me. (140)

The instrument of negative aesthetic continues to be employed. For instance, Bailey writes: “I came only about five miles in ten hours this day, having to spend some time over rope bridges, by one of which we crossed the river on the right bank. This bridge

alone took three hours. The Lohit was about eighty yards wide, with a very rapid current” (142). This passage not only constructs the northeast as a hostile topography but also already prepares for the potential transformation of the area. The traveler also ‘turns’ ordinary objects or even unknown places-empty spaces into signposts of the Empire. For instance:

When first travelling in the Mishmee Hills on my way down from Tibet I had occasion to follow a sign of this kind. It was laid horizontally across a path. I thought that the branch must have been moved accidentally by some animal and followed that path, to be recalled by cries by my Mishmee companions. Somewhere in the course of the five hundred miles separating the two areas the sign is changed and you block the road you did *not* use by a cross branch instead of marking the one you *did* use by a longitudinal one. I wonder what is done in other similar countries, for all jungle people *must* have a sign for this purpose. (140)

It is obvious that as a rule colonial projects are propelled by the motive to transform occupied areas into capital assets facilitating the generation of wealth. Needless to mention that the exercise is multifold and is better viewed as a complex layering of action and meaning. Given the fact that the ultimate goal is to transform space into remunerative assets, colonial travelers often pioneer or push for such projects. Given the fact that the ultimate aim of any creation of space in the Empire and the eventual occupation of territory must necessarily lead to the generation of capital assets or wealth, the colonial expedition texts operate as a pioneer of expansion. Importantly such expansions get layered and include areas such as hunting and managing the wild. For instance, Bailey carries out extensive hunting expeditions throughout his journey, often with the intent to collect skins and horns. For instance, one chief temptation of his travel remains the fauna of the region, especially an animal called takin. The traveler’s thirst to see and kill one is satiated only on reaching the Dibong valley (presently in Arunachal), where he kills numbers of it (124-136). “The whole afternoon was spent cleaning the skins, a task rendered difficult by the pouring rain, which made the air so damp that they could not be dried” (136). Similarly, he writes: “Next morning I was up early to see whether the takin had come back, though Koko assured me that my doing so was useless, as we had walked all round the spring, and that it would prevent them from returning for some days” (136).

As Bailey informs later on, two live takins are caught and presented to Zoos at London and Edinburgh (33). The participation of the explorer-traveler cum surveyor in hunting is important in view of the driving metaphor of control and conquest. Taming the wild involves killing wild animals that dominate a track numerically or by virtue of their dominating presence. So whether it is hunting wild boar or bison or deer or rhinos, the primary aim is to clear the track for real or material occupation by displacing the indigenous species. This works almost like dispossessing the natives of land and rights. It is important to note that way Bailey, apparently engaged in an intelligence mission actively initiates commerce of a sort. Bailey collects not only animals but butterflies as well (138), which eventually find their way to museums at the metropole. These instances further corroborate the argument that colonial travel regularly participates in converting space into economic assets or wealth.

It is important to note that Bailey is a secret agent. Interestingly, he not only visualizes the sanitization of the frontier but also of the transformation of the frontier space into useful and productive assets. Evidence in the text confirms that the traveler regularly attempts to carve out strategic spheres of geopolitical influence through acts of interception aimed at containing Chinese advances in the region. Bailey writes:

During the night some Mishmis arrived at the village. They were to hold a consultation at the village of Walung, which was on the opposite side of the river, and then all were to go to Chikong to see the Chinese officer there, who had sent for representatives of what he called the ‘monkey people’. *So unwilling there these Mishmis to go that it did not take much from me to make them change their plans and return to consult the British political officer at Sadiya before visiting the Chinese, whose interest in the tribes south of the Himalayas it was advisable to discourage.* (141; emphasis added)

Although Bailey is seemingly involved in an act of exploration, he regularly makes strategic interventions to contain other agencies and power centers from gaining a foothold in the region. He plays interesting diversionary geo-political or diplomatic games. For example, in one instance, he intercepts the Tibetans sent by the Chinese to bring some Mishmee head men from lower down the Arunachal valley and diverts them instead to the British political officer at Sadiya. He writes:

They [Tibetan agents] had already been a month on the job, and had at last persuaded about forty [headmen] to come. I told them that they had much better go to the political officer at Sadiya and keep out of the way of the Chinese, who in any case I heard were being sent to fight in Po Me. I am sure that none of these Mishmees went to the Chinese and I hope the Tibetans, if they did so, arrived after the Chinese garrison had been wiped out, and came to no harm. (147)

Even though Bailey resolutely carries out his secret operations, there is always an element of fear in the handling of such affairs. He writes: “I learnt from these men about the murder of Mr. Williamson and Dr. Gregorson and their servants and followers by the Abors. It was a relief to me to know that they had been murdered by Abors and not by the Mishmis” (141). It could be viewed as an act of intelligence gathering as Bailey’s return is immediately followed by a punitive expedition to the land of the Abors (170). It is also significant that for the most part, Bailey makes use of the night-shelters built by Mr. Williamson, the agent who had travelled to the place the previous year and killed by the hillmen, and spends most of his nights there (148, 151). For instance: “Leaving Ti-ne I continued down the valley. I passed some lean-to shelters where Williamson had camped, and they showed me a tree on which as far as I could make out he had hoisted his flag” (142). It could be said that Bailey almost retraces the footsteps of his predecessor, Williamson. It makes it important to view Bailey’s travel in light of larger diplomatic and military agenda of the Empire in the northeast frontier.

The spy-diplomat-explorer regularly tries to tempt the hillmen. For instance, he writes: “One of the Mishmees whom I had met at Ti-ne, and whom I had advised to go to Sadiya, before visiting the Chinese turned up here and brought his wife to see me. I gave the lady my watch-chain as a present to her great delight” (147). There are several occasions when Bailey contrives to obtain complicity as well as create footholds for the empire by tempting the local people. It goes without saying that he continues to minutely observe activities by the Chinese in the region and across the Border. For instance: “I passed two flags which my men told me had been put by the Chinese to mark the frontier. I bivouacked in a small flat called Mango. I soon got used to sleeping thus in the open in heavy rain” (142). Throughout his travel, Bailey continues to monitor Chinese activities in the Eastern Himalayan region.

There are occasions when the spy-diplomat-traveler/explorer acts more like a capitalist vanguard and reflects on prospective commerce and attending hurdles. For instance, Bailey writes:

The southern slopes of the Himalayas from the eastern frontier of Bhutan to Burma and beyond are lacking in salt. The lower part of this country, say from five thousand feet downwards, is inhabited by scantily-clad savages of many tribes-Akas, Daflas, Miris, Abors, Mishmis of various kinds, and others. These people have to get salt from somewhere. Those near the plains of India go south for their supply, while those living nearer Tibet go North to Tibet for this necessity. For the most part of these tribes do not understand money, but exchange the products of their forests- skins, bamboo, canes and medicinal plants for salt. They also bring little rubber to Assam. (142)

It is important to view such observations in the light of greater expansionist designs of the empire. The border, from this perspective, is an asset for imperial commerce.

Reaching the Mishmi Hills on his way from Chinese territory, Bailey makes necessary arrangements to proceed towards India. Eventually, his Tibetan coolies run away, as Bailey informs, scared to enter the Mishmi villages (144). However, Bailey arranges some carriers and sets off to travel along difficult terrain. The fact that his carriers and attendants were slow and unwilling makes his job difficult. The key to this trip is the trail created by Williamson. He writes: “On July 18th I made a late start-at least, I considered it a late start, but I was to get used to these delays and difficulties with Mishmi coolies. *The track was again of the same primitive type, but had been improved in places by Williamson the year before* in some of the more difficult places” (145: emphasis added).

Likewise, he writes: “The road was, if anything, worse than before, owing to a fresh landslip and to a slippery climb over clay. We passed several rope bridges leading across the Lohit. Some of these were of a different kind to those that I had used previously” (148). The passage illustrates how the colonial explorer navigates the passage between metaphors and metamorphosis of the frontier space. There are similar examples where Bailey executes such tasks himself. For instance:

The road was better than usual and partly through all tall grass, some of it fifteen feet high. At one sandy place we halted for a rest while the Mishmee carriers

amused themselves practicing long jump. Further on we had to cross a large tributary called the Chera. *Here over the deeper part we made a 'Mishmee' bridge of crossed sticks.* (146: emphasis added)

Bailey continues his passage through dense forest, leech-infested jungles and other similar hardships. However, all the hardships endured by him do not go waste and the traveler is awarded with a Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society and several others (170). It is important to note that later on Bailey also participates in the punitive expedition sent the following year to punish the Abors for the alleged murder of Mr. Williamson and his party. It is important to note that throughout his voyage, Bailey not only keeps a regular note of animal tracks and potential fishing spots but also indulges in hunting games (162). As per his admissions, the botanical and zoological collections, namely birds, mammal skins, butterflies and plants made by Bailey were given to Bombay Natural Historical Society, British Museum, and Edinburgh botanical gardens (169). These could be viewed as proof of the instrumental role played by travelers and explorers in the colonial northeast in expanding and enriching the colonial knowledge system.

Bailey's account gives important clues into nineteenth century colonial attempts to expand military and strategic footholds not only in areas that were already territorialized but also to control areas lying outside the immediate territorial jurisdiction of the Empire. As an exploration cum travel account by a colonial secret-agent, it reflects on the usually overlooked dimension of the northeast as a crucial site of trans-border geopolitics, a coveted prize for contending power centers. The fact that this is a journey that follows an 'inverse' route-not from the northeast to the outer world but from the outer periphery to the northeast is important bolt for reasons of narrative and strategic importance.

V

The present section focuses on projects of material construction of space as reflected in *The Tour Diary of the Deputy of Commissioner of Nagah Hills* (1871). Composed in the format of a diary, it narrates the annual tours made by the erstwhile Deputy Commissioner of the Nagah Hills, Captain Butler for the year 1871 (This Captain Butler is not to be confused with Major John Butler whose text *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* is incorporated in chapter 3). What makes this narrative a crucial text for the study is that it is written by an important functionary of the colonial state and also

the fact that it illustrates the actual politics of the colonial state materially intervening in existing spaces. Rather than attempting an extensive survey of such transformations, the analysis will focus on finding out useful illustrations.

As already suggested, roads are important sites, always ready for material transformation. It is important to note that despite appearing interchangeable and identical, the range of terms associated with it such as ‘tracks’, ‘line’, ‘path’ are also implicated in colonial visions of metamorphosis. As will be illustrated later on, such denominations often hint at existing imperfections, inadequacies and thus generate spaces for intervention and material transformation. To this end, most of the colonial narratives are crowded with a litany of complaints about native passageways. The travelers survey and map native ‘tracks’ or ‘paths’ only to transform these into colonial ‘roads’. For instance, Captain Butler writes:

I am happy to say the whole of the *jungle* between Samoogooting and Deemapoor has *been cut and cleared*, five new *bridges have been erected* and that portion of the road leading through that *terrible swamp* the Darrogahpothar has been raised about 18 inches by *trees having been laid across the road, the interstices filled in with fascines* and the *whole then covered with a layer of about 4 inches of earth* on to which more earth will be added hereafter. I have left 25 coolies still hard at work and I hope by the end of the month to have this portion of the roads (which ought to be the strongest link in our communications with Golaghaut) in *very fair order* and if I am only allowed anything like a liberal allowance for annual repairs I hope by the end of next cold season to *have carts on*.

Here also what is obvious is the attempt undertaken at different levels to facilitate mobility. It is also important to note that unlike the traveler and explorers discussed in the previous chapters, Captain Butler makes resolute and prompt interventions with the intent to transform impediments into utility.

Prompt and systematic interventions are also evident in producing sites other than roads. For instance, the following passage reflects the consolidation of specialized material territories:

On visiting the gatah [a storehouse] at Jamestown [a place in Naga hills] which I built there some six months ago I found that there was a fair supply of everything including rice, dal, oil, ghee, salt etc., and the same at Deemapoor so I have no fear of running short of stores this cold season. *The guard Houses and Constables Lines* both at Deemapoor and Jamestown are being in the former case, *put into thorough repair* and in the latter, entirely *rebuilt* so that I hope they will all be comfortably housed before the rains commence.

These instances illustrate the way the colonial politics of space production extends across a range of sites like roads, buildings, military spaces as well as other civil and military spaces. Similar accounts of inconvenient roads and the corresponding visualization of smooth communication proliferate in the text. For instance:

I left Deemahpoor this morning about 7 a.m. and reached Camp at Oagovree about 3 p.m. The distance being I should say between 18 and 20 miles, through a dense Forest Jungle the whole way without a single break and as may be supposed the road was not in very good order, never having had as far as *I can gather a single pice spent upon it and yet this is the only road by which the ryats inhabiting the villages situated along the Jumoonah, Kopile and Doyang can reach Samoogooting* I proposed therefore to solicit that a small grant of a few hundred rupees be made in order to open out this road for I am sure *the road is much wanted and a small sum judiciously spent would be well laid out.*

It is important to view such proposals in light of the key agenda of the Empire, namely- the generation of wealth. Often tropes of negative esthetic are made to mode side by side foraying of economic assets. For instance, Captain Butler writes:

Moved camp this morning into Mohung Dizooa, a distance of about 12 miles through much the same kind of road as that we traversed yesterday often having had to stop and cut our way through fallen trees and huge snake-like creepers which so encumbered the road that in many places we found it easier work to walk through the jungle itself on either side. The forest seems to swarm with wild animals whose well-marked tracks lay in every direction, more especially near a spot called Amlookee where there is a salt lick about half way between Rogooree and Mohung Dizooah.

There is a possible sub-text of forest and fauna being potentially used as utilities. If the narrator is sometimes tormented by uncommonly bad road through the usual forest jungle, sometimes he is elated by better roads. Interestingly, roads are classified into types on the basis of imagined norms. The narrative of roads as dystopia continues:

The road was one of the worst I have ever had the misfortune to travel on, at times a mere trace through forest and dense jungle, at others wading through water up to our knees along the bed of a stream. Twice we lost our road notwithstanding the precaution I had taken of having a guide with us. Often we had to creep along bending our backs until they ached under overhanging masses of bamboos or force our way through long grass which met over our heads and the long oat like seeds of which managing to get into our clothes caused great irritation. It is rather difficult to say how far we have come to-day but I should think the distance must be over 16 miles at the least.

This disruption of the road is by now a familiar plea for the institution and consolidation of revenue and fiscal territories:

In the afternoon two Meekirs named Jeerbar and Jingloo came in and complained that they were being assessed not only by Likpok on my side but also by Jor (son of Sarmong) and by the Dekah Rajah of Kothalgooree on the Nowgong side. After enquiring carefully into the matter and finding that their villages lay among the Rengmah Nagas who had been specially made over to the Naga Hills jurisdiction I decided that they too must belong to the same jurisdiction and accordingly addressed the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong to the effect that if (as I believed was the case) these men did belong to the Naga Hills he would be good enough to forbid his mouzadars from interfering with them in any way.

As suggested above, as an agent of the Empire the traveler does not remain complacent with mere passive visualization of space but also makes active interventions into it. In another instance of setting up regular revenue arrangements, Captain Butler writes:

We left camp this morning at sunrise hoping to reach the Rengma village of Jaukhe which I am informed is one of the largest Naga villages on this side but after a long and tedious journey up steep ascents and descents having to cut one

way through tangled masses of cane, bamboo and wet Jungle we only managed with great difficulty to reach the small Meekir village of Sartoa by sunset, having passed close to the west of the Rengmah villages of Demgho and Gangresso the former containing 10 and the latter 5 houses respectively. Both the Gaonboorahs came in to see me and I explained to them that they would have to pay revenue this year and regularly for the future and they both expressed their willingness to obey my orders whatever they might be.

Here, too, the body of the empire is manifest in terms of a newly established fiscal infrastructure.

In yet another variation of the transformation of space into imperial assets, we see as the production of colonial subjects while the colonizer pretends to extend paternalism or charity to the native population. Captain Butler writes in an apparently self-glorifying move:

Rode out early this morning and visited a small colony of 9 families of Samoogootmgeeah Nagas who have lately migrated to a spot close to Mohung Dizooa. They seemed contented and happy and expressed their intention of staying there after having first asked me whether I was really going to remain permanently among the Tengeemahs adding that if I was not, they must return to Samoogooting for they would most certainly be killed by the other Nagas if they stayed down in the plains where they were without any means of defence. However I assured them they need have no fear as for the future they would always have a Sahib living among them to look after their welfare.

Throughout the narrative, scenes of an enthusiastic and desperate submission to the colonial traveler-campaigner are regularly paraded. Charity is extended only against the promise of good behaviour, which illustrates the construction of the very villagers as loyal subject. Captain Butler writes:

Notwithstanding my having sent words some 20 days ago that I was about to visit these Hills for the purpose of appointing a Mouzadar who I wished should be a man of their own election and that for this purpose I desired the gaonboorahs of the various villages would meet me at Jaukhe, I find that Moosung of Dangho and Rello of Yangresso are the only two that have obeyed my summons the rest I

am told having determined to refuse to listen to my orders and to oppose any attempt to raise revenue. Under these circumstances I determined to act at once and immediately called a meeting at which I appointed Phembeega Phookun (the son of the late Jaukhe Phookun) Mouzadar over the western Rengmahs (or that portion of the Rengma villages which used formerly to pay their revenue into the Nowgong Treasury) and explained to him what his duties were adding that I should hold him personally responsible that the revenue was duly collected and promptly paid into the Treasury at Samoogooting.

He adds:

I then explained to him that I should of course support him and that provided only he behaved properly and was guilty of no offence he need fear no one and in order that there should be no misunderstanding about the matter he should accompany me in my tour through the remaining villages in his Mouzah and make his arrangements for collecting the revenue.

These are examples of the imperial traveler's eagerness to participate in the project of wealth-generation. Rationalizing the move to impose tax as a move to civilize the indigenous people Captain Butler writes:

I therefore informed them that if they continued to behave themselves as well for the future as they had for the past 2 years I had no doubt but that they would be permitted to share in the blessings of a good Government such as the Samoogootingeeahs enjoyed. I feel assured we have only to give the order and the revenue would be paid in without the least opposition and I know of nothing which has so great an influence or which acts so quickly in civilizing barbarous savages as the infliction (or rather blessing I should say) of a fair and moderate taxation.

It goes without saying that these gestures of paternalism and submission are followed by further territorialization. The explorer-officer continues to map and assess the encountered sites against some pre-formed expectations. It is more obvious in the case of production of revenue spaces. Captain Butler keeps enumerating and surveying villages and their inhabitants with the prospect of revenue enhancement in mind. This explains why a thin population in a village often disappoints him. He writes: "In the evening I

walked through the village and counted the houses which I found to be only 33 including 8 Barees or widows which together with the Dekka Chang are according to former custom exempted from paying any revenue". This is an instance of colonial attempts to transform space into economic asset.

For the entire length of the journey, the traveler-officer keeps on looking for sizeable populations and a better prospect for revenue collection. So he complains of the meager size of the population in many Naga villages. He writes:

A distance of about 5 miles from Jankhe brought me to Rehong containing only 16 houses from whence I proceeded on to Kakhee a village containing 20 houses and from this I went on to Sagalee containing 14 houses. These three villages are about the same distance apart so I calculate I have walked over 16 miles to-day and that too by a path that it is simply absurd to call a road and what with wading and struggling through wet jungle.

This tour is part and parcel of an imperial allegory in the sense that it provides for ample colonizing opportunities that can be disguised as something else. Thinking and reflecting on the demographic constitution of an area is a meditation on revenue generation. Occasionally the craze for asset-building becomes very obvious. For instance, the traveler thinks over the possibility of establishing a station at Kohima:

The face of the country here is very different from that around Samoogooting being much more open and quite free of that dense forest jungle and thick undergrowth which causes the latter station to be so unhealthy than we are at a comparatively high elevation with five rolling mountains almost every one of which has a village on its summit and being the most populous portion of these hills, the very heart in fact of the Angamee clans.

Similarly, the traveler's reflections on bad roads and visualization of smooth travel can be seen as preludes to the territorialization of these spaces. Captain Butler writes:

I consider a well chosen spot anywhere in this vicinity (and there would be no difficulty in finding one) would be peculiarly well adopted to become the Head quarter station of the Naga Hills - A good road with an easy gradient could easily and with very little expense be made leading from James town (the outpost at the Samoogooting hill) via Mizuphemah, Pherumah, Peephumah, Keroophemah and

Theesamah to Kohimah and once fix the station here and positively declare that all feuds must cease we should soon have peace and quietness where all at present is war and discord. There is a very strong party in almost every village who are anxious for peace and who would I believe gladly pay a moderate revenue (say Re.1 per house) and aid me in restoring order.

As suggested earlier, one of the important sites in the northeast to invite and go through colonial intervention is the border. Captain Butler writes:

Accompanied Captain Phillips the Officiating Deputy Commissioner to Cachar and had a long consultation regarding our mutual boundary which ended finally concerning the opinion that there was one and only one really good natural boundary to be found and that was to hold to the Kopili and Jamuna Rivers, the very boundary in fact which I believe formerly existed between Nowgong and Assaloo, and it seems strange to me why it should not have been adhered to when the Naga Hills District was originally formed. The whole of the small tract of country lying between the Jamuna and Kopili now belonging to Nowgong only contains 8 villages paying a total revenue of less than Rs.4, 000 so that Nowgong would be no great loser by the transfer.

This little note in Captain Butler's diary is symptomatic of larger and more pervasive colonial designs in the northeast frontier. It is obvious that the earliest colonial views of the northeast as a hazy, uncertain landscape have faded away and have given way to more resolute and actual attempts to intervene. It is obvious in the way Captain Butler, as a personification of the great British Empire, attempts to transform spaces at his custody, namely the Naga Hills into an instrument of wealth generation. Roads, rivers, trees, rice-fields, people are all seen as components of a remunerative geography.

To sum up, the tour diary of Captain Butler, although not automatically a travel writing text, illustrates the aftermath of projects that are very much part of travel imaginaries that are also called allegories of Empire. It also offers insights into the consolidation of state apparatuses in areas often framed as hostile geographies in early colonial accounts.

(VI)

The next text taken up for examination is the Tour Diary of the Naga Hills by W. J. William, the Inspector General of Police, Assam in 1878. This document, along with the

diary of the Deputy Commissioner discussed above is a crucial text to explore the politics of space in the colonial northeast. Both Captain Butler and William are important civil officials of the colonial government and hence their narratives offer helpful insights into the transformation of space into administrative assets. Like Captain Butler's text, this narrative also illustrates the initiation and consolidation of space into capital assets in general and economic apparatuses in particular.

William marches into the Naga Hills with the apparent aim of capturing an absconding murder-accused. As evidence in the text suggests, from the very outset of his march, he is more into projects of survey, surveillance, and, more importantly, of converting space into military and economic assets. As suggested earlier, being the account of a colonial civil official, William's text, for the most part, deals with the setting up and consolidation of administrative space in a particular quarter of the northeast, namely the Naga Hills. For instance, William writes: "Both the Mazema and Konoma men again promised not to make any aggression on Monipooree villages acknowledging that they perfectly understood their doing as can be in defiance of our authority"(1). This passage illustrates the construction and consolidation of the Empire as a material body often carried out through the instrument of military travel and expedition. There are other similar instances to suggest how official travel is a key and strategic participant in projects of converting space into capital assets. For instance, William writes: "Went through Kohima. The village is said to number full 1,000 houses. I observed large number of cattle and other livestock. The people are evidently well off" (1). Similarly: "Heard that un-husked rice is sold from this part of the country to Mozemah and Konoma at the rate of Rs. 1 for one man's load. That would be equal to about 12 annas per maund for clean rice" (2). It is not difficult to see that that traveler's gaze readily perceives the place as a potential fiscal or taxable asset. Such instances corroborate the argument that colonial space is predominantly a product of colonial greed.

Despite being on the mission to nab an absconding murderer, the traveler regularly looks out or forays for military and civilian passage. For instance, he writes: "In the morning went out towards Jotsoma and Merama looking for a line for a road. It seems that a path from Samagudting might not go through Kohima at all but through Jotsoma on rather under that village"(1). Similarly he writes: "Marched through Phesama to Reginema. The distance took about five hours. It is clear that a path could be taken along this route from Jotsoma with ease and that it would be free from great ascents or descents and have no

considerable streams to cross. The village cultivation is all terraced very carefully” (1). It is very likely that the same will be transformed into full-fledged capital assets later on.

The text presents instances which explicitly suggest that colonial space production is always motivated by colonial territorial greed. For instance, William writes:

Jakama lies over a beautiful stretch of terraced cultivation. From Jotsoma to the large village of Viswemah the whole way was through cultivation. Distance about one hour’s journey. After passing through Viswemah in two hours most of the time through cultivation reached the Zullo (here a very small stream) under the village of Phusama on Mao in Muniport territory the stream being here the boundary. *It would be very easy to take a path along to this point and it ought to do infinite good in opening out the fine rice country. The crops have been very good this year and Jotsoma, Viswamah and other villages must be full of rice.* Part of which would find its way to Samagudting which is always so hard up for it. The rice grown here is of very good quality too. (1; emphasis added)

Clearly, William visualizes the road as a colonial state apparatus to generate wealth. The passage thus illustrates the crucial role of tours and travels in carrying out material transformation of unmarked or traditional space into military and economic utilities.

It is obvious that despite the apparent mandate of enforcing law and order, William is more intent on foraging resources and creating taxable assets. For the most part, the project involves enforcing fiscal jurisdictions over the colonized territory. As an emblem of the empire, the traveler moves from villages to villages and enacts authoritative interventions. It is interesting to note that negotiation with each village that he visits starts with an enquiry about the absconder and culminates in submission or loyalty on the part of the native subject. The native people are made to take oath of loyalty and made accountable for fulfilling imperial dictates. “Marched from the Zullouphill to Viswemah a steep and long ascent. The Vishema’s men took an oath to the effect that they had not seen the murderer Nicrole and that should he visit their village he would be given up” (1). Eventually every visited village is converted into a revenue-paying site of the empire. Thus, the transition from landscape to capital assets through modes of territorialization comes to a full circle.

The expansion of the tax base is the most obvious instance of the transition from space to capital assets. If with a traveler discussed in the chapter on landscape such as Major Butler (1855), the local people had come with gifts of fowl, rice and forest produce, with William people are forced to come with money as tax. In other words, voluntary gifts and presents are converted into well-assigned and enforced tax liabilities. For instance, he writes:

In the morning had up all the Kohima Gaonburas and heard what they had to say for themselves and after doing so decided that the Latonomakhel *must pay a fine of Rs. 200 and Rs. 50 expenses incurred in keeping a postage in Samagudting. The Dakuchimakhel to pay a fine of Rs. 50 and the Resamakhel the same sum giving 24 hours for payment.* (2; emphasis added)

Here we see how the local population is made to pay for maintaining infrastructure, the latter entirely dedicated to the Empire. There are also instances where the imperial traveler obtains tax even at gunpoint. For instance, William writes:

In the morning the men of Dakuchima and Kesamakhels *brought in their money.* The later being a very small clan and having obeyed orders without clamor, I returned to them Rs. 20. *The Latonuma did not begin to come in until the police were under arms and on the point of marching into the village, theirs seemed a disposition to stop sort of the full amount. It ended in my going into the village when after using a few threats, the money was paid without any recourse to force.* (2; emphasis added)

The text is replete with instances of people being forced to pay taxes and fines making use of force. These instances reveal how space is instrumentalized as remunerative geography.

It is not unexpected that a tour essentially intent on enacting and consolidating the material body of the empire will certainly look out for existing deficiencies and potential intervention. For instance commenting on the condition of roads, William writes:

Marched at 7 A. M and found a fair path way down to Kotsoma along what would be about the line of our road. Beyond Kotsoma found the path covered by Jungle, in most places owing to men going on between Tesephima, Kotsoma and the villages to northward. The destruction of the path entail great trouble in

cutting our way through, besides in sundry places the old path was panjied ... when however we pushed our way into the village the people were civil enough. Evidently examples made in previous years have had their effect. The villages now met with are very poor looking compared with the fine Angami village, particularly those towards Viswema, here too there is a poor water-supply where there almost every likelihood has a stream of fine clean water. (3)

This narrative of hardship constantly endorses projects of transformation. The traveler foregrounds his vision of asset-creation. For instance:

Halted at Moka. In the morning went out to see about the ground for a station. Went to the place selected by Captain Butler on the shoulder of Thebzetu some 1 mile from Moka village to the east. When Captain Butler was here he found no less than eight streams of good clean water crossing the path round the hill in less than a mile. It seemed clear therefore that water would be abundant and easily taken to any part of the proposed new station; now I find no less than six of the streams quite dry, in one a mere spread of water and that evidently fast drying up. In the eighth there was a small flow of water, but whether this would be practicably available is a question. (3)

William does not restrict himself to the enforcement of law and order and, regularly participates in the conversion of space into assets. For instance, looking for a prospective site for a station he writes:

Just under the village of Moka, there are no less than five good springs which so far as I can ascertain have never been known to fail. *It appears to me that near where our present camp is would be the best place for a station; it is rather higher than the other site and very open.* The rains too are not severe judging by the state of preservation the buildings inside the stockade are, they having lasted through two monsoons. Besides the site selected by Captain Butler and the one near the village I can see no other place adapted for a station, water being the difficulty. (3; emphasis added)

This instance illustrates how projects of space-production in the colonial northeast are predominantly determined by the strategic interests of the Empire. William's narrative, in a way, encapsulates the colonial politics of space-production in the northeast by

reflecting on its manifold layers. In other words, it illustrates how the colonial traveler-agent not only makes implicit suggestions but also envisions and actively carries out projects of transforming pre-colonial spaces into wealth-yielding capital assets.

VII

These narratives mark a clear shift in the transformation of space. As a follow-up from the coding or marking of space, the traveler-explorer initiates and often actively participates in the transformation of space. In other words, the transformation of space into assets—as markers or producers of wealth—shows the direct intervention of colonial governance or agency in the northeastern region. The transformation of space from territory to assets can also be seen in the infrastructural assets of colonial governance such as transport and communication networks, roads, bridges, railways, forts, military garrisons, etc.

It also shows the transformation of ‘passive’ space into ‘active’ economic assets or zones, such as tea gardens, taxable land, timber industries, toll gates etc. This transformation of space can be seen as a movement from observation to Empire-building. Given the fact that most of the travel and expedition writers happened to be colonial military or official agents, this move seems logical. Even otherwise, travel and expedition writings participate in the transformation of spaces seen as natural objects or empty spaces to instruments of the Empire.

In sum, colonial travel and expedition writings frame pre-colonial landscapes or territories into assets that can produce wealth for the Empire. Though writing as such is never credited with active or direct intervention in Empire-building, the evidence that we get from the texts suggest that writing is as powerful as direct colonial instruments. Colonialism, therefore, can be seen not as a result of any particular form of instrumentation but as a result of several combinatorial forms of colonialism of which travel and expedition narratives form an important part.