

**EUROPEAN TRAVEL WRITING AND THE REPRESENTATION OF
HIMALAYAN BORDERLANDS IN INDIA (16-18TH CENTURIES A.D)**

A **Thesis** Submitted During **2018** to the University of Hyderabad in Partial
Fulfilment of the Award of **Ph.D. degree** in **History**

by

LANUCHILA CHANGKIRI



**Department of History
School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad – 500 046**



DECLARATION

I, **Lanuchila Changkiri** hereby declare that this thesis entitled “**European Travel Writing and the Representation of Himalayan Borderlands in India (16-18th Centuries A.D)**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Dr M. N. Rajesh** is a bona fide research work, which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that, it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodganga/INFLIBNET.

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Parts of this thesis have been:

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Dr M. N. Rajesh
Research Supervisor

Head

Department of History
University of Hyderabad

Dean

School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad

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Chapter- 1

Introduction

The central focus of the thesis is to analyse the travel writings narrated by the European travellers on the borderlands of the eastern and western Himalayas which encompass the most important land routes to India since the early period. The narratives of the travel writings and their thematic content are analysed with a view to understand how these regions were imagined and represented in the European worldview. Proceeding from this, the thesis seeks to understand how these characterisations of the borderlands based on their selection of themes and adoption of certain frames of references created certain imageries and how these representations were later internalised in the subsequent writings. The discursive nature of these narratives and their bearing on history and the imagination of certain regions employing certain European categories were constructed. Displacement of the earlier categories has led to certain portrayals that have become standard and at the same time also have become contested. It is this tension between early representations and the subsequent contestations of the narratives focusing on the regions of the Western and Eastern Himalayas which is one of the main threads that unites the different themes.

The thesis is also informed by recent academic trends beginning in the 1980s when the category of Orientalism became a prominent analytical tool to read travel writings and subsequent writings on the region and representations. Along with this, the translation of new material and their publication had also led to new openings that have given some

refreshing scope to approach the regions afresh. The publication of the Ladakh Gaylirabs¹, Cheitharon Kumpapa², Tripura Rajmala³, Namthras⁴ and the Burmese Royal chronicles⁵ have brought about fresh material that is only now being seriously being worked upon. Similarly, new trends have created new agendas to bring about newer understandings of the borderlands. One of the important concepts that this thesis engages with the notion of Zomia as the non-state space based on James Scott's much acclaimed work, "An Anarchic History of Upland South East Asia"⁶.

1.1.1 Title of the Dissertation

The present thesis titled "Travel writing and the Representation of the Himalayan Borderlands" includes the three components of travel writings, beginning in the 17th and 18th centuries till the advent of the British rule over a large part of the Indian subcontinent. It is followed by theories of representation and finally the Eastern and Western Himalayan regions that form the borderlands as the main creation of this exercise.

¹ Petech, Luciano. *A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh (Indian Tibet)*. Calcutta Oriental Press, 1939.

² Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur – Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*. Taylor & Francis, 2005.

³ Long, James, and Sampanna Chaudhuri. *Rajmala: Or, An Analysis of the Chronicles of the Kings of Tripura*. Firma KLM, 1978.

⁴ Tshahs-dbyahs-rgya-mtsho, Dalai Lama VI. *Songs of Love, Poems of Sadness: The Erotic Verse of the Sixth Dalai Lama*. I.B.Tauris, 2004.

⁵ Yazawintawkyi, Hmannānmaḥa. *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*. Oxford University Press, 1923.

⁶ Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 2010.

The title is informed by a need to engage with the Himalayas as a whole and also to understand the questions raised by the scholarship on Himalayas over the last 50 years which led to a genealogy of generalisations. It is this series of generalisations that have led to many doubts and questions over the characterisation of regions. After the independence of India in 1947 and the subsequent decolonisation, the rise of formerly colonised countries inaugurated a new form of scholarship that is now understood through one influential approach as post-colonialism and one of the major aims of post-colonialism was a corrective to the colonial writings. Further, the surfacing of new material and secondary writings on these primary sources also brought about fresh understandings pointing out to certain regional particularities that needed explanatory frameworks. Similarly, the rise of new analytical methods and the rise of non-Western historical discourse also have impacted many new works on similar themes in different parts of the world where travel writing had made an impact. The prime examples are in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The need to address all these challenges meant that most of the earlier representations had to be re-evaluated and reinterpreted afresh and therefore the title incorporates the three major elements of travel writing, representation and the Himalayan region.

1.1.2 Scope/ Temporal

The temporal span of the thesis is located in a very critical juncture of world history when the ascendancy of European historical discourse about many new people and societies into the ambit of history. This engagement with new groups and regions was primarily a new form of engagement as the earlier polities of India always had some form of engagement, but largely not in the form of formal documents. Hence, this these engagements were

primarily in the form of practices and the domain of morality and hence could not survive. The European expansion also brought in certain formal procedures in writing, cartography and other such administrative practices and religious practices and also travel writing in the form of literary representations.

This phenomenon also reflected a change in Europe after the Renaissance and the introduction of the printing press and therefore, we also have large number of elements of modernity in this period. Therefore, the recent references to characterise this period beginning from the 16th century as early modern instead of the term late mediaeval would do justice and is employed in this thesis. Chronologically, the thesis is situated between the 16th and 18th centuries and is considered to be the early modern in south Asia based on recent adoption of such historical practices. The 18th century is seen as the dividing line for the simple reason that the decline of the Mughal Empire is one of the most important factors after which the paramountcy of India passed on to the British Crown. It inaugurated a new government and by extension a new set of rules and regulations. It set in motion a chain of successive events that ushered in a western modernity and while this has been a topic of research, the borderlands have been largely ignored in this exercise and hence the chronological framework of 16th to 18th-century would do more justice.

Another problem associated with this is the question of periodisation in Indian history that divides Indian history into ancient, mediaeval and modern based on the European assumptions of the tripartite divisions of history that began in the Renaissance period⁷. This tripartite division of history sees the decline of the Roman Empire as the end of the classical

⁷ Reuter, Timothy. "Medieval: Another Tyrannous Construct?" *The Medieval History Journal* - Timothy Reuter, 1998. 21-23.

period. It perceives the rise of the postclassical as a dark age and the ushering of modernity as another period of light. It fancies a play-off light and darkness so often seen in many historical traditions like the Indian and Chinese tradition where new dynasties are shown to represent light thereby negating the darkness of the earlier dynasties like the Ming dynasties of China who called themselves the luminous ones in contrast to the darkness of the Mongol rule. A similar parallel also exists in India with the Mughals making use of light as a metaphor of brightness and dispelling darkness. The Mughals paintings also go so far as to adopt European ideas of Halo. Thus, this adoption of Halo is itself a feature of early modern practices in Europe that were internalised by the Mughals. The division of history in India follows from this post Mughals period and was labelled as the ancient belonging to the Hindu period, the mediaeval belonging to the Muslim period and the modern representing the British period. However, in the postcolonial period these labels had been substituted for ancient, mediaeval and modern respectively whereas the chronological markers accompanying them had remained static. Therefore ancient ends with the fall of the end of north India and mediaeval begins with six A.D. or the beginning of Muslim rule in India⁸. The mediaeval period is supposed to end in 1757 A.D. with the inauguration of the British East India companies' administrative practice, namely the regulating act of 1757. This is also known as the 18th-century crisis and persisted for a long time in Indian history till it demised in the form of a series of articles that challenged the decline of the Mughals as a period of overall darkness all over India. The counter to this argument was that the chronological marker of decline was only felt in the centre of

⁸ Mukhia, Harbans. "“Medieval India’: An Alien Conceptual Hegemony?" *The Medieval History Journal* 1, no. 1 (April 1998): 91–105. 91-92

Delhi which was the seat of the Mughals Empire whereas other centres experienced cultural efflorescence. Lucknow, Hyderabad, Bengal and many other places witnessed new forms of literature, artistic creativity and new dynasties that brought about a renewed prosperity and also period of creativity. Therefore, in place of one centre we have multiple centres and the idea of Dark Age was confined to only one centre. Thus, the question of adoption of temporal span is also contingent on the spatial span and thus the temporality has to be more inclusive and also reflect certain historical brakes or raptures to qualify for a new periodisation.

Keeping all these factors in mind the period from 16th to 18th-century is taken as an important chronological marker when travel writing acquired a new character and also a new form and shape that is analysed in detail in the later chapters.

1.1.3 Scope/ Spatial

Space is one of the most important components that informs the thesis and how the Christians are problematized. Continuing the discussion from the earlier paragraph we talk about a convergence of temporality and speciality that produced a narrative of decline in the centre-the capital of the Mughals that was generalised to include the picture of India which subsequently came to be known as the 18th-century crisis⁹. The historiography of this 18th-century crisis has rehabilitated the 18th-century as a period of decline only in one centre and efflorescence in the other regions or other centres thus moving away from the idea of a uni-centric to multi centric geographical spread. The question therefore is whether

⁹ Richards, John F. "Early Modern India and World History." *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 197.

the borderlands are part of this one centre of Delhi or the multiple centres or do we need more categories of Periphery or other centres to analyse these spaces. It becomes important as these spaces have been generalised on one side, as part of the territories of the domains by the British ratings and on the other hand, in the modern period and particularly the postcolonial period ethnic assertion has brought about a picture of acute regional particularity unconcerned with the larger questions.

To locate the thesis spatially, one would start from the highlands of western Himalayas which are truly the Highlands in the geographical sense of the term as they are part of the Tibetan plateau and include the regions of Ladakh. It was a stable kingdom with a long historical past and a ritual practice of royalty till its incorporation into the British sphere after the suzerainty of the Dogras started. The other kingdoms of Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur along with some other territories like Bangi and Dharchula in the western Himalayas are examples of borderlands with mixer populations and also part of transitional polities. Moving on to the central Himalayas, Sikkim and Darjeeling, the latter was a creation of the British but a part of the Kingdom of Sikkim and the borderlands of Nepal and Bhutan are the focus of this thesis. In the eastern Himalayas the regions bordering Assam and Bengal of the pre-modern period are taken up and in the modern period they are represented by the seven states of north-east India whereas Sikkim is to the west. These are the regions including both state and no state societies that lie between the settled agrarian regions of Assam, Tripura and Manipur on one hand and the Irrawaddy plains of Burma on the other hand and Yunnan in the North, with Arakan forming the borderland in the South as it enters the sea near lands' end.

The defining feature of this borderlands in geographical terms and be easily plotted on a map which shows the shape of an arc. It is expressed in the form of mountain ranges of high, medium and low altitudes from the Western to the eastern Himalayas. It was also a fixation of early writers beginning from the colonial period to see the Himalayas as a natural frontier of India. This perception saw regions within the Himalayas as belonging to India and regions outside the Himalayas that is of the regions beyond India and Indian civilisation. However, the Himalayas while being perceived as a dividing line was not just a simple line but a large swap of territory by itself incorporating large number of ethnic groups, variety of flora and fauna and lakes, rivers, fertile plains and forests. Here in lies the difference between border and borderland as the border is just marker of division whereas a borderland is much more than that and it explains the border which will be explained in detail in the subsequent chapters.

It is sufficient at this point to elucidate that the spatial turn affected geography and in our case means the hills and valleys and plains of the Himalayas from the west to the east both in terms of physical and cultural geography as geography is not only physical but also a way of imagining a reason. The accompanying map highlights some of these regions and leads to other maps that show in detail the regions under survey. A combination of physical geography and human agency that gives personality to the region is taken as an expression of the region and this framework is used to demarcate certain regions.

1.1.4 Broad themes

Landscape is one of the most important and striking themes that one finds in the writings of all the travellers. It offers immediate contrasts between large swathes of territory and

new regions which are expressed in the form of the encounters with the landscape. This encounter is a result of the discontinuity that the travellers express as they encounter different territories characterised by landforms, flora and fauna, altitude, forms of production, isolation and the cultural expressions of these as part of the living landscape. Thus, landscape forms one of the major themes of enquiry and is also a starting point to elaborate the discontinuities.

Cultural practices are another important set of themes that consists of wide variety of themes labelled here as cultural practices and they include everyday life, settlement patterns, rituals, patterns of dress, art forms etc. One of the problems associated with representing cultural forms is that many of the forms that resemble the host culture are glossed over as they are taken for granted and a certain universalism is attributed to them-monogamy. Cultural practices are also the mainstay of large number of markers of identity and thus are dependent largely on production processes as the surplus needed to maintain these cultural practices in a concrete form are dependent on the material inputs.

Religion and language are two other important themes. The early writers who came primarily from an European background and were most knowledgeable in the ideas of the Semitic religions namely in Judaism, Christianity and Islam had clear ideas of who was inside and outside as these religions were codified and sometimes they indeed were also known as the people of the book, a term popularised by the Muslims. In contrast to this codified religions resting on sacred books of similar parallels. Many other terms like faith, belief system and similar cognates had been suggested instead of using the term religion as they do not fit into the clear Western imagination of religion. It is also complicated by the fact that there was no term called Buddhism till the 19th century and the first instance of

this term was first used in the English dictionary in 1801. There were other similar terms employed in the Buddhist societies all over with the exception of Tibet where there was no word called Buddhism but the term was translated as Dharma or Chos. Such problems of representation of terms and practices make religion a much contested area. Therefore, religion and language are chosen, as language is one of the mediums through which religion is expressed. Further, the difference between language and dialect is also another problematic issue and this debate had gone on and ended with no clear linguistic map of the world till today.

Gender is another important aspect that figured prominently in the narratives of travel writings. Many of the writers were occupied with evaluating societies other than their own using criteria of their own gender. Therefore, the idea of gender and its operation was largely represented in negative tones. Furthermore, the representation of gender also suffered from the male voices and there was no multi-vocality as women did not have a large voice.

A set of other themes also surfaced infrequently based on certain travellers' particular predicaments like adventure, animal life, aspects of bravery and notions of childhood. Another important area is the notion of travel itself as travel to these regions were seen as different and this difference in an age when the world was being discovered and is thus known as 'the age of discoveries'. Large regions that connected regular circuits of travel were seen as something of a normalcy whereas the borderlands were seen as something that was discontinuous. This discontinuity and its representations arose largely from the problem of travel in a different geographical and cultural zone and thus travel is also taken up as one of the important themes.

Last but not least, production patterns and consumption are important too. Till recently, culture studies towards consumption had negated the question of production patterns largely making it immune from any materialist interpretation on which the whole basis of history rests. Keeping this predicament in mind, wherever available production patterns are taken into clear consideration as a marker of the societal make-up keeping in tune with some of the basic ideas of a materialist conception of history.

1.2.0 Primary sources/ Typology

Till recently, it was argued that there are no primary sources in the borderlands and this was based on the notion that most of the people were preliterate and did not have access to writing or rejected writing. Hence the idea of literary sources as primary sources did not exist and the available primary sources were only material remains.

For the purpose of our thesis, the primary sources here are the travel writings of the various European travellers from the 16th century on the Western and Eastern Himalayas and they are listed in the following table 1.1 in chronological order. Some of the travel writings written in non-English language have been translated into English and they are used in this account and the most famous example of Ippolito Desideri which is an account of Tibet¹⁰.

¹⁰ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995.

Table 1.1

Sl.	List of the name of travellers to Himalayan region	Period of visit
1.	Ralph Fitch (Eastern Himalayas)	1583-1591
2.	Jean Baptiste Tavernier (Eastern Himalayas)	1639-1684
3.	Diogo D' Almeida (Western Himalayas)	1600-1602
4.	Antonio D' Andrade (Western Himalayas)	1600-1634
5.	Ippolito Desideri (Western Himalayas)	1713-1725
6.	William Moorcroft (Western Himalayas)	1808-1825
7.	Alexander D' Koros (Western Himalayas)	1823-1841

1.2.1 Literary sources

Indian history had suffered from a lack of clear chronicle writing till the advent of the Turks with the exception of Kashmir where we have the text *Rajatarangini* that was continued in different forms bearing the same name by the later Muslim rulers. However, we also have clear historical chronicles in the eastern Himalayan borderlands and also in the western Himalayan borderlands beginning with the *Ladakh Gaylrahs*¹¹ on the kings of Ladakh. We also find similar chronicles that of Lahaul and Spiti which were later translated. The *Buranjis* or the historical chronicles of Assam form an important source as they explain in detail the chronological order of the relations between the different polities. The other two important sources are the *Namthars* or the monastic chronicles of Arunachal Pradesh that are primarily Tibetan Buddhist in nature and the *Cheitharon Kumpapa* which are the *Chronicles of the Kingdom of Manipur* and the *Royal chronicles of Burma* all of which

¹¹ Petech, Luciano. *A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh (Indian Tibet)*. Calcutta Oriental Press, 1939.

will be elaborated later. A reading of the historiography and trends would reveal a chronological and descriptive account of borderlands though their prime focus is on the state societies.

1.2.2 Archival sources

The arrival of the British administration in India created a new form of record-keeping known as the archive and thus emerged new forms of scribal representations as many scribes were also provided in the colonial administration. The concern of the British archives was primarily to do with two aspects, revenue collection and law and order that were crucial to the British Empire. In addition to the archival records we also have gazetteers which are primarily the accounts of different districts. They provide dual information on the history and population along with some of the political alliances and cultural patterns of the districts and form an important source.

1.2.3 Other sources (official reports)

Official reports like boundary commission reports-mainly the Boundary line in the north-west of India that demarcated the border between India and Afghanistan and the Mac Mahon line between India and China and the earlier boundary commission reports which were a result of the surveys undertaken by the British form part of the official reports¹². It is pertinent to mention here that the Survey of India is one of the oldest institutions next only to Britain and is more than 350 years old, older than even the founding of America as

¹² Crosthwait, H. L. "THE SURVEY OF INDIA." *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 72, no. 3716 (1924): 194–5.

a modern institution and released in detail how some of these regions were mapped and the ideologies behind this cartographic exercise¹³.

1.2.4 Problem of oral sources

One of the important ideas that arises with regard to the borderlands of India is the nature of pre-literate societies where writing systems were not cultivated out of choice and not out of compulsion. In these societies the primary method of transmission of knowledge was through oral practices that were institutionalised many times. Some of these oral practices survive in the form of folk songs, ritual and ceremonial practices and practices associated with many material artefacts and also social institutions and art forms. As they are in oral form, they are of great use to the anthropologist and the folklorist work. Much of the scholarship in south Asia on tribes and the borderlands have been the result of anthropological and folklorist. The investigation of these disciplines do not discriminate very tightly between the need for a primary source and take ethnographic fieldwork as one of the primary sources, as there may be an absence of text. Historians on the other hand are bit conservative when it comes to dealing with oral literature and herein lies the problem. The faithfulness of representing a largely and predominantly preliterate society through reliance on written documents would fail to capture the spirit of the large gamble of experiences. At the same time it would also be a narrative from outside that would be an etic rather than an emic viewpoint. This would then lead us to explore the large volume of oral narratives. Herein lies the problem, best expressed by Walter J Ong who brings about the category of primary and secondary orality stressing on the fact that orality is dynamic

¹³ Ibid.

and since it is not fixed therefore is always mutating and this mutation and change is subject to certain additions and deletions and at times it is seen as an anachronistic.

One of the important examples cited in this regard is the recent ethnic assertion in Nepal and the use of maize as one of the important markers of ethnic identity in place of rice is historically wrong as maize entered India only after the Columbian exchange in the 17th century¹⁴. Therefore, the practices associated with this tradition are actually a later interpolation and one is reminded by the famous work by Eric Hobsbawm, titled, “The Invention of Tradition”¹⁵. Archaeologists seems to be more settled around as the practice of ethno-archaeology integrates some aspects of folklore and orality with material culture. Thus, one may conclude by saying that oral history is a double-edged sword that promises to reveal and at the same time reveal what is untrue also.

1.2.5 Secondary sources/ Notes

Most of the secondary sources begin in the 1930s during the interwar period though starting a bit earlier during the First World War and are largely travel narratives. One of the greatest stimulus for this is that, the 19th century was a great age of travel as Europe was caught in the swirling waves of modernisation with no way to reset the clock. At this juncture the famous book by Thomas Hylton titled “Shangri-La” immediately cast spell on Europe transporting them to a land of eternal happiness in the Himalayas¹⁶. The template was

¹⁴ Lecomte-Tilouine, Marie, and Pascale Dollfus. *Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil: Identities and Representations in the Himalayas* (ed) by Johanna Pfaff- Czarnecka, “Differences and Distances Contested Ethnic Markers in Local and National Communities”. Oxford University Press, 2003. 160.

¹⁵ Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

¹⁶ Hilton, James. *Lost Horizon*. Random House, 2015.

already set by Rudyard Kipling during the colonial period whose famous quote, “East is East and the West is West Till the Twain Meets” became a set rule and an algorithm for the later writers. Many of the travellers to the Himalayas started writing and in their way generated new writing by people who had never travelled to these regions. A new phase of anthropologists and linguists are credited with some of the seminal works. The frontier and their peoples were the concern of the government also and it is no surprise that many of these anthropologists were government employees.

A new shift takes place with the onset of independence of India in 1947. The postcolonial nation is confronted with the task of nation building and thus the frontiers acquire new meaning primarily out of military and strategic concern. This led to another group of writings by military generals and others interested in strategic affairs. Anthropology also generated new works along with some histories. However, the golden age of history started only in 1960s when the focus shifted from the grand narratives to the regional narratives and the movement for ethnic assertion led to a shift in scholarship. This had led to the blossoming of many academic and semi academic works focusing on one ethnic group. But herein lies the drawback as it fails to integrate not only the larger questions but also the interethnic relations in which many of these ethnic groups lived in. The practice of accommodation, appropriation and the resultant hybridity is totally forgotten or erased and this is one of the main problems that may have the monographs stand apart.

Most of the new works begin in 1990s with an integrated approach towards the state, society and economy and the practice of history is the product of new scholarship influenced by the recent trends in history writing. The shift from political to cultural history

is also clearly palpable. The table given below 1.2 details some of the landmark works on the borderlands.

Table 1.2

Sl.No	Name of the Book	Author
1	Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza.	Gloria Anzaldua
2.	Women in Indian Borderlands.	Paula Banerjee and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury (ed)
3.	Becoming a Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India.	Sanghamitra Misra
4.	The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia.	Willem Van Schendel
5.	Understanding life in the borderlands: Boundaries in Depth and in Motion.	William I Zartman (ed)
6.	State Frontiers, Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East.	Inga Brandell (ed)

1.2.6 Theoretical works and books on borderland

Frederick Jackson Turner's works on the Frontier is widely understood to be the first important work on borderlands in which he posits the colonisation of the Americas. He theorises the Frontier as the region where the white Americans encounter the Amerindians or the indigenous inhabitants who are called as red Indians¹⁷. For Turner, this becomes a Frontier or the end of the land of white man's colonisation and in the current period it has been read in such a fashion and has dropped down from its iconic status. In Europe, the rise of the Annales School of History in France moved away from the earlier deterministic

¹⁷ Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. Biblio Bazaar, 2008

position of the German historians and geographers. They pointed to larger forces that went into the making of a region and this second phase of the Annales School took an important turn with Fernand Braudel putting forth the idea of a *Longue durée*. One of the important works that has theoretical implications is the work on the Mediterranean during the age of Philip the second. This historical work provided important theoretical impetus, for the later historians¹⁸.

One of Braudel's famous statements, the state ends where the hills begin was literally incorporated by Schendel. He put forth the idea of the Zomia or a non-state space in south-east Asia taking on from his earlier work on the enclaves of India and Bangladesh in the neighbouring territories known as the Chit Mahal¹⁹. The journey from the deterministic position also involved many important interventions and in the last century the idea of a culture area popularised by the German geographer Ratzel to signify the spread of a single culture for very large area of land taking from the example of the American Indian cultures in the plains of North America was taken as an example. Other important works are the concept of space given by Edward Soja who articulates a postmodern construct of space. Studies in space and its relevance to sacred centre and the making of boundaries are also articulated in the context of East Asian cultures by Yi-Tu-Fu. Michel Foucault's concept of the Heterotopia as a kind of space which is in this world and in this time but at the same

¹⁸ McNeill, William H. "Fernand Braudel, Historian." *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 1 (2001): 133–46.

¹⁹ Schendel, Willem Van. "Stateless in South Asia: The Making of the India-Bangladesh Enclaves". *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (2002).

time belongs to another temporality while rooting the speciality giving the examples of museums, graveyards and other spaces is another theoretical input.

1.2.7 Secondary works on the region

A very large number of works had surfaced in recent years focusing on the borderlands and in addition to books, mention must be made of two important journals. The Journal of Borderlands Studies²⁰ and the Asian Journal of Highland Studies²¹ which came out as a response to the resurgent interest in the borderlands in the last decade. Among the new works, most of them proceed with the assumption that the map is a cartographic projection of an understanding the centre. The regions far removed from the central point do not neatly fit into the nation-state and a cartographic frontier in terms of governance. Thus in today's publications the idea of centre and periphery is replaced with the term centre to borderland to regency to the peripheral regions. Many of the works are also concerned with the present politics, particularly after the World War II and had been written in the shadow of the Cold War and hence clearly reveals this concern. The rise of the cartographic state is one such work and the other two important works are both by Robert D Kaplan, titled "The Ghosts of the Balkan" and "The Revenge of Geography"²². Both of these talk about unsettled regions and the lack of meaning in formal borders. The later developments in the 1990s have brought another word into lexicon-failed states after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

²⁰ "Journal of Borderlands Studies." <http://www.tandfonline.com>.

²¹ "Asian Highlands Perspectives JOURNAL - Academia.Edu."

²² Kaplan, Robert D. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*. St Martin's Press, 1993.

The later turmoil in the post Afghanistan war period had brought about another set of works that touch the borders of India. Inner Asia by Svath Soucek²³ is one such example and is primarily a book written for audiences who want to comprehend the basics of Inner Asia post USSR. Bin Yang's²⁴ article on the frontiers of China titled, "Cowries, Silver and Horses" is an important addition and talks about the role of borderlands and their dynamic role in Chinese history and world history from the perspective of Inner Asia. Several new encyclopaedias and atlases and maps have also added to the understanding and the most important map collection of the pre-modern world is the Castaneda map collection. Similarly, the Encyclopaedia Britannica with old issues dating from the inception is another important source not only of the current state but also to help us track the career of many concepts. The list is endless, but important works cannot be omitted and therefore, some of the important works along with the titles and authors are given below in tabular form 1.3 and arranged chronologically in the next page.

²³ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

²⁴ Yang, Bin. "Horses, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective." *Journal of World History* 15, no. 3 (2004): 281–322.

Table 1.3

Sl. No	Title of the Book	Author
1.	A History of Inner Asia	Svat Soucek
2.	The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate.	Robert D Kaplan
3.	The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia.	James C Scott
4.	An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727.	Ippolito Desideri
5.	A Comprehensive History of Assam.	Swarna Lata Baruah
6.	Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil: Identities and Representations in the Himalayas.	Marie Lecomte Tilouine and Pascale Dollfus
7.	A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh (Indian Tibet).	Luciano Petech

1.3.0 A note on the limitation of the sources and scope for further thematic engagement

One of the main problems that we encounter in the borderlands is the sense of discontinuity of the idea of discontinued flow into literature. The continuity of the sources and their patronage is disrupted by the lack of patronage and therefore nonexistence of sources and the prevalence of orality and the content are contrasted to the written material. Thus, the prime limitation of the thesis is the lack of reliance on oral literature keeping in trend with the historical methods of the present period.

Another limitation is the reliance on English-language materials because most of the oral materials are in the vernacular languages and that adds to the problem of translating certain terms and concepts.

1.4.0 Aims

- a. To understand and narrate the history of borderlands from their own perspective
- b. To account for the existence of different societies, polities and economies during the same historical period.
- c. To understand the historical evolution of regions and how the later narratives had addressed this problem of historiography.

1.4.1 Objectives

The main objective of the thesis is to account for the differential character of borderlands and an attempt is therefore made to unearth some of the main strands that contributed to this differential evolution.

How does one understand the borderlands and in this exercise of understanding and unpacking the narratives into categories and concepts used for understanding the core regions suffice.

1.4.2 Main themes

Landscape is the most important theme as the experience of the landscape is the most important and immediate marker of difference between different regions. Explanation of landscape is also based on the approaches and travel is one of the most important factors and forms other related themes. The human and nonhuman subjects also form related themes and with regard to the human subjects, gender is another category that inter-linked society with production. The metaphorical representation of regions influenced by categories of temporality and gender also lead us to concentrate on the forms of

representation. Culture, language and social practices along with religion are few other related themes.

1.4.3 Hypothesis

The thesis is based on the hypothesis that borderlands have their own characteristics that cannot be fully generalised although they are largely influenced by the broader patterns of history that have some specificities which are translated as regional particularities in the historical process. These regional particularities are only partly dependent on geography and are also conditioned by the human agency. The thesis goes on to argue that the emergence of a region is linked both to the larger historical forces of a period like imperialism, changes in warfare techniques like the period of the gunpowder etc. These changes are mediated through the other local categories which are again dependent on a combination of geographical, nonhuman and human agencies in the form of individual political and cultural institutions.

1.4.4 Overall plan of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters and begins with an introduction that spells out the basic structure of the thesis along with the aims and objectives. The introduction also discusses the plan of the thesis and the contents of the chapter along with the hypothesis and summary. In the first chapter the conclusion ends by making a case for the study of the borderlands in a comparative fashion as there are few such studies

The second chapter is titled as “Borderlands and their histories: A survey of recent trends”. This chapter deals with the definition, term and concept of borderland with its broader

meaning. It explains different typologies of borderland along with recent borderland studies with reference to different regions of Asia. This chapter is mostly theoretical and it forms the main chapter of this thesis. Complementing the theoretical part, the question asked is the relevance of the question of borderland as against the concept of border and how does this provide for a more meaningful understanding of the region. In this sense, some of the important border conflicts in the world that our approach from the normative is the new presentist bias ignored the weight of history and thus negate the historical evolution of regions. In this context leads us to substantial empirical understandings and the chapter therefore deals with certain clear-cut examples followed by debates on the nature of borderlands with special reference to Asia and their ordinance to the Himalayas.

The third chapter is “Contextualising the Major Borderlands of Eastern Himalayas and a Discursive Study of the Evolution of a Region”. This chapter tries to contextualise the eastern Himalayan borderlands region. In this chapter, the genesis of the study of borderlands and the importance of borderlands in Asia and their histories and interconnections are recounted. The types of borderlands surrounding India is also narrated. This chapter also offers examples of the main characteristics that provide personality to the borderland. The chapter ends by arguing that the borderlands of India in the Himalayan region have general features as well as specific features that are the result of interaction with the Indic regions as well as the larger forces and therefore have a distinct personality.

The fourth chapter is titled “The Borderlands of the Western Himalayas” and brings out the personality of this high altitude region which is characterised by aridity. Though geographically it forms part of the Tibetan culture area and the Tibetan plateau, however, since the 11th century owing to certain historical reasons on account of the fall of the

Tibetan Empire and the rise of successor states had acquired certain divergences from the Lhasa based polities. In this chapter spread of the monastic networks and the predominance of Tibetan Buddhism are also narrated. The chapter ends by arguing that the institution of the monastery is one of the most important features that had led to the continuation and reproduction of culture and survival of society in this region.

The fifth chapter is titled as, “Travellers Account of Eastern Himalayas” and forms one of the most important chapters. It begins with a description of the important travellers and the themes that were chosen for elaboration along with the methods employed for bringing out the descriptions, though they were not very apparent. In this chapter the idea of the main themes that are brought into concrete action by the writings of the travellers and their impact in generating generalisations that are perpetuated and examined and also the varacity of the generalisations and their power. The chapter ends by analysing the power of representations in the making of the region and how these representations, whether true or false, have brought about certain images of the regions that continue to endure.

In the sixth chapter, “Travel Writings and the Representation of Borderlands of the Western Himalayas”, the main concentration is on western Himalayas and travel writing that have brought about the emergence of this region. Most of the travel writer who came to the western Himalayas was actually studied from the Tibetan geographical area since Tibet was a repository of a great tradition and also the final destination for many of the travellers and therefore the western Himalayas were understood as a part of the journey. Therefore, the western Himalayas did not have any agency and had to be studied either from India or Tibet. One is therefore confronted with the problem of explaining the western Himalayas from the local perspective. It is here that conflates the indigenous sources against the travel

writing is to arrive at representations that are more meaningful in the sense that they represent not only the region of western Himalayas but also its connection with the outside world in terms of not only material goods but also ideas. Very important in the sense that most of the material goods travelled to a very wide distance that went as far as the great trade networks and is connected India with Russia through the western Himalayas and also parts of central China like Beijing regions in Europe the Caspian Sea. Another important development of this region is the emphasis on ideas that subverts the commonly held notion that all progressive ideas flowed from the west. In fact, the western Himalayas gives as good examples of how certain ideas of rationality entered the west and this is one of the recent debates in the region on the roots of Hume's ideas that were supposed to be delayed from Tibet. In this chapter, the detailed ideas of the different travel writers are taken up for analysis thematically.

The final chapter is titled as conclusion and is a summary of the important findings of the thesis and makes the final argument of the thesis. The thesis ends with a bibliography and a detailed glossary supplemented by maps and appendix.

1.5.0 Summary of the scope, direction and questions along with the approaches of the thesis

The scope of the thesis is undoubtedly focused on the borderlands but does not begin and end only with the borderlands that would condition it to fall into the trap of ethnocentrism. It tries to understand the larger linkages with different neighbouring societies. In addition to the linkages with neighbouring societies the question of larger currents of world history-technological, political, economic and epidemiological are also taken into account along

with geography to account for the regional particularities. On this particular template, where the larger regimes of knowledge in the West that led to an inscription of ideas and also brought about by the travel writers in the form of books that later became standardised generalisations which form the part of the primary scope.

The direction of the thesis is dependent on a historical understanding of the evolution of regions and therefore the method followed is to read the texts against their historical background and unpack the themes and try to account for a historical understanding that had conditioned the themes. Methods from social history, political history and history of the region and theories of representation are employed to arrive at an understanding and new meaning to the primary and secondary sources. The main thread that unites all the questions and explanations is focused on one singular aspect of how to understand borderlands in their multifarious contexts. The question of not being satisfied with a reductive approach is one of the problems encountered and taken for analysis that unites all the other approaches and that gives way to all the understandings.

Chapter 2

Borderlands and their histories: A survey of recent trends.

In recent years, the study of borderlands has acquired a new momentum and force conditioned largely by the refugee crisis in Europe in the year 2016. However, this crisis had led to the study of borderlands which is largely of an instrumentalist nature with a goal to the immediacy of the problem. Two points emerged from this-one being the Eurocentric narrative arising out of the immediacy of the refugee crisis and secondly, the presentist bias of study of the borderlands whereas the borderlands arise from the problematic of the borders which has the history of around 300 years and more specifically beginning with the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The question therefore is can we use the current categories of borders, borderlands and other resultant categories and analytical frameworks back in time to the mediaeval period which is the focus of study?.

While Borders are Trans-historical, the notion of borders and territoriality had vastly changed with time and therefore the earlier specialities also had to be read against their context which would otherwise be anachronistic. This question had preoccupied many mediaevalists who are confronted not only with this problem of borders and borderlands but also with other such modern preoccupations. The question of reading history backwards by imputing the modern categories to premodern period by asserting their trans-historical nature is also mostly a historical exercise for the simple reason that it assumes changelessness. One of the characteristics of borders is that it is associated with territoriality and this territoriality is unstable leading to certain conflicts battered by

exercise of power. Therefore instability is always a feature of borderlands. Beyond this generalisation, the nature of conflicts and exercise of power are predominantly contextual and largely conditioned by the age¹. We can speak of the age of the nomadic empires and the demise of that age was ushered in by the age of the gunpowder empires. Both these created certain borderlands vastly different in their spatial and temporal span. The focus of this chapter is to essay the narratives and try to understand what had been mapped and the analytical frames that went into these exercises by survey of certain regions of the borderlands in the Himalayas.

2.1.0 Borderland-Definitions, term and concept

The terms border, frontiers, boundaries and borderlands have different meanings and historical backgrounds. The term borderland or border or frontier mean many things to many people and have attracted more attention. Since the early 1990's there had been an extensive use in social and human sciences of the concepts of border and boundaries, frontier, with different metaphorical meanings and referring to different social phenomenon. The metaphorical invasion of the words 'border' and 'boundaries', and sometimes 'borderlands, into the social sciences often refer to the seminal work by Fredrick Barth in 1969. In his work he elaborates how ethnic groups act to constitute themselves by establishing a border with others.² The Oxford English Dictionary defines boundary as "that which serves to indicate the bounds or limits of anything". 'Borders are central

¹ Inga Brandell. (ed.) *State Frontiers, Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East*. I.B Tauris and Co. Ltd, 2006. 10.

features in current international disputes relating to security, migration, trade and natural resources'.³ Humans draw lines that divide the world into specific places, territories and categories. Broad survey of border history and border research creates great interest and awareness and further study of these topics among scholars, students and general readers. Anderson refers 'frontier' as the international boundary and 'boundary' to the limits of political and administrative authorities below the state level.⁴

This chapter demonstrates the importance of borders as a topic of study by reviewing how the boundary bounding of space has been an essential component of human activity for millennia. All borders have their own histories but from different sides of the border. Borders are integral components of human activity and organization. Borders are and will remain such important factors shaping our world. Borders require further study both from the top down and from the bottom up, from the state scale and from the local scale, as they are perhaps the most obvious political geographic entities in our lives. "Borders provide a powerful symbolic and practical means of dividing "us" and "ours" from "them" and "theirs." Indeed, the concept of national security and the state's capacity (some would argue obligation) to use force to defend its interests often centres on the maintenance of borders".⁵ Gloria Anzaldua says "Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep

³ Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen. *Borders-A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2012. 1.

⁴ Inga Brandell. (ed.) *State Frontiers, Borders and Boundaries in the Middle East*. I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2006. 10.

⁵ Alexander C. Diener and Joshua Hagen. *Borders-A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2012. 64.

edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is a constant state of transition”.⁶

2.1.1 The term Borderland – Recent approaches and re-definitions

In recent years, the idea of borderland, boundaries, or border has come to play a key role across the social sciences. Various studies appeared on these topics. Boundaries are variable, in the same way as the people who created them, in different times and for various purposes. They filled the space **in** between with political and social organizations, and endowed them with special meaning, to define and separate themselves from others, define what is theirs and what is alien. Boundaries are the results of the activities of societies. In recent years we have seen an increase in the study of borderland. “Borderland are geographically defined areas that can be drawn on a map like any other region”.

Borders divide two states/countries from one another and have long and colourful histories. Border is the area where two societies meet and overlap. Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury argues that “borders are not just lines in the landscape, they actively shape the societies and cultures that they enclose. Border denote a spatial dimension of social relationship that are continually being configured and, in this process, the meaning of borders is produced, reconstructed, strengthened or weakened. The notion of borders in today’s world is a testimony to the importance of territoriality with the creation of the ‘other’”.⁷ Border, on maps appear as fine one-dimensional lines, whereas on the ground they have many dimensions. “Borderland are boundaries in depth, space around a line, the place where state

⁶ Gloria Anzaldua. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987. 3.

⁷ Paula Banerjee and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury. (ed.) *Women in Indian Borderlands*. Sage Publications, 2011. XX

meets society. In human terms, it is impossible to understand borders, and indeed the peripheral relations between the states and societies they contain- without understanding how it is to live along them”.⁸ Borderlands have existed during all times. As a result, the rising study of borderlands had been undertaken by several disciplines. The Oxford English Dictionary defines borderlands as “the land or district on or near the border between two countries”.⁹ “Border is an artificial that is, man-made, political line running through the region. Borders can be sharp, clear, deep lines where the political line is reinforced by ‘natural’ distinctions in terms of physical and human geography, that is, where populations are clearly different on either side of the line and where they are thinned out by clearly marked, less inhabitable distinctions such as natural walls and moats, mountains ridges, or water bodies”.¹⁰

2.1.2 The applicability and the problem of definitions in different borderlands of the world.

One is confronted by a great dilemma when the question of generalisations regarding borderlands comes up, for we cannot have one standard of borderland throughout the world. Historical contingency, geography and above all certain social and political factors lead to the creation of borderlands. Certain aspects are simply clear-one being the centre and the periphery. The question is whether the periphery is always a periphery or whether

⁸ I. William Zartman. (ed.) *Understanding life in the borderlands: Boundaries in Depth and in Motion*. University of Georgia press, 2010. 1.

⁹ Bradely J Parker. “Towards Understanding of Borderland Processes”, *Society of American Archaeology*, 2006. 80.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

the periphery also has a centre generating its own periphery. One may view this explanation as a semantic exercise but such stations are part of the staple of postcolonial thought, an approach that have cast a long shadow on the study of borderlands.

Ukraine was understood as the classic borderland and taken as the preferential discursive sides of the borderlands as it stood between Europe and different parts of the Asiatic Europe and Asia meeting together. In recent years the Journal of borderlands studies had inaugurated a new agenda to study borderlands which includes certain papers that are of pre-modern concern. Similarly the Asian Journal of Highland Studies had taken up the study of Asian borderlands and one can clearly notice the influence of the concept of Zomia. Thus, the concept of borderland is also conditioned by historical and other contingencies and therefore we cannot have one standard that is universal. However, regional particularities always do not predominate as we are in a world system and the reality of the nation-state is concrete.

In the pre-modern period, which did not have any world system like capitalism, although some scholars have tried to stretch feudalism to extreme lengths and present it as a world system. Capitalism as a world system had brought in certain universals that can be translated from one geographical region to the other including the idea of the nation-state. Such a frame of reference is not available for feudalism and herein lies the problem of universals. In Europe, the feudal polities were largely concerned with control of the city and the rural areas whereas there are many unmarked territories. These territories did not fall into the strict preview of the political domain of any super ordinate power of sovereign. Such spaces have had also been encountered in nomadic regions where lip service or nominal sovereignty of the imperial power was acknowledged. Central Asia with the

various khanates and Emirates is a classic example of clan groups who are part of the patronage of the Khanates and Emirates.

India also had a tradition of demarcating borders right from the early period which also changed considerably during the early mediaeval period when regions came into prominence. Though primary source material in the form of textual and inscriptional evidence, particularly the latter gives clear evidence of demarcation of territory in the form of field, grassland, pastureland, forest and political units, secondary concern on this area is less forthcoming. However, there are some important works that provide landmarks in this direction and they offer us multiple interpretations about peripheral regions beyond the boundaries of established polities. We find these categories at a considerable distance from the European ideas of territory. The making of early medieval India is a classic text in this direction and talks about the spread of state formation and the emergence of regional polities from a core but does not neglect the question of peripheral regions. The term Disha is used here to specify certain such territories. Similarly, "Borders in Ancient India" is another book that actually talks not only about physical borders but their transportation into the realm of literary texts which are primarily religious. They discuss these sacred and imaginary spaces that may also be termed as heterotopic spaces. One of the examples is in the Hindu text the Shiva Purana where the author talks about five different types of hell and some of them are a desert, the jungle full of thorns etc. It shows that the author was aware of different conceptions of hell based on the different regions, borders and borderlands. The process by which a periphery becomes a core is also alluded to by the spread of temple culture and it should not be read only as a religious statement as the temple was not just a religious structure. The inscriptions of the Chola dynasty which has the

largest number of inscriptions in India are largely situated in temples and during the early Chola period there were innumerable references to the forest land or kadu being converted to the fertile agrarian land which was also settled unit known as the nadu. The temple was a religious, economic and an integrative institution and was spearheading agrarian expansion and therefore the intrusion of peasants into the forested areas shows the shift from a peripheral region to the status of a core region.

Thus, ample evidence is bound in Indian case to employ the concept of borderland as a conceptual device that can be imputed to read the early texts. Similar examples exist about Inner Asia and in south-east Asia and one has to make a cautionary claim of placing the regional particularity before reading the source through this concept.

2.1.3 Geographical Borderland

Geographical borderlands are the easiest to surface in reading through the borderlands and they are directly perceptible but one should not be mistaken to adopt a priori approach as some of the borderlands actually display certain characteristics that are a result of human agency. One is reminded of the famous comment by Owen Lattimore on the idea of borderland in the Americas. When Turner had written that he had found the borderland as it revealed itself geographically, Lattimore made the statement that it was not a geographical relation but the mediation of human agency that transforms region into borderland. Thus, shifting the focus from a purely geographical deterministic perspective to a geographically possibilistic perspective.

Highland's, Hill ranges, forests, deserts, rivers and many other natural land forms divide populations based on different cultural patterns which are in fact rooted in production

patterns, constitute some of the important geographical borderlands. The point of emphasising these borderlands of the Indian subcontinent is that the tone of travel writing acquires certain distinctiveness when it passes through this region and is impacted by it.

2.1.4 Ethnic Borderland

Before one proceeds to study ethnic borderlands, one has to be reminded of the potency of the term and its potential to create large-scale damage as is being done in various histories labelled under the rubric of ethno history. While the modern period has seen a boom in this type of history writing largely because of the ethnic movements that have informed this type of history writing, a cautionary note also has to be struck by the arrival of another term along with the term ethno history. The contentious term in this case is ethnic cleansing that has acquired a strong currency in the last few decades along with the price of ethnic movements. One is reminded of the famous article by David Gellner titled, “How Not to Read Ethnicity...” This applies to the case of Nepal and can be generalised to include many case studies in South Asia. The theoretical question here is that if the ethnic groups are at the receiving end of statist practices, and there any peripheries within these ethnic communities where such practices are reproduced and by creating or marginalising other microscopic ethnic minorities. Therefore, when one is talking about ethnic borderlands, the multicultural aspect of these borderlands has to be taken into account though the dominant ethnic group or ethnic may be the prime authors and thus become another dominant group. Such an exercise will only lead to ethnic discord backed by a falsification of history as one has seen in the case of Rwanda where the Hutus and Tutsis were both assigned specificity and it marked status in one aspect. Prior to the Belgian fixation of Hutus and Tutsis as

closed ethnic groups with closed territories, the fluidity that marked the ethnic crossover in terms of group membership and also territorial shift was now frozen.

Like the Belgian case which was a colonial enterprise based on the utopian perceptions of homogenous countries that were in fact the result of centuries of ethnic cleansing which produced clear majorities in Europe and also the disenfranchisement of Jews since antiquity. Since such historical circumstances were not there in Asia, the colonial project made a clear break with the introduction of new institutions like census and similar other institutional interventions that froze identities. The identities that were hitherto contextual now assumed a fixed character and were also delimited and graded based on the contemporary idea of race in Europe. The effect of this had been to produce certain regions portrayed as the homeland of different ethnic groups and at the same time the subsequent marginalisation of many different groups and it had set in motion a chain of events of ethnic conflict. We see that there is no clear ethnic map of Central Asia possible because of the interpenetration of many different groups in the same territory and the metaphorical use of the term most like mosaic would do more justice.

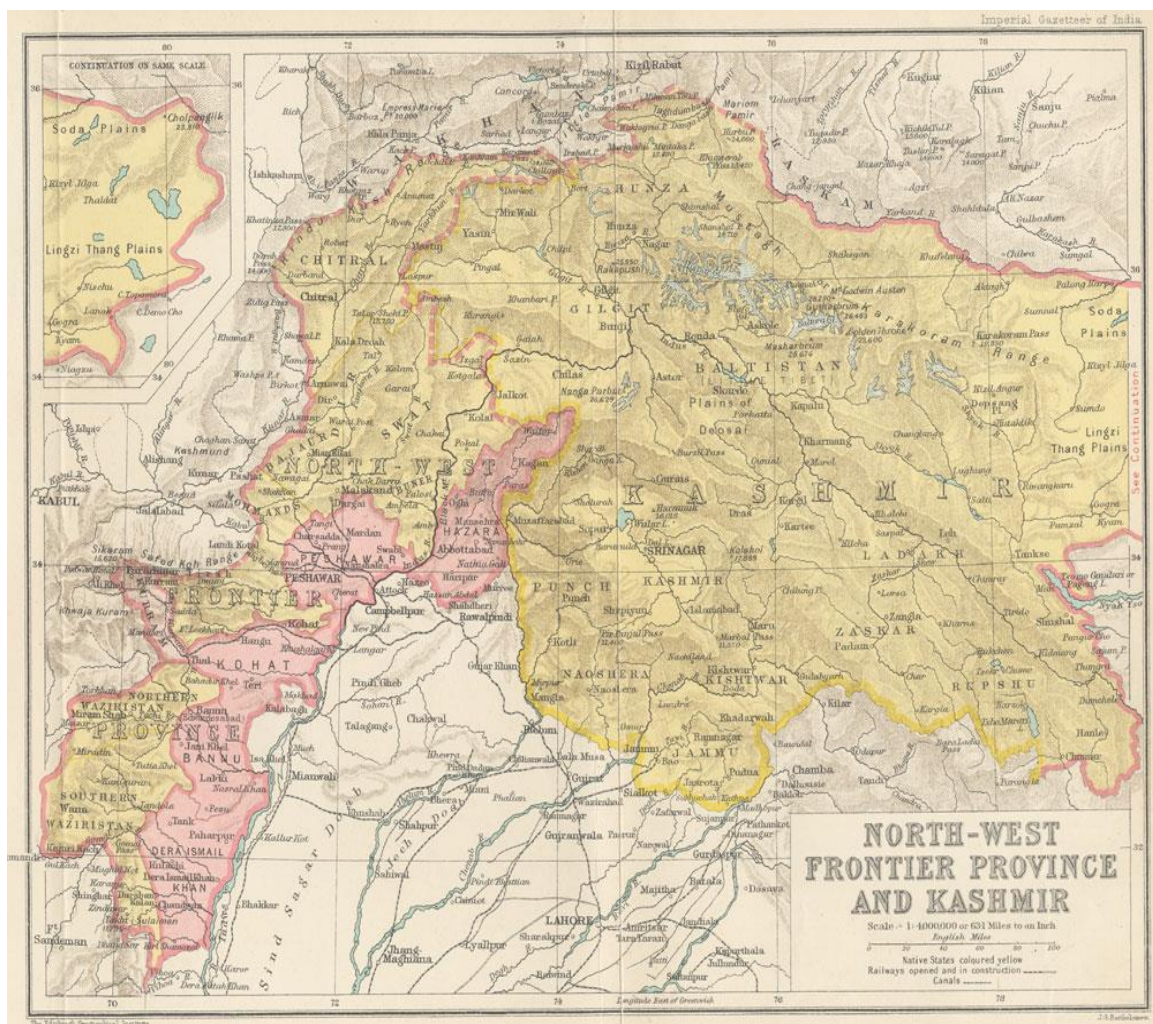
An empire by definition incorporates many different groups and is multi-ethnic and thus acknowledges a certain amount of plurality though in the ranking, there is an ethnic particularity. Similarly, minor ethnic groups whose voices and presence are very marginal are part of the ethnic borderlands though many of them may be too small in number to constitute a nation or visible group. Therefore, while keeping these preliminaries in mind one may embark on a description of the borderlands of the eastern and western Himalayas in the pre-modern period.

The concept of a culture area that encompasses similar ethnic groups and gives agency to the region would be more feasible to study some parts of the borderland. In the western Himalayas, the region of Ladakh, Lahaul, Spiti and Kinnaur are part of the Tibetan culture area. Other regions bordering Kashmir and known today as the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir were in fact surveyed by the early British explorers and reveal a great deal of divergence from the Valley of Kashmir and are predominantly populated by speakers of a Punjabi variant languages that diverges to dialects. They in fact constitute an effective borderland between the Valley of Kashmir and the Punjab region which is now divided in the postcolonial period between India and Pakistan. Moving to the central Himalayas, the plains of Nepal known as the terai constitute an important borderland between the plains of northern India or the Gangetic plains which forms a large continuity and another on the hills of Nepal and this tableland constitutes a discontinuity and this borderland much like Ladakh in the western Himalayas.

The picture gets more complicated when one moves towards eastern India and the eastern Himalayas with Bengal, Assam and Burma being the major agrarian regions against which the borderlands are contrasting it. But the problem is not as simple as this on account of the fact that this region, largely Tibeto-Burman speaking (unlike the western Himalayas), is itself composed of a large number of ethnic groups in a state of disarray. Though it constitutes a borderland, it is in fact reproducing the same ideas on borderland via certain ethnic coalitions marked by the ascendancy of certain ethnic groups at the cost of different groups. This contestation can sometimes take strong armed force and also lead to serious clashes, which in the pre-modern period witnessed conflicts between different polities. It is these conflicts and the resultant settlement patterns that lead to the peopling of these

regions constituting certain continuities and creating borderlands. A reading of this would be complete when one looks at the hill ranges and the valleys where in the larger populations live and contrast this with the languages and dialects which would reveal the ethnic complexities. The concept of minor borderland though less unexplored would be a more meaningful and representative device to capture the ethnic complexity. Given below are a set of maps detailing the hill ranges and ethnic groups along with the polities in a historical framework from the 17th century.

Map of North-West Frontier Province and Kashmir 1907-1909



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

2.1.5 Multi-Culture Borderland

All borderlands are not ethnically homogeneous and even in such cases also reveal heterogeneity in religious practices and other subjectivities that maybe the doing of administrative practices and other institutional influences. Ladakh in the western Himalayas is one of the classic cases of a multicultural borderland contrasting between Kashmir and the plains of Punjab and northern India to the south and the regions of Tibet to the north and the east. During the Mughal period Ladakh was known as Little Tibet as it is also known today on account of the fact that it forms part of the Tibetan culture area. Even within the Tibetan culture area, the Lhasa dialect of Tibetan language is seen as standard Tibetan and the language of Ladakh is understood as corrupted Tibetan. Furthermore, unlike in Tibet where Buddhists form the overwhelming majority amongst very small minority of Bonpos in the case of Ladakh one notices different sets of Muslims and also Christians who came here due to varying influences and pressures in Central Asia. We thus have the Buddhist Ladakhis, Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims and various other small groups of Muslims with different ethnic and religious persuasions. The picture gets complicated as one looks into Gilgit, where more than 15 ethnic groups with no preponderance of any one such group. While Ladakh is a classic case of multicultural borderland in the western Himalayas, in the eastern Himalayas too we have similar cases. One such case is Sikkim where the Lepcha and Bhotia of the mediaeval period who lived with a sprinkling of Nepali speaking people and other indigenous groups were suddenly outnumbered by the Nepali speakers. The reason for this is that this region has some of the important passes through which trade to Nepal and Tibet is carried on and thus provides

the gateway to the borderland. It is these gateways to the borderland that has brought about this multicultural ethnic make-up which is also revealing the religious persuasion.

One such important multicultural borderland is in the Indo Myanmar region of Manipur which is revealed in the Royal Chronicles dating back to a very early period. Chronicles mention trade routes which are functional even today and also the prevalence of large groups of these people who follow different forms of production. Along with the Meities who formed and also continue to form the dominant majority in the Valley of Imphal and the Burmese along with Muslims from Assam and Bengal and also some Hindus from Bengal making this region one of the most multicultural borderlands in eastern India. What is surprising is that references to this ethnic mix and make up are clear in the Royal Chronicles as they are similarly clear in the Rajatarangini which is also a historical chronicle of Kashmir and literally means the stream of the King's.

2.1.6 Borderlands as Transitional Zones

The concept of the borderland first found favour in the case of Ukraine as it was the most important transitional zone between Russia and the West. Borderlands as transitional zones have been the subject of enquiry on account of their presence as regions that are markedly different. They show some particularities that are acknowledged by the pre-modern polities though graded on unfavourable elements to certain universalising forces of modernity. This turns out into a contemporary debate in Inner Asian studies between two scholars of Russian studies. Adeeb Khalid advocates that while Czarist Russia was a mixture of nationalities with the Russians ranked in the top and other nationalities ranked unfavourably, there was the acknowledgement of ethnic particularity that collapsed with

the Universalists notions of the Russian Revolution and he traces the present day assertions to the yearning for this particularity. At the other end of the pole is another Russian studies scholar Nathaniel Knight who contests this particularity and argues for a universality based on dissolution of certain practices in favour of a larger project of universalism. While, both these projects have their own teleology, the historical reality is that the borderlands have taken from two or more neighbouring regions. These borderlands also contributed to the cultural make-up of these regions though unacknowledged and thus form zones of transition. Thus, the appellations of little was to be found in the fields largely in the borderlands. In the case of Russia we have the Great Russians and the Little Russians and in the case of India we have little Tibet etc some other examples of nomenclature are also seen in the eastern and central Himalayas where the Tibetanized and other groups drawing source of culture from larger reference points exist.

2.2.1 The early history of borderland studies and the problem of non-recognition of borderland.

In the year 1648, the Treaty of Westphalia created a new global environment by recognising nation-states as the only legitimate political entities along with kingdoms and thus negating other political spaces. During that period even in Europe there were spaces outside the domain of the nation and royalty. These regions could not be fully conquered and incorporated and administered though they now had nominal suzerainty over them. The immediate example that comes to mind in Europe is of the Balkans which were nominally under ottoman control.

When European colonialism became a worldwide phenomenon, in the first phase it was accompanied by the Age of Discoveries and it led to the travel of many merchants backed by the Crowns of different kingdoms in Europe under the aegis of trading companies. We thus have the British East India Company, the French East India Company and the Dutch East India Company along with the Danish who made their presence felt in South Asia. According to the Papal Bull regarding the confrontation between Spain and Portugal, an imaginary line was drawn to the west of which Portugal explored the territories and the territories to the east where Spain explored and settled. Thus, Philippines became part of the Spanish dominions whereas Macau in China and Timor in south-east Asia came under the Portuguese control. In the name of securing trade privileges, these countries helped the traders who in turn negotiated with the chiefs to get trade concessions. By the time the companies made their presence felt in the 17th century, a treaty was normally between the chief and the trading company. It is assumed that the king is the ruler of the entire domain excluding minor chieftains and other local potentates. The end result of this was the pre-eminence of the nation-state based on the European model of a territorially demarcated nation-state or kingdom that had full sovereignty within its borders. Many such treaties followed in Europe and one would benefit by tracing the history of diplomacy where the legitimate actors were only the nation-states. Thus, the legitimacy of the borderlands as legal entities receded to the background as new conceptions of space emerged.

In retracing the early history of borderland studies, one may begin with a negative note by showing how the de-legitimisation of territory led to tension between the actual governance and the theoretical construct of the territory. The struggles of the Slavs in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Greeks and the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the non-

Russians in Czarist Russia, shows the territorial expressions and the first writings on borderland consciousness. An exception has to be made in the case of the Jewish Diaspora in Europe as they were not considered to be native and hence they were not affiliated to any territory. The scramble for territories in Africa brought about new writings on borderlands and to some extent mirrored similar experiences in Asia.

Map of Russian Empire and British India 1865



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

2.2.2 The future agenda of borderland studies with specific reference to Asia

A cursory glance at the map of the world would reveal certain fault lines that are not geographical but political. They are most expressed in the conflict between the nation-states and the cartographic boundaries of the states. It is in these boundaries that the extent of the limit of the nation-state in the current scenario that had lasted since the last 60 years was being tested to its stress. While the map of the world according to United Nations reveals the rising number of nation-states, particularly after the implosion of the Soviet Union and the rise of new states in Central Asia, many other new nation-states had also risen. The best examples are the rise of East Timor in Indonesia and the State of South Sudan as independent countries. However, while these are noticeable on account of the large scale struggles witnessed over the decades, there are still many other significant problems to be dealt with.

According to the United Nations, super imposing the map of the world along with the map of the UNPO or the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisations, one is immediately struck by the number of flashpoints. Most of the flashpoints are in Asia with a few of them in Africa and undoubtedly are all products of colonial gerrymandering that accompanied the imperialist processes. It is this mismatch between the aspirations of the nation-state that actually are still in state of completion after shedding the colonial baggage but not in to the realities of the ethnic questions expressed in the form of ethnic borderlands and homelands. In the case of Asia, the picture is compounded with the rise of the ethno nationalist movements after the 1990s in full steam though many of them dating back to the earlier period. This can also be explained by the fact that earlier articulations of dissent were mobilised and channelized on class lines leading to the popularity of class-based Marxist

movements all over Asia. In fact, Dayan Jayatileke observes that while the battles for Marxism were fought in the South, the collapse of Marxism ultimately happened in the North¹¹. This is meant to refer to the USSR and the Soviet bloc including East Germany¹². The question of its portents for Asia is baffling in the sense that the articulations of dissent now shift to ethnicity as a mobilising factor which is also primordial and easier rather than a class-based alliance which would on the other hand be a product of larger socialisation among different ethnic groups on the basis of shared work. The shared work and the idea of workers union transcending ethnicity and ethnic consciousness appealed to many of the workers in large-scale multi-ethnic sites of production like plantations, factories and so on. They gravitated towards the trade unions which in turn posited global capitalism as the primary contradiction and was of the view that workers of the world had no country but only a consciousness of a working class. It is important to note that out of the five Marxist countries in the world today with the exception of Cuba all the other Marxist countries are located in mainland Asia-the People's Republic of China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea commonly known as North Korea, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Socialist Republic of Laos. Therefore, the decline of the Soviet Union directly impacted Marxist movements all over the world and more particularly nations in Africa that the largest representatives of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisations are most active.

One of the important problems regarding ethnicity and Marxism that was sidestepped is the unique contribution of Africa which had been unacknowledged in the long history of

¹¹ Jayatileka, D. *The Fall of Global Socialism: A Counter-Narrative From the South*. Springer, 2016. 60.

¹² Ibid., 60.

Marxist thought as a dialogue propounded by the reformer president of Ethiopia, Mengistu Haile Mariam. Mengistu came to power in a Marxist coup and ousted the former President of Ethiopia, Atnafu Abate on the pretext that President Abate placed the interests of Ethiopia above the interests of Marxism. In Mengistu's words the orthodox Marxist, the interest of Marxism was supreme and paramount and the interest of Ethiopia were only secondary to Marxism and it was this heresy of Abbate that prompted Mengistu to overthrow him¹³. While the nationality question in Marxist thought is being heavily debated owing to a lineage of Lenin and Stalin, the ethnic ramblings in the former Soviet Union were one of the main factors, though not the only factor that cost the implosion of the Soviet Union. Russophobia and the declining economic situation were seen as going hand-in-hand. To sum it up, the debate among the Marxists in Asia who often quoted Lenin and Stalin and particularly Lenin's famous work titled "The Nationality Question". In this work he clearly posited that if the nationalities wanted to have independence it was their choice and his view was similar to Stalin's. They argued that in the future, proliferate among the nationalities would dislodge the ruling classes and form a proletarian union transcending all other primordial loyalties. The People's Republic of China strictly adheres to this formulation and does not encourage any ethnic movements within its borders that it views as secession. On the contrary, most of the ethnic movements in South East Asia are directly located on the borders of China.

Thus, we have the Hmong people divided between Laos, Thailand and Vietnam and form the largest ethnic minority among the hill people of south-east Asia. Hmong people are

¹³ LeRoy, Paul Edwin. "Mengistu: Robin Hood of the Army and Vanguard of Socialism." Edited by Rene Lefort. *Africa Today* 32, no. 3 (1985): 89–91.

hopelessly split between different groups and were subjects of the Kingdom of Thailand and also the Marxist state of Vietnam and Laos in a complex struggle for independence. The example of this group is taken as the prime example on account of not only the numbers but also the number of active struggles. It is only recently that the first work by a Hmong scholar articulated in great detail the problem of ethnic mobilisation in a location factitiously divided on between various valleys and hills that forms the crux of the problem of uniting diversity in ethnic consciousness¹⁴. Like this case, we have a range of groups in Indonesia, mainland Southeast Asia and the borders of India and Iran who are the prime members of the UNPO. Many of these groups like the people of Aceh and West Papua are part of the multi-ethnic tapestry of Indonesia. The situation is not one of a healthy democracy or one of victory for the rebel forces. One will be reminded of the famous work by Joseph Heller who coined the phrase Catch-22 as a response to the lack of progress in the Vietnam War, it was stalemate that kept on flowing with no victory in sight and no option to backtrack¹⁵. James Scott's other celebrated work titled "Seeing like a State" offers a methodology to unpack the statist idea of the border and the counter narratives which are produced in the form of ethanol nationalist movements¹⁶.

The best example before we end this discussion on Asia is the most important flashpoint of Syria. The current crisis in Syria reveals many fault lines with President Assad pitted against a union of Islamist rivals sponsored by transnational governments also composed

¹⁴ Lee, Mai Na M. *Dreams of the Hmong Kingdom: The Quest for Legitimation in French Indochina, 1850–1960*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2015. 47.

¹⁵ Heller, Joseph. *Catch-22: 50th Anniversary Edition*. Simon and Schuster, 2010.

¹⁶ Scott, James C. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999.

of certain anti-Syrian forces like the Kurds whose aspirations for a nation state dates back to almost a century¹⁷. Further complicating the situation is the fact that the ruling Baath party in Syria based on socialism was the product of the 1960s Marxist response. It was a reaction to a combination of socialism and Arab faith and in this particular case draws its strength from the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Hezbollah of Lebanon, the latter itself being a weak team of the silver of 1970s. It is interesting to note that while the Ba'ath party is not religious, its important supporters are the Hezbollah and Iran which are highly religious but are at the same time the prime supporters of the Shia faith in contrast to the Sunni Islam supported by Saudi Arabia and other countries. Here we see the intersection of ethnicity and religion with Iran being a Persian and non-Arab country but Shia Islam in faith, whereas the Hezbollah is Shia in faith and Arab in ethnicity. In this case it is the faith that transcends ethnicity and therefore both these groups have decided to support the Ba'ath party regime of Syria.

We also have significant minorities of Christians of the Eastern Rite collectively known as the Eastern Rite, though they practice wide variety of Orthodox traditions ranging from the Assyrian Church, the Chaldean Church, the Greek Orthodox and the Armenian Orthodox and the other Catholic traditions of these churches. We also have other religious traditions like the Druze, and minor Muslim traditions like the Alevis¹⁸. Furthermore small pockets of early religious traditions with a long history like the Yazidis, Mandaeans and the Shabaks along with older Jews like the Saramatians complicate the picture of West Asia

¹⁷Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. Random House Publishing Group, 2012. 35, 310, 353.

¹⁸ <http://looklex.com/e.o/index.religions.htm>

with local, regional and transnational alliances and sponsors¹⁹. The lack of numbers of small ethnic groups leads them to join together as in the case of small ethnic minorities of non-Muslims joined under the leadership of the larger Christian minorities²⁰. The best example was the case in the Civil War of Lebanon with Commander Michel Aoun of the Maronite Christian forces emerging as the undisputed leader of his and other communities alike to them and Walid Jumblatt as the leader of the Druze²¹. The ethnic map and flashpoint of Asia seems to be complete only when this complexity is taken into account.

2.2.3 Inner Asia- Eastern borderlands:

David Szanton, while approaching the regions of Asia opined that if we fold the paper into four, on one side would be East Asia and below it would be Southeast Asia and to the left would be South Asia and to the north would be Inner Asia²². Such a geographical scenario has come alive to us when we try to look at the eastern Himalayan borderlands as the regions bordering the eastern massif merge into the Tibetan highlands and become part of China which is in East Asia. The southern part of the eastern Himalayas proceeds towards Southeast Asia which is where Myanmar is located. Taking a similar exercise to the northwest, we find Tibet and Inner Asia emerging as the most important points of connection for the polities and peoples of the western Himalayas apart from India in the pre-modern period.

¹⁹ Russell, Gerard. *Heirs to Forgotten Kingdoms*. Simon and Schuster, 2014. 11.

²⁰ <http://i-cias.com/e.o/druze.htm>

²¹ http://looklex.com/e.o/aoun_michel.htm, http://looklex.com/e.o/jumblat_w.htm

²² Szanton, David L. (ed). *The Politics of Knowledge: Area Studies and the Disciplines*, in, "Introduction: The Origin, Nature, and Challenges of Area Studies in the United States". University of California Press, 2004. 1-3.

Therefore, a survey of the different borderlands to the north and east of India help us to place the question of alliance in proper perspective. It would come as surprise that in pre-modern period, there are no borders between India and China whereas there are clear borders between India and Russia and this was during the period of the rule of the Czars. Expansion during the rule of Czars into Inner Asia brought the region of Tajikistan under their control and forms part of the Czarist dominion of Russia as a protectorate²³. British India border Tajikistan and the Tajiks had a history of cultural interaction with India in the ancient period where they were known as Tajikas during their pre-Islamic past²⁴. Even in the literature of ancient India like the Smriti literature and even in the texts like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, we find clear references to the borderlands. In fact the regions are referred to as Shina, place from where the famed silk came and it was identified as China and the silk was known as Shina Patta²⁵.

What has added new relevance to the debate is the nomenclature of the term Chin. The Cambridge history of China volume 1 which deals with the early period of the Chin and the Han empire from 211 BC to A.D. 220, the derivation of the term China from Chin had been taken up for discussion. It is suggested that the term China came from Chin as early as 1655 by the Jesuit missionary Martin Martini in his *Novus Atlas Sinensis*. It was based on the identification referred above by the Indian text titled *Arthashastra* and this was supposed to have mentioned silk. The point of dispute was that silk would have travelled

²³Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 194-6,199.

²⁴Chattopadhyaya, Brajadulal. *Representing the Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth to Fourteenth Century)*. Manohar, 1998. 36-39.

²⁵Twitchett, Denis, John King Fairbank, and Michael Loewe. *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 1, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 BC-AD 220*. Cambridge University Press, 1978. 22.

to India from China or the land of Shina as it was written in the text if only the country was unified by the Chin Dynasty in 221 A.D. The recent application of computer techniques to this text shows that it has been possible to demonstrate with fair certainty by application of advanced computer techniques regarding the date. This has helped to remove the major obstacle that stopped the equating of China with Chin²⁶. It is a factor of great importance that the Chin were not considered as progenitors of the country of China till the identification was fully established. The interesting fact is that the passage through the borderlands of the Himalayas and the knowledge of the borderlands is what had made both countries come together and it solved an important historical riddle.

The other important relation with India and the borderlands of Inner Asia apart from Tajikistan and Tibet is the ancient transmission of Buddhist religion from India to the regions of Inner Asia and from thence to China. We have a fair amount of literature on the spread of Buddhism in Inner Asia but very less information on the exact mechanism of how the spread occurred. It is also paradoxical that we have records of the two geographical spaces and extent of territories and kingdoms but not on the mode of transmission. Most of the remains are in the form of literary texts, inscriptions and more importantly material remains. The Encyclopaedia of religion by Mircea Eliade has a collection of a number of articles regarding the spread of Buddhism in Inner Asia and it is very clear that most of this spread occurred along the silk Route²⁷. One of the point here is that the difficulty of reconstructing the borderland of Inner Asia with India as most of the ethnic groups have

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ronald Eric Emmerick, "Buddhism in Central Asia", in Mercea Eliade. The Encyclopaedia of Religion Volume 2. 400-403.

become Islamicized. We also have the entry of new ethnic groups and entry of many other groups of people like the Turks, Mongols who displaced the earlier Indo Greeks in regions like Xinjiang which was earlier known by various names to ancient Indians as Bactria and Sogdaiana and which today comprises regions of Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Xinjiang. Compounding this problem is the fact that many of the languages also had gone extinct along with the ethnic groups. The most famous example is that of the Tocharian language whose inhabitants were referred to in the visual representations as fair people with the feature of redhead on account of their red hair. The most famous of these representation comes from the famous translator Kumarjiva whose father was from Kashmir but by certain circumstances married a princess from the Kingdom of Kush and thus was born the famous Kumarjiva and many stories of his translation. One story has it that he was in a great mission along with the Royal family to translate many of the Buddhist texts of the minor tradition. Suddenly there was an invasion from China and he was taken to the capital of China from where the silk route originated²⁸. This was the famous city of Xian, with more than 1 million inhabitants, a feat unparalleled in any part of the world till the 18th-century England where London was the only city to have such a population²⁹. He was later released and made in charge of the team of translation and as such the Buddhist religion of India which entered China was mediated through the borderland experiences and the genius of translation from Sanskrit to Chinese through the experience of translating from Sanskrit to the now extinct languages of Inner Asia like Tocharian. Most of these towns were in fact oasis towns centred on the linkages of the Silk Road. Another popular nomenclature of the

²⁸ Ibid., 403.

²⁹ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 44.

religion of this period is also known as the religions of the Silk Road as we see that the Buddhist religion was in fact modified by its interaction with the Manichean religion of Iran which was also the state religion of Iran in ancient period and the Zoroastrian and other Indian religions³⁰. Its traces can be found in the iconographic representations. More important for us from the geographical point of view is the recurrence of the place names that seem to have a pattern and follow the rise and fall of the Silk Route. The ancient phase ends with the fall of the oasis based economy and the consequent rise of Islam which saw the entry of new groups and the decline of earlier ethnicities and polities like the kingdoms of Khotan. We also have many towns with the name, Kashi and some scholars also speculate on the linkages of the storms like Kashgar, Kashi, Kusha as part of the subgroup of languages and the Kusha people. It was presupposed that a group of early Indo-Europeans slightly unrelated to the Indo-Aryan migration remained in Central Asia and it is this group which is known as the Kusha. They have been equated variously with the Dards and we also have a group of languages named after them. Graham Clarke in a famous article titled “Blood and Territory as Markers of Identity” and a similar article titled “Who are the Dards” analyses this claim and points to a distinct ethnic pattern of non-Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European but slightly apart from the established Indo-Aryan peopling of India³¹. It is this complication and movement of peoples that has given a specificity to the eastern borderlands of Inner Asia.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “Kailash” - Journal of Himalayan Studies Volume 5, Number 4, 1977. 329-334.

A new chapter is etched and continues with regularity with the rise of Islamic Central Asia and the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate, where we see the regular interaction in terms of movements of people, including migration from the regions of Tajikistan, Afghanistan and the borderlands of Iran along with Uzbekistan to India and also from the other places through a smaller scale³². Most of the Turkish slaves of the Delhi Sultana had been identified as coming from Iran but were in reality Turks from Nishapur like Balban and most of his predecessors and successors³³. These Turks were actually under the cultural influence of Iran and therefore introduced Iran in Indian institutions. Before the rise of the Mughals in India, we find a small interregnum in the Mongol invasion though not directly affecting India of the present but Afghanistan on a large-scale. The Hazara people of Afghanistan are physically distinct from their Pashtun neighbours as well as from their Iranians neighbours and resemble the Mongols and this distinctiveness has made them the target of ethnic cleansing³⁴. As descendants of the Mongol army, they embraced Islam and entered the local society as many of the descendants of the Mongol army of the Golden horde and the other took Khanates.

The rise of the Mughals in India not only updates a new chapter in Indian and world history where it is known more popularly as heralding the period of the gunpowder empire along with the Safavid dynasty of Iran and the Ottoman dynastic of Turkey. In a recent book titled, “The Mughals of India”, the celebrated Indian historian Harbans Mukhia dwells at

³² Kumar, Sunil. *The Emergence of the Delhi Sultanate, 1192-1286*. Permanent Black, 2007. 72,127.

³³ Ibid., 163.

³⁴ Brower, Barbara, and Barbara Rose Johnston. *Disappearing Peoples? Indigenous Groups and Ethnic Minorities in South and Central Asia*. Routledge, 2016. 157.

some length on the title of the book trying to explain that the term of India is actually anachronistic to the Mughals and is a modern day need and construction. He explains it based on the fact that no one would ask the Mughals during the period whether they were from India or from any other foreign country³⁵. It is this incongruity of assumptions that had shaped the treatment of regions beyond the nation-state and the regions with which we had a different set of relationship in the pre-modern period. Most of the important travel writings of the period attest to this fact that there are considerable exchanges in the borderlands between India of the Mughal period and Inner Asia which is populated by the Turkic people with the exception of Tajikistan which is predominantly Persian³⁶. Barth in *Encyclopaedia of Islam* gives considerable treatment to the Central Asian region which is also echoed by Sherin Akiner another leading scholar on Central Asia who also devotes considerable space to the movement of nomadic groups and their sedentary settling down under various polities³⁷. With the establishment of the three empires, the gunpowder empires of the Ottoman Turks, Safavid Persian's and the Mughals of India, the borderlands of these empires were ruled by various chiefs known as the Khans and the Emirs who ruled over the various Khanates and Emirates³⁸. Most of these polities continued to exist till the modern period like the Khanate of Astrakhan in the Caucasians region of Russia to the Emirates of Bukhara. The sudden rise of Asia under the Czarist expansion saw large-scale incursion into Inner Asia with the objective of finding warm water ports that Russia

³⁵ Mukhia, Harbans. *The Mughals of India*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008. 1-2.

³⁶ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 334-335.

³⁷ Ibid., 334-343.

³⁸ Fromkin, David. "The Great Game in Asia." *Foreign Affairs* 58, no. 4 (1980): 938.

severely lacked and felt the need desperately. Two possible candidates for this access to warm water ports were the Port Bandarabbas in Iran and Karachi in British India. The passage through the Georgian heartlands and the Caspian region to Iran thus heightened anxieties among the British in India. As the largest empire in the world, the British Empire was very much aware of the Russian designs and we enter a new phase of conflict between the Crown and the Czar. Matters came head-on with the famous Great Game that inaugurated a new phase of conflict in Inner Asia. The term Great Game coined by Rudyard Kipling signified the contest between Britain and Russia for control of Inner Asia. It brought into effect the exposure of three important regions-Afghanistan, Xinjiang and Tibet forcibly into world politics³⁹. The Great Game ended in 1907 with the Anglo Russian Convention of 1907. By this time Great Britain ceased to have a border with Russia as some territory was added to Afghanistan and this territory in the north-eastern corner of Afghanistan is known as the Afghan finger and a geographical oddity. This small strip of land is only 13 km wide and populated by non-Pashtun people and predominantly inhabited by nomads from Kirghizstan. The significance of this territory is only to separate British India from Czarist Russia and the colonial legacy has lingered on till now⁴⁰.

Thus, the borderlands of South East Asia had profoundly shaped Indian history and also inaugurated the rise and fall of many different polities. Therefore, the political history of northern India from the earliest period to British India and the postcolonial period is largely shaped in terms of international relations by interactions with the neighbours from the western region of Inner Asia. The region of Tibet is taken up for special consideration as a

³⁹ Ibid., 936-41.

⁴⁰ Rezun, Miron. "The Great Game Revisited". International Journals, Sage Publication. Vol. 41, No. 2, 1986. 56.

whole and is therefore excluded from this analysis as it fits into a different mode of analysis and is thus taken up in a section on borderlands of Inner Asia and India. One may conclude by invoking the people in India from the earliest period to the transmission of Indian influences to Central Asia and vice-versa in terms of the establishment of the polities in India culminating with the Mughal rule. The legacy of this is seen in the inheritance of the problem of the Mughals by the British and by the postcolonial state and of noteworthy mention would be the problem with Pathans of north-western Pakistan and Afghanistan and this has led to an intractable situation with no solution in sight till date is also something noteworthy of mentioning. We therefore have three borderlands in the north-western region, the Turkic borderlands, the Tibetan borderlands of Ladakh and the borderlands of the Indo-Iranian region that encompass Iran and Afghanistan and Tajikistan in earlier date. Collectively this was known as the Gateway of India and more specifically the passes. Thus, we see most of the invaders and immigrants to India coming through these north-western passes.

2.2.4 Inner Asia-Eastern Borderlands

When we talk of the eastern borderlands of Inner Asia, the central Himalayas and parts of the eastern Himalayas come into focus. This area had received a new lease of life owing to the rise of regional studies and new concepts like non-state spaces. A recent article by Sara Schneiderman raises the question of whether the central Himalayas are also part of Zomia⁴¹. The second stimulus for scholarship on Inner Asia is aggravated by a crisis that

⁴¹ Shneiderman, Sara. "Are the Central Himalayas in Zomia? Some Scholarly and Political Considerations across Time and Space." *Journal of Global History* 5, no. 2 (July 2010): 289–312.

began with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of new actors in Inner Asia on one side and the posting of China on the other side. Both these factors had led to a re-orientation in area studies with newer definitions of Inner Asia and Central Asia that are sometimes used with the change and sometimes to the exclusion of vast regions depending on the geopolitical realities of today that condition the approach in recreating the pre-modern. How valid is this approach of imputing presentist bias that rise from contemporary anxieties? Many of the modern-day textbooks reflect this attitude⁴². How does this operate in real world and what are the implications for borderlands studies are clearly evident when we deal with the borderlands of Eastern Inner Asia.

Vladimir Putin, termed the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical disaster of the century and suddenly in the wake of the USSR occupying much of the cartographic space, a large number of new entities came up and these nation-states known as the Commonwealth of Independent States reformulated the Asian boundaries not fully on national realities but on models that are acculturated due to their seven decades of existence as part of the USSR⁴³. It is this problem that is replicated not only in western Inner Asia but also in Eastern Inner Asia and the main problem here is the non-recognition of other geographies like sacred geography etc. Negating ethnic spaces and collapsing them into a homogeneous nation with the resultant problem of trying to manage ethnic aspirations and territorial integrity seems to be leading to a crisis in the borderlands. This crisis emanating in Ukraine and the Caucasian region is replicated in Afghanistan and Tajikistan on account of the problem of minorities and their homelands. Similar such resonances are seen in

⁴² Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 289.

⁴³ Kreutz, Andrej. *Russia's Place in the World*. Algora Publishing, 2015. 25

Eastern Inner Asia and article by Sara Schneiderman is one such attempt to understand this problem.

A recent textbook titled “Inner Asia” by Svat Soucek includes an updated rendering of the history of Inner Asia from the earliest times. The central focus is on the modern period including the emergence of the postcolonial states of the USSR and also the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China and the Democratic Republic of Mongolia. As a result of this book and its impact on high school and college education throughout the world the image of Inner Asia is reproduced from this perspective with the notable exception of Tibet⁴⁴. This exclusion of Tibet from Inner Asia and by extension Inner Asian academic concerns would then push Tibet and the Tibetanized regions that form the borderlands out of the preview of Inner Asia. They, then become part of East Asian studies and the core area of East Asian studies includes China, Japan and Korea. Taiwan, though a part of East Asia has been marginalised so much so that it is referred to as a forbidden country⁴⁵. Thus, the grounds of enquiry of East Asia and its borders with Inner Asia had been an area of non-negotiation in the political arena that shows the Sino-Tibetan stand-off. The replication of such a position in academia and stretching it back a few centuries is both historically and analytically untenable, the latter more so when an area studies framework is adopted. It only reveals the intersection of power and knowledge in its clearest example of Tibet and Tibetan borderland. This classificatory interface on Eastern Inner Asia had opened up the region for discussion as an abnormal case. This abnormality is raised by Giorgio Agamben as a ‘State of exception’,

⁴⁴ Ibid., vi.

⁴⁵ Manthorpe, Jonathan. *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan*. St. Martin's Press, 2008. 36-7, 211-2.

period when normalcy is suspended⁴⁶. It is this nexus of power relation and its linkages with academia that produced the region with the exception of its largest component-Tibet. When we speak of the Tibetan borderlands that constitute the Eastern Inner Asian borderlands, we are in terms speaking of the coalescence of two borderlands-the physical and the cultural. The Tibetan plateau is the physical borderland and the people who live on this are the components of the cultural borderland.

What is the Tibetan borderland and who are the Tibetans and where is Tibet? The official narrative of the People's Republic of China and the Central Tibetan Administration popularly known as the Tibetan Government in Exile. This is a subject of a book by John Powers who unpacks the rhetorical strategy of both these parties⁴⁷. For China, the Inner Asian borderlands comprising the regions of inner Mongolia, Sinkang and Tibet along with two other regions Ningxia Hui autonomous region of the Chinese Muslims and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region are all part of the autonomous regions that were given for the ethnic minorities of China. One of the major problem here is that all these regions are distinct from the majoritarian Han inhabited regions of China in terms of ethnicity and forms of production. While rice is the major crop of China, Barley is a major crop of Tibet and the borderlands surrounding it⁴⁸.

In the magazine Himal, an article titled “Whither the Tsampa Eaters” created a minor sensation and has now become the official position of the Central Tibetan Administration

⁴⁶ Nayar, Pramod K. *Postcolonial Studies: An Anthology*. John Wiley & Sons, 2015. 567.

⁴⁷ Powers, John, and David Templeman. *Historical Dictionary of Tibet*. Scarecrow Press, 2012. 44.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 44.

who define Tibetans as people who eat barley in contrast to the Chinese who eat rice⁴⁹. This rhetorical assertion by the Central Tibetan Administration and the consequent narrative had created an acceptable climate of opinion for this claim in voting for the ethnic individuality of the Tibetan nation.

As mentioned earlier, that the erasure of eastern Inner Asia from the modern curriculum deprived of this region of its agency and home as the state is a part of a larger political unit—the People's Republic of China and at the same time the ‘State of Exception’ had also cast its shadow. One is struck not only by the different ethnicities and forms of production but also by the weight of history and more importantly by the imposing geographical divide. It would be prudent to quote Nicholas J Spykman, the famous Dutch geographer who said “Geography does not argue, Geography simply is”⁵⁰. This is such an apt statement to summarise the historical isolation of Tibet as it was an inaccessible region on account of its high altitude and impossibility, compounded also by the Conservative nature of the Buddhist Lamas whose worldview dominated traditional Tibet⁵¹. Its essential nature and orientation towards India had made this borderland the least explored and also the least dangerous. While invaders and immigrants poured into India from both the north-western and north-eastern borders, through the Himalayas and the other mountain ranges, the exact opposite is seen in case of the Eastern Inner Asian borderlands namely Tibet. A possible explanation for this is the weight of history amplified by the geographical context.

⁴⁹ Shaykya, Tsering, *Whither the Tsampa Eaters*, Himal, 1996.

⁵⁰ Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. Random House Publishing Group, 2012. 29.

⁵¹ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 283.

It would be worthwhile to explore the historical factor and account for the historical gap when we deal with India, China, Tibet and the borderlands associated with these three regions from a historical perspective. Going backwards, we see that the 2300 km border between India and Tibet until 1949 and only 51 policemen to battle the entire border which underwent a big change within operation of the People's Republic of China and costs less than 30 million Indian rupees a day now. One can therefore document exchanges between India and Tibet beginning from the seventh century A.D. as a set of peaceful exchange largely under the garb of religion and also under trade. At no point did it acquire a military nature though there are some myths of Tibetan Empire during the Imperial period conquering India as far as the Ganges River. This is however in the realm of myth and is a literary device of hyperbolic representation to exalt the ruling dynasty. A brief summary of the nature of contacts would help to put the borderlands in perspective.

One is sharply struck by the geo-body of the Indian and Chinese nations on one hand and the Tibetan nation on the other hand. While the geo-body of India is feminine and India is metaphorically imagined as a mother and the same is the case with China which is also feminine, Tibet, from the earliest period when the regions came into historical notice was self-represented as a fatherland-Phayul⁵². It consists of two components father and land the suffix Yul means land and is added to many of the lands that are part of the Tibetan culture area. The classic example of this is the confusion after the passing away of the fifth Dalai Lama. He predicted in his last days when there was a contestation between the Ming Dynasty to impose their hegemony in China that his next reincarnation would be very far

⁵²"The Statement of Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay on the 54th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day - Statements & Press Releases - Phayul.Com." <http://www.phayul.com>.

away and on the basis of divination in the sacred lake, the letter M was revealed and the suffix Yul added to this would give the option of Maryul or Monyul, the former being Ladakh and the latter in the eastern Himalayas. Thus, the Sixth Dalai Lama was born in Monyul and proceeded to Tibet⁵³. With the rise of the Tibetan Empire in the seventh century, various groups of non-Chinese Chiang people became part of a nomadic imperium and this led to the rise of the first Tibetan Empire from the period A.D. 618 to 842 A.D. During this expansionist period, various tribes of Chiang were united. Leaders of the Tibetans as founders of the first durable Empire and as a part of an imperial exercise acquired script and religion from India, the greater tradition that is required for all state societies. This period of the Tibetan Empire was the only period when Tibet was a military power and therefore had the potential to invade India which did not happen on account of the friendly relations that lasted from then onwards. This relationship had been named by the 14th Dalai Lama as a teacher-disciple (Guru-Chela) relationship with India being a teacher and Tibet being the disciple⁵⁴.

The rise of the Tibetan Empire was only one in a long series of rise of nomadic empires all over Asia starting with the Xiongnu configuration and later the Mongol's after Tibet's collapse as an imperial power⁵⁵. We also have the other nomadic empires in the borderlands of China who also ruled over China for a considerable period of time and this is reflected

⁵³ Mullin, Glenn H. *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation*. Clear Light Publishers, 2001. 244-245.

⁵⁴ "India Is Our Guru and We Are Reliable Chelas, His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Bengaluru | Central Tibetan Administration." <http://tibet.net/2017/05/india-is-our-guru-and-we-are-reliable-chelas-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-in-bengaluru/>.

⁵⁵ Di Cosmo, Nicola. "Ancient Inner Asian Nomads: Their Economic Basis and Its Significance in Chinese History." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 4 (1994): 1092-4.

in contemporary textbooks on Chinese history as a period when people of ethnic minorities participated in the unification of China. This narrative tries to co-opt the ethnic minorities and erase the distinctiveness from a modernist point from reading into historical backgrounds. To return to the point, we see that the collapse of the Tibetan Empire and the rise of the Mongol brought an extraterritorial actor into Tibetan politics. Thus Tibet was forced to depend on the Mongol armies for its own survival⁵⁶. This is replicated during the later periods of Tibetan history on account of the peculiar priest-patron relationship known as cho-yon⁵⁷. This led to the dependence on the Ming Dynasty and the later the Manchu dynasty for Tibet's security and thus Tibet was not a military power. Therefore, the relations between Tibet and eastern Himalayas were mediated largely by the chiefs of the borderlands and it is one of these chiefs in the easternmost region who became the ruler of the Monpa people⁵⁸.

The predominant nature of relationship between India and Tibet was religious. Though the umbilical cord was broken it was not fixed on account of the Turkish invasions of northern India which signalled the end of Buddhism as an organised religion in India. Itinerant pilgrims and traders were the only link between India and Tibet and by the 16th century the emergence of wool marts in the eastern and western Himalayas led to the renewed importance of Tibet. But this new found importance also did not have any military component and was purely commercial in character. To sum up the whole discussion, the

⁵⁶ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 104-5

⁵⁷ Peters, William. "The Unresolved Problem of Tibet." *Asian Affairs* 19, no. 2 (June 1988): 140.

⁵⁸ Mullin, Glenn H. *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation*. Clear Light Publishers, 2001. 244-5.

entry of the Mughals marked the integration of India into the world economy and one of the important exports to the west was the shawl known as pashmina known in Europe as cashmere which acquired the status of a fashion statement⁵⁹. The closure of Nepal after the fall of the Malla dynasty and the rise of the Gorkha dynasty led to closure of trade routes and a trade route from the western Himalayas was discovered or rather restarted⁶⁰. After considerable pressure Nepal also opened up and the linkages from India to Europe to sea actually started from Inner Asia as commodity trade largely composed of caravans of yak and merchandise comprising mainly of wool from the Tibetan mountain goat and other items like musk that came from the far reaches of Inner Asia as far as Siberia to borax and salt⁶¹ in addition to horses, the last mentioned will be dealt separately combining both horses from the North western and eastern borderlands.

One may conclude that this pattern of trade between India and Tibet, between India and the borderlands of eastern Inner Asia replaced religion and continued till the colonial period. During the colonial period it acquired a new dimension with the establishment of two wool marts in eastern and western Himalayas namely Darjeeling and Leh. The Inner Asia borderlands thus functioned as conduct of trade and the special character to transnational linkages formed important components of the economic structure of the Mughals and also the regions of Kashmir and Bengal in addition to Nepal that were the direct beneficiaries of trade directed to Tibet.

⁵⁹ Maskiell, Michelle. "Consuming Kashmir: Shawls and Empires, 1500-2000." *Journal of World History* 13, no. 1 (2002): 27–30.

⁶⁰ "III Tibetan Trade." <http://www.tibetancoins.com/III%20Tibetan%20Trade.html>.

⁶¹ Tuttle, Gray, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. *The Tibetan History Reader*. Columbia University Press, 2013. 497.

2.2.5 South Asia- North Eastern borderland

In today's context, the term north-east in India refers to the eight states or provinces of India which are geographically situated on the eastern most extremities of the Indian subcontinent and now referred to as north-east India. The term north-east itself is a postcolonial construction that has become perpetuated due to governmental intervention and subsequent internalisation of this term as a category of reference. In sharp contrast, in pre-modern India these terms and regions were not fully imagined in such a way as the process of the spread of Indic culture on one hand and relative isolation of the societies going hand-in-hand.

In the northernmost part of north-east India lies the region of Arunachal Pradesh that came into history in a big way via the sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gaytso, who took the throne and Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. He composed many poems and in one such poetry alludes to the birds from eastern Tibet and peacocks from India. Similarly the process of Indic influence is also seen in the state formation among certain regions like Tripura and Manipur and also the Chakma Kings to built a stable polity. The geo-body of India was identified as feminine and a recent article contrast this with the geo-body of north-east India. However it takes into account aspects of difference in the local perception of region. One of the important point is that as elusive as the relation between these regions in the state formation process on either the Hindu or the Buddhist model as the above three cases have shown. The states had a clear idea of the relations with the hill people's and like all political relations these were also power relations which are codified in many different ways but

more fluid than codified. It existed largely in the realm of rituals and practices and for practical reasons included aspects of material redistribution. The classic example of this is the posa system instituted by the kings of Assam to pacify the tribal raiders from the hills. Similarly, a recent article on trade in Zomia also questions the myths that the hill regions were totally self-sufficient. Salt was one of the most important commodities needed for survival and with the exception of evidence of salt making in Manipur, most of the salt were obtained by trade. The exact mechanism was through fairs and festivals and we have a large number of fairs stretching from Udalguri in the West to Tawang in the East.

The large number of ethnic groups, their particular affiliation to certain regional and cultural practices had survived till date and is one of the important testimony to the acknowledgement of difference, particularly of some of the earlier polities. Though many of the regions were not under state control, they at times formed certain coalitions. Their non-state status was to a large extent dictated by the presence of the state as the other. This other thing led to the identification of non-state as a source of wealth for the non-state regions and the ethnic groups.

All these larger questions cannot be ignored and one may conclude by saying that the linguistic groups show the diversity and their multiple locations of coalition in the pre-modern period before the sharp break with colonialism. Secondly and most importantly there was a lot of fluidity in case of both the state and non-state actors and societies in this region functioned in pre-modern period. This is acknowledged to large degree also by James Scott who talks about the loose knit political systems of the highland societies. Some of these also went onto create stable polities as in the above mentioned four cases. Another important case is the story of the aspirations of the Hmong people of south-east Asia who

are the largest non-state ethnic group, but always had dreams of the kingdom as elaborated earlier

2.2.6 South East Asia- North Western borderland

One of the important rationale for including the north-western borderlands of south-east Asia as distinct from the north-eastern borderlands of South Asia is a problem of perspective primarily. In its path breaking work on the geography of south-east Asia titled “Thailand: the navel of Asia”, Thongchai Winichaul explains how the concept of the Thai region emerged collapsing many different geographies like sacred geography, rise of the nation and monarchical narratives. Its encounter with modernity helped create a Thai nation but at the same time losing territories to the British which later became Malaysia and some parts in the east that became the country of Lao, later known as Laos as a buffer against the British and the French⁶². Similarly, the view from beyond the borders of India and the Indic are slightly at variance with regard to migration and territory. It is noteworthy to mention here that most of the migrations to India occurred only from the north-western borderlands and the north-eastern borderlands and mention may be made here of the Ahom Kingdom created by originally Thai people who settled in the region of the Brahmaputra valley and established a stable polity. The earlier kings were known by their Thai names and mention may be made of the first king Chaow Long Sukapha. His later successor Shungmung became known as Svarga Narayana through complex and time-tested process of syncretism and Hinduization⁶³.

⁶² Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. University of Hawaii Press, 1994. 73, 94, 117.

⁶³ Baruah, Swarna Lata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. 220.

The process is explained as a series of complicated rituals that coincide with the worldview of the Indians and one may contrast this with the worldview of the Chinese which explains for the plurality of India and the unitary nature of China, a point well highlighted by Warren Smith Jr. Smith goes to the border policies of both ancient India and China to understand how the bearings of the border policies and the people in the borderlands of both north-western and north-eastern India accommodated people from Inner Asia and from south-east Asia in contrast to China⁶⁴. In India during the ancient period according to the literature of the Shastras expounded by the famous lawgivers for example, Manu, Gautama and Apastamba, is the country of Bharata later known to the Greeks as India extended as far as the black gazelle roamed and as far as the Munja grass grew. Beyond this is the land of the Mlecchas variously referred to as barbarians or unclean people. This is the dividing line between people of the inside and outside. However, we see that many dynasties came to India from the north-west in the north-east and these dynasties included the Kushanas, the Sakas, the Parthians and also most famously the Indo-Greeks. They were designated as not only Mleechas but also as fallen kshatrayias⁶⁵. There was the chance for these groups to regain their kshatrayias status and legitimately stake their claim as rulers. But this process of reclaiming their status also involved the acceptance of Indian values and the Indian cultural system and thus their distinctiveness as foreign ethnic groups from a different borderland was sufficiently compromised and they became part of the Indian tapestry. The performance of two important ceremonies like the Hiranyagarbha or the entry through

⁶⁴ Smith, Warren. *Tibetan Nation: A History Of Tibetan Nationalism And Sino-Tibetan Relations*. Avalon Publishing, 1997. 19-21.

⁶⁵ *Indo-Iranica*. Iran Society. 1996. 14.

golden womb as it literally signified indicated a new rebirth, new genealogy for the invaders linking them with the fictitious solar and lunar lineages either of the two giving an origin point from which all Indian royal families descended. This mechanism was coupled with the Asvamedha sacrifice which signified the offering of a horse and the horse was let loose to roam and the territory covered became part of the royal domains. This also involved a large amount of redistribution of wealth and co-option of many different social groups and their interlinkages through economic system⁶⁶.

Similar to this was also the Buddhist method of incorporation and many rulers like the Kushanas became patrons of the followers of Shiva, Vishnu and also the Buddhist religion⁶⁷. One of the most important examples would be that of the Indo-Greek King Menander who converted to the Buddhist religion and became known thereafter by his name Milinda. His most famous dialogues with a Buddhist monk, Nagasena are compiled in a book titled as “The questions of King Menander”⁶⁸. In the Indian situation, the accommodation of foreigners along with their gods and different cultural practice as was easily taken up as part of an extended group of people. In contrast the border policy of ancient China differentiated between the Han and the non-Han or nomad and the latter was categorised as a barbarian⁶⁹. Therefore, the role of the two important dynasties-the Mongols and the Manchus were seen as a rule by a barbarian power and is one of the most important markers of ethnic identity in China dating back from that mediaeval period after the

⁶⁶ Singh, Upinder. *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century*. Pearson Education India, 2008. 375.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 376.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 375.

⁶⁹ Smith, Warren. *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*. Avalon Publishing, 1997. 29.

Mongol conquest⁷⁰. It is here that the question of the south-western borderlands and their view of India come into picture. As the peopling of India was not an affair that ended after certain migrations but continued as late as the contemporary period. Even as late as the 1960s after the fall of the Republican forces to the colonists, we have migration of groups of people from China and most importantly the Lisu or Youbin people of Arunachal Pradesh is an example as this ethnic group is found in both India⁷¹, Myanmar and China. The distinctiveness thus encouraged or aided many of the ethnic groups of the western borderlands of south-east Asia to come and settle in India. There is no clear nomenclature of attractiveness like the term the ‘golden bird’ that was used by the people of West Asia and Inner Asia for India from this region. There are also many other smaller dynasties like the Chandra Dynasty of Bengal who originally came from Burma⁷². Other migrants from Burma include the Mog who are also mentioned as a predatory group in the 16th century AD when they raided Dhaka⁷³.

In conclusion we may say that the perspective from south-east Asia including both the mainland and the Highlands of the Indian region had various nomenclatures like Swarna Bhumi which is used by the Buddhists or the settled agrarian land or plains for which various binary opposites existed in the dialects of the hill people. In this context mention may be made of the difference between the Zou dialects of the Lai or the Hill and the Vai

⁷⁰ Dunster, Jack. *China and Mao Zedong*. Cambridge University Press [by] Lerner Publications Company, 1983. 7-8.

⁷¹ Walker, Anthony R. Review of “*Profile of a Little-Known Tribe: An Ethnographic Study of Lisus of Arunachal Pradesh*”, by Asim Maitra. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 28, no. 2 (1997): 473–77.

⁷² Mukherjee, Rila. *Pelagic Passageways: The Northern Bay of Bengal before Colonialism*. Primus Books, 2011. 267-70.

⁷³ “Shaista Khan - Banglapedia.” <http://en.banglapedia.org>.

or the settled region which is mainly used to refer to the plains of Bengal⁷⁴. Thus, the tribute missions that characterised the relationships between the Chinese and the non-Chinese in everyday transactions was missing in the case of India and the devices of exchange were fairly fluid and this is the perception one gets from the borderlands.

2 2.7 Eastern Himalayan Borderland

The rationale for breaking up the Himalayas into different borderlands becomes clear both on physiographic and cultural categories as the Himalayas tapers down and creates many new passes. This region comprising of the borders of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan have acquired regional particularity and it is this aspect that had led us to club these regions as the unit. As mentioned in the earlier unit, in addition to the rise of wool, horse was another important commodity of trade and most of the horses came to India through two regions- north-west India and the eastern Himalayas⁷⁵. The two types of horses were known as the Kohi from north-west India or originating from the Persian borderlands. The other variety was known as the Tangan horses or originating from Yunnan region of China. The Tangan horses form the mainstay of Bengal and Bengal is the only region where the two varieties of horses were in circulation⁷⁶. It is also important to mention that horses and gold were the only two commodities in which India was deficient since ancient period. It could therefore absorb large inflows of this and was virtually dependent on outside world for these two commodities. It is therefore the flow of horses through the Eastern Himalayan

⁷⁴ Dubey, S. M. *North East India: A Sociological Study*. Concept Publishing Company, 1978. 107.

⁷⁵ Sen, Jahar, *Sikkim and Himalayan Trade*. Namgyal institute of Tibetology, 2012. 11, 14.

⁷⁶ Chakravarti, Ranabir. "Early Medieval Bengal and the Trade in Horses: A Note." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 42, no. 2 (1999): 201.

region and it possess a unique vantage point⁷⁷. Horses were also important for all state societies till the advent of the wheeled vehicle and the second Industrial Revolution that led to the popularity of the internal combustion engine. China, therefore also depended on the Mongol horses and the horses of the various nomadic groups that were sold in the markets. In fact, since ancient period, China had created a famous department known as the tea-horse department to sell tea to the nomads in exchange for horses⁷⁸. This is a very important point as we see the peoples of the borderland procuring and supplying a very essential item that was the mainstay of the military machine on which the states were founded. Most of the Tangan horses to India from the eastern Himalayan borderlands actually originated in the region of Yunnan in China where they were bred by non-Chinese and partially Tibetanized people⁷⁹. This is the subject of an interesting paper by Bin Yang titled “Horses, Cowries and Silver in Yunnan”⁸⁰. In addition to trade, religion was a major element in the polity which supported Sikkim and Bhutan and exerted enormous influence on the populations and also in the neighbourhood⁸¹.

The passes of these regions were surveyed by many of the European travellers and thus form representations in good number which will be the focus of analysis in the later chapters. One may conclude this section by saying that the regional particularity of the eastern Himalayas arose on account of the stable polities of Sikkim and Bhutan and the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 194

⁷⁸ Yang, Bin. “Horses, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective.” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 3 (2004): 295,301.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 201

⁸⁰ Yang, Bin. “Horses, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective.” *Journal of World History* 15, no. 3 (2004): 299-302.

⁸¹ Sen, Jahar, *Sikkim and Himalayan Trade*. Namgyal institute of Tibetology, 2012. 13-14.

territorial integrity of Nepal and religion was supplanted by trade. Trade and religion could not be separated as we see that most of the convoys in the caravans were composed not only of merchants but also monks, pilgrims and many other people.

2.3.0 The Eastern Himalayan region- A survey

The Himalayan region has its own unique history which had been a region of profound interest to most of the outsiders. The Himalayan Mountains are the youngest, and the most un-stable. They form a distinct geographical divide that separates the Indian sub-continent from Central Asia. During earlier times, the Himalayan region had been largely overlooked. South Asia is separated from the Asian continent by the world's highest mountains, the Himalayas. The Indian subcontinent as it is also known as a triangular shaped peninsula bounded on two sides by the Indian Ocean and divided from the rest of Asia by three intersecting mountain ranges of the Himalayas. Literally, the name is equivalent to 'the abode of snow' (from the Sanskrit *hima*, 'frost' and *alaya*, 'dwelling place'). Himalaya is also most popularly known as Roof of the World. It is also revered as the abode of divinity. Stretched across Nepal, India, Bhutan, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan, Himalaya shelters over 200 mountains. The Himalaya is that great range of mountains that separates India, along its north-central and northeastern frontier, from china, and extends between latitudes 26°20' and 35°40' north, and between longitudes 74°50' and 95°40' east.

The Himalaya lies between the bend of the Indus on the west and the unexplored gorge of the Brahmaputra on the east. It covers partially or fully twelve states/provinces of India viz, Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam and West Bengal.

Without the Himalaya India would have been a different country, with perhaps a different history too. This mountain range had formed an effective barrier against invasions from the north. The Himalaya, lying in Indian Territory, is spread over a length of about 2,500 Km and a width of 220 to 300 Km. Complicated as the physical geography of the region, the knowledge about the patterns and extend of prehistoric settlements in Himalaya is sparse. This caused the reconstruction difficult and whatever could be done were mainly based on Sanskrit epic literature which had been derived from oral tradition

Physio-graphically the Himalayan region is grouped as the northern mountains and on the basis of general spatial differentiation of associated geographic elements and broad pattern of human occupancy, the Himalayas are identified in three major realms as:

- A. Western Himalaya (Kashmir Himalaya and Himachal Himalaya).
- B. Central Himalaya (U.P. Himalaya, Punjab Himalaya, and Nepal Himalaya).
- C. Eastern Himalaya (Darjeeling Himalaya, Sikkim Himalaya, Bhutan Himalaya and Arunachal Himalaya).

2.3.1 Geographical limits

In his famous book titled, “The Revenge of Geography”, Robert Kaplan brings to the reader the state of art in geographical thought and at the same time engaging with contemporary issues and applications of theories which reveal fault lines in the thinking of the colonial administrators and at the same time rehabilitating the wisdom of the pre-modern polities. Among the current world disturbances, the dominant narrative about the interconnectedness of the world and the rise of cyber linkages push geography to the background and he makes a persuasive case for bringing geography back to the narrative

as an important variable⁸². However a crucial difference that Kaplan detects from the earlier thinkers of the last century is the move from geographical determination to one of geographical possibilism. He explains the necessity of geography as an important but not determining variable and this approach helps us to understand and set right the earlier narratives where the erasure of geography was dominant particularly beginning with Haklyut school which argued for geography and chronology as the two eyes of history. Employing this approach of Kaplan would also give agency to the borderlands and at the same time do not stress on the ethnocentric view posted by some of the borderland historians which is equally dangerous⁸³. Thus, the limits of geography and also its potential offer us a point of departure from traditional understandings and also validate the breaking of fresh ground.

2.3.2 Administrative units

An important intervention in the convergence of governmentality and geographical space is unpacked when one examines the administrative structure of the borderlands. One of the important features that strikes an observer in the borderlands of India, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Bangladesh and to a lesser extent Sri Lanka reveals the gap in the state making process and historical journey from a pre-modern polity to modern state and the consequent tensions that manifest in different forms.

A great impact was made in both India and Pakistan with the decline of the Mughal Empire and the rise of the British power which led to a unifying administrative setup in all the

⁸² Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. Random House Publishing Group, 2012. 27.

⁸³ Ibid., xviii.

British ruled areas with the exception of the princely states that were granted autonomy but were ruled indirectly by the British. It led to reorganisation of most administrative units from the lowest to the highest level starting from village to a state or a province keeping revenue as the main criteria. The revenue districts were the most important administrative units whose apparatus including delegation of judicial and executive powers were monitored by the Central legislatures. The unifying principle of this was the application of the rule of the law based on the British system. Historically, the weight of history was far stronger in these regions in the transition from the Moghul post and other ruling dynasties to the British paramountcy. While the East India company laid the foundation of the British rule that was passed on to the crown after 1857 in most parts of India, the map of India of the post-Mughals period largely excluded the borderlands that were ruled by the princely states and many chieftains.

With the advent of British rule, colonial institutions like the judiciary, police and other institutions were established in all parts of India but faced certain problems in the borderlands. These were characterised as revolts and the great revolt of 1857 was still a fresh memory of the British and this was the important event that led to the transfer of power from the East India Company to the Crown. For the reader of Indian history, a chronological reading from 1857 would reveal a large number of revolts and the geography of these further reveal that they took place in the borderlands on account of the incorporation to the revenue apparatus of the British that led to their unrest. Historians had characterised the tribal revolts as primitive revolts as they did not have a large programme of action. The net result was that many of these regions were therefore not incorporated into the direct administrative structure of India but granted limited autonomy and became

part of British India with certain autonomous status. This autonomy to the region also therefore acknowledges the uniqueness and historical evolution from a multi-linear perspective. In the postcolonial period large number of ethnic nationality movements had also led to unrest and therefore large-scale autonomy had been delegated to these regions in India. India is one of the few countries in the world where indigenous people in areas with a numerical majority have their own representations in the legislature contrasting to the countries like the United States of America, Brazil and Australia where a significant number of indigenous people are invisible. Pakistan too has given certain autonomy to regions like the FATA or the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Northern areas which border on Kashmir. The autonomous districts of India and certain states based on tribal majority are thus an acknowledgement of the borderlands status, ethnic mix and historical specificity. In case of Bangladesh the situation is not clear as the main borderland of Chittagong is populated by more than 13 tribal groups who are collectively known as jumma or the people who follow jhum cultivation. While this nomenclature seems to be a modern invention, it proves to be a part of Spivak calls 'strategic essentialism' and is a tool that is to negotiate with the state to preserve certain aspects of traditional life and practices which are representative of the borderland of the Chittagong Hills. Unlike India, less autonomy is granted here on account of the colonisation of the region by land hungry peasants from Bengal, a practice that started from the late mediaeval period. In fact the spread of agriculture and dense settlements to the borderlands was one way of extending royal and imperial control that was successfully contested by the hill people and the legacy of this is seen in the present day administrative arrangements which are more welcoming in India than in the other regions.

In the case of Burma or Myanmar, the ethnic borderlands are clearly marked on account of two features-one being the spread of ethnic groups and the meagre resources base of the geographical regions they inhabit away from the fertile Irrawaddy plains which form the core region of Burma. Secondly, the practice of the government in Burma is also given nomenclature to many of these regions as ethnic regions and we thus have a clear case of comparison of the regions of Eastern Himalayas, India, Bangladesh and Burma that seem to form a tri-junction in the South and India Burma and China in the North. The net result of these administrative arrangements had been that the free flow of people among the ethnic brethren were halted by the postcolonial boundary and administrative arrangements of the nation-state.

In the case of China the shaded map is striking since two thirds of China was shown on the map as belonging to the autonomous regions that were modelled on the Soviet structure and are known as Zhizhiqu. In China the differential arrangement is also part of the legacy of the Ching Empire that ruled from 1644 to 1911 and the later period of turmoil during which certain institutions could not be directly implanted into the borderlands. Unlike the colonial encounter in India, European colonialism in China was of different nature with no direct role. But the Ching dynasty gave too many concessions to the Europeans and only after the fall of the Ching Dynasty did Japan occupy China. It would be a meaningful reading if one would compare the status of the ethnic groups in the three regions of India, China and Burma from a historical perspective till date but no such comparative study had surfaced till now.

One may conclude by saying that the postcolonial institutions while trying to bring in certain uniformity had to deal with the baggage of history and the ethnic particularities though they promised to bring in a certain universality.

2.3.3. Altitude and Eco regions

Altitude is one of the most important factors that differentiate the borderlands from the fertile agrarian plains that serve as a core region and also as the resource base of the regions. Most of the plains are situated at slightly lower altitudes as they are suitable to be irrigated. The vast stretch of plain land free of outcrops and undulations serve as the farming regions in which the core of the population is settled in. Proceeding from these densely settled agrarian regions towards the borderlands, one notices the transition from thence agricultural communities to promote agricultural communities and the cultural and material production of these are strikingly different in scale. For example, we have large temples and monasteries and also temple and monastic complexes that give way to small shrines in the remote agricultural communities. As one goes towards the Himalayas in the western region, the altitude is most strikingly palpable and one easily feels the lack of oxygen and headache sets in. It is here that the Indian land mass and the Tibetan Plateau meet and the difference between two geographies is striking and one immediately experiences headache as one travels fast and is addressed to get sufficient recuperation period⁸⁴. The average altitude of the Tibetan Plateau is around 13,000 to 15,000 feet high and therefore at the solitude in Ladakh, the air is rarified. In fact the term Ladakh in its traditional renderings

⁸⁴ Smith, Warren. *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*. Avalon Publishing, 1997. xix-xxiv.

means high land and this topography is conditioned by the settlement pattern of the Tibetan culture areas of the western Himalayas as all the Tibetan culture areas have felt this impact. The most striking feature is that nothing grows here except barley and no animal can be domesticated here except the yak. The high altitude desert feature is also strikingly different from the monsoon plains of the Indian subcontinent⁸⁵. The air circulation here is of a high pressure low temperature followed by a low-pressure high temperature seasons which extend as far as Siberia and is part of the Siberian wind systems⁸⁶.

Similar to this is the central Himalayas and while Sikkim and Bhutan are hilly regions, the borderlands of Nepal present a different picture. Sikkim is one of those few regions that have all sorts of ecology ranging from the tropical to the Alpine to the tundra all in the span of a radius of 70 km which is very striking. Bhutan too has medium and high mountains and has different physiological regions resembling Sikkim. The region of Nepal is characterised by three physiographic regions with the highly Himalayan ranges characterised by great mountains like Mount Everest, in the northernmost border is of Nepal abutting Tibet and home to many ethnic minorities like the Sherpas and in the eight parts of two medium-sized hills centre of the country with a capital Kathmandu, Pokhara and Kirtipur. It is only when one comes to the plains of Nepal and the borders of India midfield that there is practically no difference as this are the vast tableland. It is known as the terai and is still recently populated only by one ethnic group. The Tharu were the only

⁸⁵ Ibid., xx.

⁸⁶ Ibid., xx.

people in the world to have natural immunity to malaria and hence were the only people able to colonise the marshes of this land from ancient past⁸⁷.

With regard to the regions of the eastern borders, one will notice small hill ranges that are located on the accompanying map which kills not in very great height but affording settlements in the valleys. Except for the Brahmaputra valley and the smaller valleys of Chittagong and Tripura and Manipur that have valleys and flat land but are still about the sea level. The hills on the other hand have only moderate altitude and unlike the western Himalayas, do not exhibit great barrier in terms of movement conditioned by ice and snow which is present only in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly with the Tawang corridor which is technically part of the Tibetan plateau both physiographically and culturally.

Thus, we may conclude that altitude in the western Himalayas place a marked influence annually while in the eastern Himalayas it is topography more than altitude which plays an important determinant in the peopling of the region and the production patterns.

2.3.4 Forms of production

The swidden or slash and burn agriculture predominantly known as Jhum in eastern Himalayas is the main form of production and till recently did not generate much surplus and therefore there was a need for other forms of surplus in the form of rates. In the case of the western Himalayas as also in eastern Himalayas, patches of land along the rivers are

⁸⁷ "Malaria Acted as a Bio-Weapon to Protect the Tharu People from Invaders." *Conservative Headlines*, May 6, 2014. <http://conservative-headlines.com/2014/05/malaria-acted-as-a-biol-weapon-to-protect-the-tharu-people-from-invaders>.

suited for large-scale agriculture and these have become stable polities. On account of the topographic, western Himalayan borderlands are predominantly characterised by the cultivation of barley and the combination of high incidence of nomadism in the form of pastoralism. The main difference between the western and eastern Himalayas in terms of animal and crop is the domestication of the horse and this appears along with barley to be an extension of the main form of production in the Tibetan culture areas. Apart from the highly centralised agricultural regions that have enough surpluses, most of the regions do not have means to produce enough surplus and therefore there is a constant need to acquire goods through trade and plunder. This explains the portrayal of borderlands societies of Inner Asia, as one characterised by greed which is understood as an inverted reading that translates greed into need. This approach was pioneered only recently to explain the nomadic incursions into China⁸⁸.

With regard to the eastern Himalayan region, the slash and burn cultivation is best explained in an article titled, “tribal man in the humid tropics of north-east India”. The later interpretation on these lines is what the famous book by James C Scott's concept of Zomia. It is articulated as the region that sought to avoid incorporation into the state and therefore had production patterns with less surplus and hence the choice of slash and burn agriculture⁸⁹. In the postcolonial period large-scale transitions had happened but the term associated with Jhum had also become politicised and history is being written to read backwards and the best example is the case of the invention of the Jumma of people of

⁸⁸ “Nicola Di Cosmo.” *World History*. <http://www.history-of-world.com/himongo/17164-nicola-di-cosmo.html>.

⁸⁹ Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 2009. 19-20.

Bangladesh⁹⁰. Fishing and other itinerant occupations are also seen. But these do not predominate and by and large below surplus and agriculture as the main form of production with limited hunting in the pre-modern period. Hunting was a former production but not as large because domesticated animals were rare and hunting required mobilisation of labour and thus the aspect of hunting was welded with the concept of Chieftaincy. Therefore the successful hunter put aspect to become a part of the chieftdom but at the same time had to spend lots of money in feasting. This served as check and balance and also as redistributive mechanism⁹¹. One of the lesser known aspects is the prevalence of slavery in tribal societies, though this slavery was very different from the dominant forms of slavery encountered in different parts of the world. In the borderlands of Assam, one finds the Posa system as a mechanism of giving rice, chicken and other agricultural and metal utensils to the Tani tribes who came from the hill regions of Arunachal Pradesh to the plains of Assam. It is surprising to note that the system continued as late as 1954 though India became independent in 1947⁹². Originally this system was invented by the Ahom rulers who exempted these villages from taxes so that their surplus could be matched to the interests of the raiding parties. Edmund Leach⁹³ in his classic works on Highland societies of Burma also alludes to this point which is explained again by FK Lehman in his classic work the ‘structure of the Chin societies’, who are the cognate of the Zo people of India and speak

⁹⁰ Michaud, Jean, Margaret Byrne Swain, and Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh. *Historical Dictionary of the Peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 69.

⁹¹ Malsawmdawngliana, A. “Thangchhuah Feasts and Their Implications in Mizo Society” 89 (January 1, 2009): 229–37.

⁹² Thakur, Amrendra Kumar. *Slavery in Arunachal Pradesh*. Mittal Publications, 2003. 63,139, 245,254.

⁹³ E. R. Leach, Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure(London School of Economics and Political Science, London) in SELTH, ANDREW. “Modern Burma Studies: A Survey of the Field.” *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 421.

mutually intelligible dialects⁹⁴. Main arguments regarding the adaptation of an indigenous people to non-Western society shows the prevalence of this form of production wherein the need for surplus leads to a plunder⁹⁵.

2.3.5 Language families

It is interesting to note that when we talk of borders the physicality and cultural contours end and along with it, the language also ends. While the concept of the other and the otherness is largely cultural, it is mediated through the notion of language and this in areas of dispersed political units, we also see different varieties of language groups, dialects and strikingly different usages. It is very minimal according to the standards of the agrarian societies with their homogeneity that provide the ideal ground for monarchies. Over a period of time, the settled agrarian communities and monarchies and the multi-ethnic groupings were united by certain commonalities of language brought about by governmentality and bureaucratic practices which form the basis for expansion and thus the final destination was towards an empire. Vast empires like the Chinese Empire and the empires of Indo Gangetic plains of India successfully brought about linguistic unity⁹⁶.

In a striking observation, the geographer's Paul Wheatley made the keen observation that Sanskrit is chilled to silence at 500 meters meaning that Sanskrit ends at higher altitude

⁹⁴ Lehman, F. K. *The Structure of Chin Society: A Tribal People of Burma Adapted to a Non-Western Civilization*. University of Illinois Press, 1963. 54-6.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 29-30.

⁹⁶ *Concise Encyclopedia of Languages of the World*. Elsevier, 2010. 203-7, 497-500.

and is essentially a low land agrarian language in a state society⁹⁷. It is this direction of non-state spaces and borderland polities that show up as clear difference and breaks from the established flow of colours and representative practices and maps. When we approach the Himalayan region, we see that the region of north-east India, which is a postcolonial construction and is home to more than 175 ethnic groups and by extension languages of the same number. It is a question of certain dialect as in the case of the different Kuki dialects⁹⁸. This in fact is more a case of politics taking precedence over linguistic taxonomy and similar such examples can be posited. The point of importance here is that from the plains of Bengal with a large number of Bengali speaking people who are the eighth largest language speakers in the world and with Bengali Muslims constituting the second-largest ethnic group among Muslims only after the Tumiputras of Indonesia⁹⁹. Bengal and the Bengali language spoken in both India and Bangladesh, suddenly gave way to a large number of dialects and languages in the ranges of the Himalayas. A similar experience awaits the linguist when he travels to the western Himalayas and the dominance of the written languages of Kashmir and Urdu suddenly pave way to a wide variety of languages and dialects¹⁰⁰.

Linguists have classified the languages of the world into five major language families. In the borderlands of the Himalayas, we find that the Indo-European represented by the Indo-

⁹⁷ Kaplan, Robert D. *The Revenge of Geography: What the Map Tells Us About Coming Conflicts and the Battle Against Fate*. Random House Publishing Group, 2012. 32.

⁹⁸ Pachuau, Joy. *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*. Oxford University Press, 2014. 11.

⁹⁹ Lapidus, Ira M. *A History of Islamic Societies*. Cambridge University Press, 2014. 453.

¹⁰⁰ Clark, Graham E. "Who Were Dards? A Review of the Ethnographic literature of the North Western Himalayas". *Kailash - Journal of Himalayan Studies* Volume 5, Number 4, 1977.

Aryan languages are predominant in the western Himalayas while the Sino-Tibetan languages in the Tibetan highlands form the borderlands. Similarly in the eastern Himalayas we have Indo-Aryan languages along with Tibeto-Burman which is a division of the Sino Tibetan language group and is the second largest language group in the world only after the Indo European languages. In addition to the above mentioned group we also have some Indo-Aryan languages that are derived from Assamese which in fact has a large number of Thai words and belongs to the Thai group of languages which is one of the predominant groups in the borderlands of the eastern Himalayas¹⁰¹. In addition, the transformation of the Assamese language from a Thai to Indo-Aryan language over the centuries indicates adoption of statist practices after the rise of the Kingdom of the Ahoms¹⁰². We also have the Khasi language which is in fact not similar to the neighbouring group of languages but part of the Austric or Mundari group which is the dominant group in the tribal regions of central India and also the language to which the Khmer belongs¹⁰³. The 19th-century ideas of language also intersected with the ideas of the category of race and therefore it came as a shock to many of the early writers on how to classify languages that seemed to be from widely different groups but whose language speakers seem to

¹⁰¹ Brown, Keith and Sarah Ogilvie. *Concise Encyclopaedia of Languages of the World*. Elsevier, 2010. 1010-11.

¹⁰² Baruah, SwarnaLata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. 220.

¹⁰³ Brown, Keith and Sarah Ogilvie. *Concise Encyclopaedia of Languages of the World*. Elsevier, 2010. 595-6.

physically resemble each other¹⁰⁴. The abandonment of the concept of race and its employment as a category has only eliminated this confusion and given us more clarity¹⁰⁵.

In chapter 6 of the book titled, “An Anarchic History of Upland Southeast Asia”, detailed discussion on the role of prescription and languages are essayed which argues that the polities of this region did not specifically cultivate a written language. A written language would lead to some amount of fixity and make the polities vulnerable. Further there is no surplus and the need for a bureaucratic organisation like a state or a military that would acutely need a written language and with the introduction of one such language the next step is the transformation to a different order of things that would lead to a fixity and language transformation as in the case of the Ahoms¹⁰⁶. As such, transformations to a statist polity did not occur. The language map is very complicated and we therefore get a collage of different lightweight dialects. Some of them are mutually intelligible while others are not and in cases of interaction with historical necessity we see the rise of pidgin and Creole¹⁰⁷. A glance at the linguistic map of the world would also reveal such tapestries in places like Papua New Guinea, Nigeria and the regions of the Niger-Congo languages and the regions of mainland Southeast Asia¹⁰⁸. It is striking to note that the map of the spread of language in other world regions are predominantly unitary and as we have the Sinosphere the East of Asia, giving way to large language groups like Persian and Arabic

¹⁰⁴ Thapar, Romila. “The Theory of Aryan Race and India: History and Politics.” *Social Scientist* 24, no. 1/3 (1996). 4.

¹⁰⁵ Curnoe, Darren. “The Biggest Mistake in the History of Science.” *The Conversation*.

¹⁰⁶ Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 2009. 220-1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, Keith and Sarah Ogilvie. *Concise Encyclopedia of Languages of the World*. Elsevier, 2010. 253.

followed by the other languages of Europe. The predominance of English in America along with the substantial presence of Spain in Latin America had led to the creation of a Spanish culture area. In addition to the above mentioned reason the rise of stable agrarian polities under a single political jurisdiction led to uniformity in language and another important factor are the relations between the different ethnic groups. In the case of the borderlands of the Himalayas, the first part-the rise of durable agrarian polities did not come through and these language groups could not be drawn into the worldview of the production oriented usage as of the agrarian neighbours, as agrarian expansion and statist institutions failed to take root here. The second part is that the languages of Europe are always cited as an example of a state and nation and the language giving the examples of France and the French, Germany and the Germans, Hungary and the Hungarians et cetera. Such a model was seen to be emulated and how these novelties suffered a major break in Europe in the Balkans which after a Papua New Guinea and Nigeria formed of one of the regions with the large language groups settled in close proximity activated only by valleys¹⁰⁹. The difference between the Balkans and Western Europe is that in western Europe most of the languages that came to prominence having patronised by the nation state which thus came into existence after a bloody history of ethnic cleansing¹¹⁰. The force of this-ethnic accommodation is witnessed in the region of the Himalayas. It is this ethnic accommodation, acculturation and adaptation that took place after encounters in various forms like trade, conflict or circulation of votes that led to the making of this linguistic

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 119-123.

¹¹⁰ Preece, Jennifer Jackson. "Ethnic Cleansing as an Instrument of Nation-State Creation: Changing State Practices and Evolving Legal Norms." *Human Rights Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (1998): 817–9.

diversity. One of the best examples of large groups in a small area in the Himalayas is the Gilgit¹¹¹.

Migration is one of the most important aspects that contributed to this linguistic diversity and in the western Himalayas, we have the Tibetanized people along with other Indo-Aryan speakers and in the central and eastern Himalayas, the different dialects survived for centuries constantly mutating. One of the problems that the researcher faces is the earlier classification of many of these languages by the travellers as corrupt and debased forms of language as giving the idea that these are actually societies that is degenerated from the rule of a king or a state to that of a chieftain and hence in this process of the degradation of the polity, so too had the language become degraded. It is also supported by many versions of a myth wherein many of the ethnic groups here assert that originally they had a language which is written on some impermanent material like the skin of a cow etc and by a trick was lost. We therefore have at present certain language maps proposed by SALA or the South Asian Linguists Association that have given agency to this region in the form of nomenclature of languages and by preparing dictionaries of major or minor languages and dialects.

We may conclude this section by stating that the essence of different groups of languages in a very small region which reveals a very high number as contrasted to the state societies of many neighbouring agrarian heartlands reveals the linguistic diversity which in turn

¹¹¹ Lecomte-Tilouine, Marie, and Pascale Dollfus. (ed) *Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil: Identities and Representations in the Himalayas, Martin Sokefeld, Selves and Others; Representing Multiplicities of Difference in Gilgit, Northern Areas of Pakistan*. Oxford University Press, 2003. 310.

holds the key to understanding the governance and historical evolution as relatively the independent language and dialect processes.

2.3.5 Ethnic groups

David Gellner, one of the important anthropologists working on Nepal while approaching the rich diversity of ethnic groups proposed a caveat in the form of an article titled, 'how not to read ethnicity' pointing to the dangers of translation of any given social group as frozen in time from adopting essentialist view. Another scholar on the Himalayas, Philippe Ramirez proposed the concept of ethnic indecision with regard to certain communities to show that they were in flux. Popular literature on the other hand and also a large number of textbooks used in the universities and colleges classify the peoples of the borderlands as tribes. This began with the colonial period and had become so internalised that the outsiders had essentialized and reproduced which was further met by the official categories of scheduled tribe with regard to India and to a lesser extent Janjati in Nepal.

One has to essentially recognise the fact that colonialism had made a definite impact in the classification of many groups into categories that were part of a hierarchical schema conceptualised during the heydays of European colonialism in 18th-century and its intersection with race science-a discredited field of enquiry now. To set the record right, G N Devy asks an interesting question as to why are there no tribes in Europe?¹¹² We obviously unmistakably locate tribes all over Africa and pre-colonial Australia and pre-colonial America. Further, we also have tribes in Asia and then the question of their

¹¹² G N Devy, unpublished lecture "criminal tribes in India", national conference on globalization and tribescdh, uoh.

absence in Europe is an enigma. It is sort to unravel this by unpacking the Enlightenment project of Europe that continue to pass it Europe as an epitome of civilisation surrounded by the other continents like Africa who are children and the same was the case with the America as children they were the image of what Europe was many, many centuries. The same could not be said about Asia since Asia had a large repository of philosophy and great traditions and hence Asia was classified as an old lady past her prime time with which Europe could never have any meaningful interaction with. However the borderlands of Asia were populated by some of these ‘childlike’ people and this ultimately led to their characterisation not only as ‘childlike’ people given the category of tribes but also included in the larger rubric of the white man's narrative. Therefore, the early literature on the Himalayan region in the mediaeval period was free from this bias and only from 18th-century one notices the full impact of the civilising mission and colonial knowledge systems that eventually come to predominate¹¹³.

A more meaningful way would be to match production patterns and the location of social groups that produced an ethnic community which was also durable over the centuries and try to understand it. Most of the fertile agrarian regions were also home to the state societies that were the kingdoms of Ladakh, Kumon and Garhwal, Sikkim, Assam, Tripura and Manipur. Another notable omission in the standard textbooks but which needs to be clubbed with this region was the polity of the Chakma people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is noteworthy to mention that the Chakmas were the only ethnic group who had a state

¹¹³ The writings of Alexander Csoma De Koros who sought to allocate early origins of Hungarian Inner Asia as an example.

and also script¹¹⁴ with the exception of the people of Manipur. All the above mentioned state societies along with the Monpas produced chronicles and literature as part of a strong genealogical and legitimising statement.

The Bodo's are the largest tribal group of north-east India and also have some presence in Bhutan. But, they lack the script and the durable state and the crucial difference between them and the other groups is that they were playing this group of people like other similar of cognate tribes. Many of the other ethnic groups like the Lepchas, Khasi and Garos had been referred to since very early past. We also have other important groups like the Mizos, Nagas but whose nomenclature is attested differently and the ethnogenesis of this group is of the individual tribes and the larger nomenclature of Mizo is of recent origin and is not accepted by the cognate people like the Chin people of Burma and the other Zo groups of north-east India who propose alternate nomenclature and terminologies. It is therefore prudent to locate the ethnic groups on a map and also explain the same by a list, both of which are done below based on standard materials prepared by the anthropological survey of India for India and other important material like the Muluki Ain of Nepal.

One may thus conclude by saying that the ethnic groups in these borderlands of Himalayas are not fixed but have exhibited many alliances and thus considerably changed in terms of cultural practices, material culture and also religion over the years. The biggest break was made by the impact of colonialism and the consequent fixation of identities which was also however not fully successful but largely had been in place. One of the results of this is a

¹¹⁴ Talukdar, S. P. *The Chakmas, Life and Struggle*. Gian Publishing House, 1988. 111.

pretty secession of identities and its reproduction in academia as static ethnic groups as the truth is at a considerable distance from this narrative.

2.3.6 Traditional polities

Kinship and monarchy based on the traditional Hindu and Buddhist ideas, though far removed in practice continue to prevail as an important political institution in the borderlands with a state society, with a significant resource base stretching from Ladakh in the western Himalayas to the Chakma kings of the eastern Himalayas though with large variations in terms of rituals of royalty and ceremonies of coronation and administrative practices. Sharply contrasting to this were the chiefdoms ranging from articulate expressions of Chiefdom that were mentioned in many of the chronicles of the state societies to minor chiefs. The rise of colonialism had in a large way delegitimized chiefs and demoted them to position lower than kings and Chiefdom is predominantly associated with the tribal societies and kingdoms with the literate societies. In traditional usage in South Asia, some of the chiefs were referred to as Raja's or kings of a particular domain. This is also one of the reasons that we do not find any kings in Africa but only chiefs except for the kings of Ethiopia who calls themselves as Emperors and was so possessed a literary tradition in the form of a writing system in two languages Amhara and Gee'z

Chapter- 3

Contextualising the major Borderlands of Eastern Himalayas and a Discursive Study of the Evolution of a region.

3.1.0 A profile of the culture areas in the borderlands and their classifications

The concept of culture area is derived from the works of the German geographer Ratzel in a 19th-century when he accounted for the spread of American Indian culture over large part of the plains of North America in a very continuous region¹.

While the Tibetan Culture Area has been a subject of research and the current state of knowledge exhibits a certain similarity and spread of Tibetan culture and institutions². The question therefore now is to account for the emergence of these regions and provide explanatory frameworks. To provide for these one has to therefore begin with by outlining the general features that can be abstracted and then theorised. In this context we find plains with irrigation potential and fertile land are found in the valleys where the potential for surplus exists and has been harnessed as in the case of Assam, Tripura, Manipur and the plains of Burma. The similarity with the plains of India, China, Iran and other regions end here as the plains have a binary that are the hills and the security of the plains and extension of the polities is dependent on the raids from the hills. Thus, we have a two sets of polities-state and non-state societies based on agriculture and swidden agriculture in the plains and

¹ Guo, Rongxing. *Intercultural Economic Analysis: Theory and Method*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2009. 13.

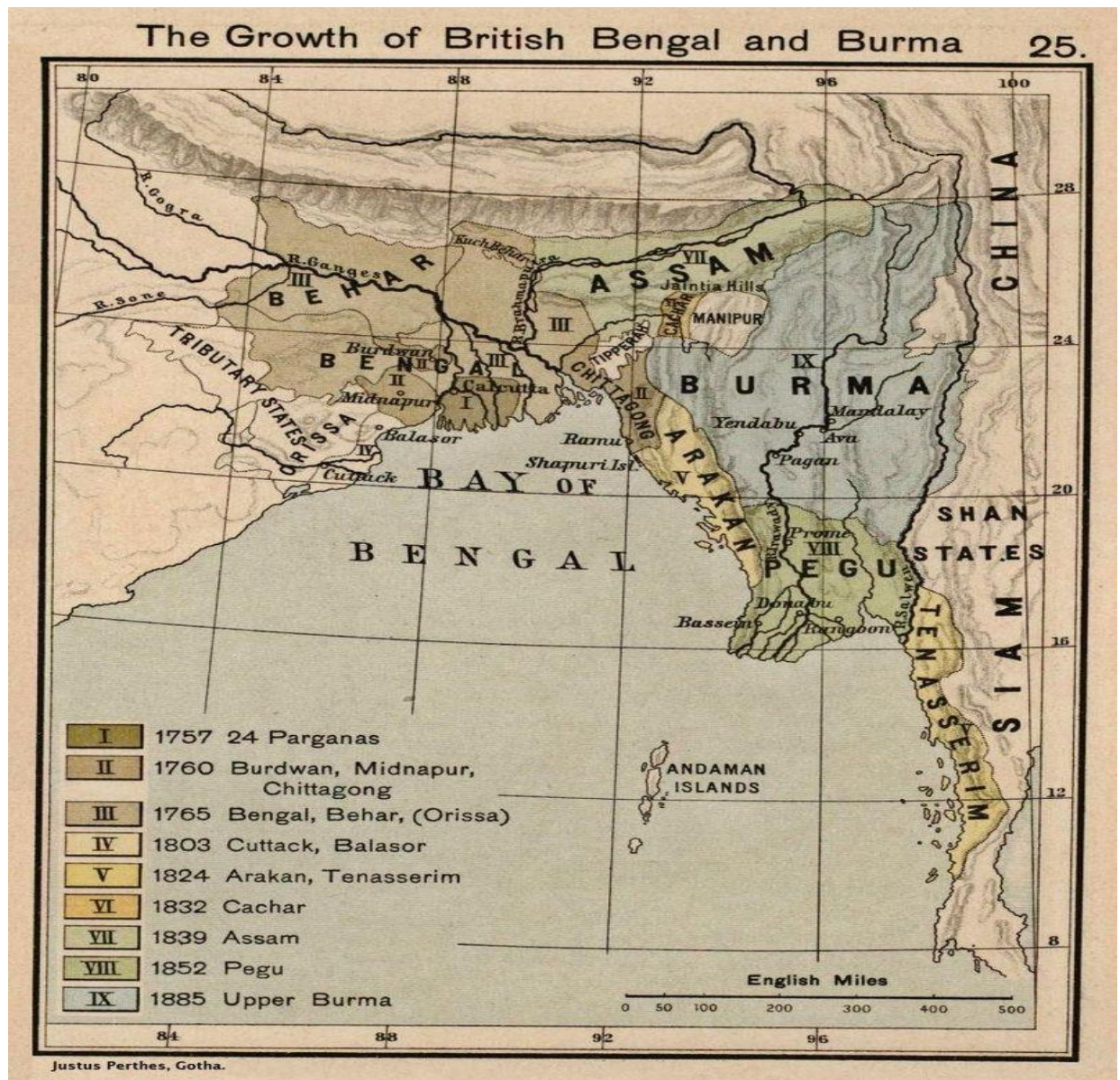
² Coleman, Graham. *A Handbook Of Tibetan Culture: A Guide to Tibetan Centres and Resources Throughout the World*. Random House, 2016. 25-33.

hills respectively³. The uninhabited hills found in many parts of the world that form natural borders extending for miles together do not exist here and in a sense modified with human presence in regions that are not large and continuous like the valleys and plains but small and discontinuous⁴. This, in short gives a description of the geography, production pattern and polity of the borderlands. The point is that they are not still been fully theorised yet. Therefore, the history of the regions in the border of the Eastern Himalayas form a borderland but described either from the perspective of the plains or the hills. An integrated approach to describe this region incorporating not only these two sub regions but also the complicated relations between these need to be analysed and presented for it is both these that combine to make a borderland.

³ Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 2010. 18.

⁴ Schendel, Willem Van. *The Bengal Borderland: Beyond State and Nation in South Asia*. Anthem Press, 2005. 138, 264.

Map of Bengal and Burma 1907-1909



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

3.1.1 Sikkim and the Tibetan borderlands

Sikkim presents interesting picture of many different eco-zones in a very short span of 50 miles ranging from an elevation of 200 feet at its lowest to 28,000 feet and low at the highest of all in the span of 50 miles. It is this problem of Sikkim exhibiting different

altitudes and also eco-regions ranging from tropical to Montaigne to Alpine and tundra in the extreme north that has combined to give a special character to Sikkim which is difficult to settle⁵. It is because of this difficulty, isolation and the lack of visible and articulate equality till the 17th century that led to the absence of Sikkim in any major narratives⁶. Today Sikkim is populated largely by people from Nepal and the original inhabitants have become a minority and thus characterise two groups, of Lepcha and Bhutia, the latter being the earliest autochthonous people of Sikkim and were largely living in isolated settlements with minimal outside influence and is mainly seen in the Tibetan influence⁷. The early Tibetan influence is related to the myth of Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche, popularly known in Tibet and also the founder of the first Buddhist tradition in Tibet. The Guru was known for performing many miracles and on the invitation of the Tibetan emperor Trisong Detsen tamed the ferocious spirits in Lhasa and is thus credited with many miraculous powers⁸. Therefore this influence can be dated to a period later than the eighth century⁹. Sikkim nevertheless comes into focus only in the 17th century with migrants from eastern Tibet, from the region of Kham establishing a dynasty ruled by the Chogyal. The dynasties that was established in the 17th century was called the Namgyal dynasty and it led to the evolution of a polity based on the Tibetan model of a dharma king who ruled in accordance

⁵ Tambe, Sandeep, and G. S. Rawat. "The Alpine Vegetation of the Khangchendzonga Landscape, Sikkim Himalaya: Community Characteristics, Diversity, and Aspects of Ecology." *Mountain Research and Development* 30, no. 3 (2010): 266–8.

⁶ Rhodes, Nicholas G. *A Man of the Frontier, S. W. Laden La (1876-1936): His Life & Times in Darjeeling and Tibet*. Library of Numismatic Studies, 2006. 6.

⁷ Bareh, Hamlet. *Encyclopaedia of North-East India*. Mittal Publications, 2001. 125.

⁸ Subba, J. R. *History, Culture and Customs of Sikkim*. Gyan Publishing House, 2008. xix.

⁹ Ibid.

with the tenets of Buddhism¹⁰. The Tibetans refer to this region as the land of rice and use the term Denzong and as a fertile valley it was resented by the neighbouring powers. This ample resource base was the source of envy of the neighbouring regions and thus cause of frequent battles with Bhutan and Nepal. As a result of this continuous military conflicts Sikkim was forced to take the help of Tibet and later the intervention of the British East India Company led to the division of Darjeeling from Sikkim and the establishment of British paramountcy over this region¹¹.

Sikkim thus has certain special features reflected in the landscape and religion and though similar to Tibet it does not follow the Gelug tradition and instead follows the Nyingma tradition and hence the reference to the Guru who is supposed to be the founder of this tradition. Politically the integration and exchange took place largely under the British East India Company and it was during this period many European travellers expressed interested in the botany of Sikkim and also the Himalayas. It was this interest in the botany of the plains that led many European travellers to come to Sikkim in the 17th century. Consequently, the prospects for tea trade with China also brought Sikkim into the orbit of the English East India Company and thus the isolation was shared. One may summarise this discussion by saying that Sikkim though being brought into the crossroads of Indo-china trade could not be fully penetrated on account of its topography and communication systems and henceforth remain marginal and thus has become an example of a borderland. The rise of the wool trade in 18th-century led to the emergence of Darjeeling as a woolmart

¹⁰ Joshi, H. G. *Sikkim: Past and Present*. Mittal Publications, 2004. 82-7,139.

¹¹ Rock, Joseph F. "Excerpts from a History of Sikkim." *Anthropos* 48, no. 5/6 (1953): 925–33.

in the Eastern Himalayas and this aspect also effected trade routes¹². Through this trade involvement, Sikkim become a part of British patronage to Darjeeling which is a British territory showed the differential development of Darjeeling over Sikkim.

3.1.2 The borderlands of Assam in the minor chieftain's Domain

One of the large and contiguous stretches of plain land found in the eastern Himalayan region is Assam. The river Brahmaputra is a defining factor in the historical revolution of the region of Assam as it provides the ideal conditions for the proliferation of complex societies in its valleys. Originating in Tibet, the Brahmaputra enters India in Arunachal Pradesh and flows from the hills down to the plains into Assam and unlike other rivers is very turbulent and is often prone to flood. It is this that creates the large-scale spread of alluvium which in turn creates ideal conditions for profitable agriculture¹³.

In the early historic period, these eco-regions were exploited by the minor chieftain's and in the course of the state formation they came to be known in history as the Mech dynasty. This dynasty however did not exploit the full potential of the plains owing to many difficulties including lack of adequate institutions and manpower for agrarian expansion¹⁴. As a result of this intrusion into the virgin areas that were fit to be under the plough did not take place.

¹² Graafen, Rainer and Seeber, Christian. *"Important Trade Routes in Nepal and their Importance to the Settlement Process"*. 36.

¹³ Saikia, Rajen. *Social and Economic History of Assam, 1853-1921*. Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2000. P87-8, 96.

¹⁴ Gogoi, Jahnabi. *Agrarian System of Medieval Assam*. Concept Publishing Company, 2002.p 58-9.

In the 10th century A.D., the rise of the Ahom dynasty started and they entered Assam by the 12th century A.D. centred on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra, primarily in the districts of present day Jorhat and Sivasagar and formed by soldiers or Paiks¹⁵. In fact, the early rulers of Assam followed the Indic model and have issued inscriptions in Sanskrit and also built a durable state based on agricultural surplus. Their mythical king Naraka is one of the important personalities regularly mentioned in the inscriptions. The spread of inscriptions and land grants along with coinage and other institutions in the Brahmaputra valley show the emergence of a polity that came to be known in history as Kamrupa. While the historical King Baskaravarman is not only a historical personality but also a representative of the ruling house of the Varman dynasty, the polity clearly follows the model of monarchy in North India with the raja wrecking at the Centre and this was largely because of the people of the region of Assam are Indo-Aryan speakers¹⁶. Assam thus became a part of the Indian imaginary not only politically but also through the other myths and these myths formed the stable of the Puranic religion in mediaeval India wherein the myths of different regions were synthesised. One of the important myths of Assam is the burning of Parvati by Siva when he opened his third eye in a fit of fury but Parvati and her body was shattered into 54 pieces and dispersed into different parts of India. One part of the body, the sexual organs fall in Assam and thus became the seat of the famous temple of Kamakhya and is the foundational myth for this temple¹⁷. Over the years many other layers have crept into this institution and the fertility based reproductive nature of the early

¹⁵ Ibid., 29, 124-26.

¹⁶ Sharma, Mukunda Madhava. *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*. Department of Publication, Gauhati University, 1978. Xliii, 122.

¹⁷ Goswami, Kali Prasad. *Kāmākhyā Temple: Past and Present*. APH Publishing, 1998. 27-8.

fertility cult has given its character to this temple¹⁸. The Yogini Tantra and the Kalika Purana are the two primary texts that are associated with this temple institution and by extension with the entire region of Assam. However, the entry of a new group of people from the eastern borders of the Himalayas and beyond, who were speakers of the Thai group of languages entered Assam by 12th century A.D. and over a period of time quickly establish their political supremacy based on military superiority. One of the significant achievements of this dynasty and the people known as the Ahom was the rapid agrarian expansion and militarisation of Assam through large stretches of the northern part of the Brahmaputra valley¹⁹.

While the Brahmaputra valley and Assam came to be peopled with a new ethnic group whose culture and polity marked a break, it was also in many ways a significant continuity. Although their language changed beyond recognition, the present-day language of Assamese derives from the early Indo-Aryan speakers and the later lone words from the Thai immigrants. Like all immigrants in Indian society, they became Indianised and this element shows the process of continuity and is best expressed in the political, social and cultural aspects²⁰. Predominantly culturally it is expressed in the adoption of the culture of Assam and the language and also the cultural institutions and patronage to the Bhakti tradition particularly of Shankar Deva.

¹⁸ Urban, Hugh B. *The Power of Tantra: Religion, Sexuality and the Politics of South Asian Studies*. I.B.Tauris, 2009. 56.

¹⁹ Gogoi, Jahnabi. *Agrarian System of Medieval Assam*. Concept Publishing Company, 2002. 17-24.

²⁰ Baruah, Swarna Lata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. 64-8, 402.

As the process of present intrusion and colonisation of many villages by establishing new settlements under the stewardship of the Ahom state, durable village communities came into existence. The centralist region of the Brahmaputra valley included agrarian settlements that were capable of producing high surplus and their potential were exploited to the full²¹. However, there are also many other regions that were predominantly pastoral and did not have a potential for agrarian surplus for large-scale irrigation and thus formed the borderlands and one of the classic examples of this is the region known as Goalpara²². It is composed of two words Goala meaning a cowherd and the suffix para meaning a settlement or in short the settlement of the cowherd's which indicates a pastoral region as opposed to an agrarian region. While the core agrarian regions formed the centre and a resource base politically and economically, the cultural aspects also flowed from this region and thus we have the making of a borderland in terms of topographic and forms of production. This point is well illustrated by Sanghamitra Misra in her work on the making of a borderlands in Assam. Like the borderlands that are part of the plains as mentioned in the case above, the southernmost extremities were prone to flooding and continuous water logging and form part of the marshlands. These marshlands were also a continuity of the marshlands of Bengal and constituted the lands' end and was not suitable for easy human habitation²³. Owing to the pressure of population large swathes of land were reclaimed in the eastern region of Bengal from the 13th century under the patronage and guidance of the

²¹ Gogoi, Jahnabi. *Agrarian System of Medieval Assam*. Concept Publishing Company, 2002. 35-36.

²² Misra, Sanghamitra. *Becoming a Borderland: The Politics of Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India*. Routledge. 2-4.

²³ Ghosh, Arun. "The Sunderbans." *Economic and Political Weekly* 23, no. 8 (1988): 352.

Sufis²⁴. A similar and parallel process is observed in the case of West Punjab where also marsh and pastoral land was reclaimed and settled with peasants under the patronage of the Sufis. Thus, Bengal and Punjab have the largest number of Muslim populations in India in the pre-partition period and most of this conversion was not the result of immigration, forced conversion or conversion due to social oppression. If it was due to social oppression, then the lowermost strata of the society would have converted to Islam²⁵. Rather, it was the middle castes who converted and this took place around 2nd to 3rd centuries and was not an immediate process. The point of engaging with this discussion under this particular heading is to locate the borders of the region of Assam and the region of Bengal in the southern part which is predominantly the marshlands and which constitutes not only a physical borderland but also a borderland that is cultural²⁶. Today, this region has become a hotbed of contention on account of the immigration of large number of Bengalis from Bangladesh and India during pre-independence period from Bengal. The argument of many of the historians of Assam is that this was actually a no man's land or at best a region that was sparsely populated or a pastoral region. It is the arrival of the immigrant peasants who were land hungry and the subsequent colonisation and the human agency that transform this landscape which opens a new chapter that redraws the boundary of Assam both culturally and politically²⁷.

²⁴ Eaton, Richard M. *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760*. University of California Press, 1996. 194, 207.

²⁵ Ibid., 113-9.

²⁶ Ibid., 129.

²⁷ Saikia, Rajen. *Social and Economic History of Assam, 1853-1921*. Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2000. 92,113,248.

With the central and southern borderlands of Assam being clear about two other borderlands come into focus and they are the plains in the northern part bordering the Kingdom of Bhutan²⁸ and populated by the Bodo tribe who were the largest tribal group in the entire eastern Himalayan region. The peculiarity of the Bodo tribe²⁹ is that they are not a hill tribe but are a plain tribes. This cultural differences and distances was largely because of the different forms of production and by extension their adoption of cultural institutions.

In the politicised postcolonial discussions on identity, presentist bias has become entrenched that ascribes the Bodo and the Assamese as bipolar opposites based on certain political exigencies of the day. The transformation of the Bodo Kingdom known as the Bodo-Kachari Kingdom was a political movement in the direction of state formation based on the neighbouring models of the Ahoms. It also brought into its fold other tribal groups like the Dimasa and Kachari Kingdoms who showed the potential for state formation and were moving in the direction³⁰.

Two important points come up that need to be addressed generally in the case of Assam and also while dealing with other polities in the eastern Himalayas. The first is the problem of non-state societies into state societies as static entities moving in specific directions. The experiences of these tribal groups and polities and the movement towards state society which is successfully achieved in the case of other groups like Tripura, Manipur and the

²⁸ Baruah, Swarna Lata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. 370-2.

²⁹ Ibid., 186-7.

³⁰ Baruah, Swarna Lata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. 66-4, 366-8.

Chakmas are counter example to the case of the Zomia paradigms. A brief account of the two kingdoms of the Kachari³¹ and Ahom³² follows.

Table 3.1

Sl.No	List of Kachari Rulers	Period of Rule
1.	Bicharpatiha/ Prakash	1336-1386
2.	Vikramadityapha/ Vikaranto	1386-1411
3.	Mahamanipha/ Prabal	1411-1436
4.	Manipha	1436-1461
5.	Ladapha	1461-1486
6.	Khorapha/ Khunkhorapha/ Khunkhora	1486-1511

The second is a question of the use of the term north-east India which seems to be an anachronistic and is largely a postcolonial creation and hence has been largely avoided in this discussion as the question of an Anachronism is an important problem³³. This is best illustrated by the writing of regional history and South India is taken for the next granted and need not be established whereas in the case of north-east India the term is still not yet

³¹ <http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsFarEast/IndiaKacharis.htm>.

³² Baruah, Swarna Lata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. Refer Appendix B.

³³ MEHROTRA, NILIKA, and LALGOULIAN. "A Report on 'Towards a New Understanding of North East India.'" *Indian Anthropologist* 38, no. 1 (2008): 96.

gained currency. The history of the Bodo begins with their early mention in the historical chronicles of the Ahom and is largely representative of their interactions with the Chieftaincy of the region³⁴.

Table 3.2.

Sl. No	List of Ahom Kings	Period of Rule A.D.
1.	Sukapha	1228-1268
2.	Sukhangpha	1293-1332
3.	Susenpha	1439-1488
4.	Sukhampha or Khora Raja	1552-1603
5.	Sutanpha or Siva Singha	1714-1744
6.	Purandar Singha	1833-1838

³⁴ Barua, Golap Chandra. *Ahom-Buranji, from the Earliest Time to the End of Ahom Rule: With Parallel English Translation*. Spectrum Publications, 1985. 66,76.

Map of Eastern Bengal and Assam with Bhutan 1907-1909



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

3.1.3 The borderlands Chittagong

Chittagong, is one of the largest regions of Bangladesh and to this day there is a district with the same name and also a town which is the second largest after the capital Dhaka. In

a modern political narrative and historical narrative fixed on cartography, Chittagong has got the status of a fixed territory with a number of people belonging to different ethnic groups following a non-fixed or itinerant way of life known as swidden cultivation and in the local parlance known as jhum. Collectively 14 different indigenous people of Chittagong are known as the Jumma people or the people who practice jhum cultivation as opposed to the settled agricultural practices of the village societies of Bengal³⁵. This marker of difference existed in the earlier period but with two different criteria-the absence of a cartographic fixity of Chittagong with fluctuating borders and secondly the movement of peoples to and from Chittagong. It is these two characteristics that bestows on Chittagong the status of a borderland and more particularly the region of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This region assumes the nature of a borderland owing to the conditioning, peopling and make-up of the polities on account of the interference from beyond the borders to a very large extent.

Most of the tribal people of Chittagong belong to the Chakma ethnic group and they comprise nearly a half of the tribal population. As mentioned in the earlier chapter, the concept of tribe in south Asia is problematic as it was a purely European characterisation and the term tribe was not fixed unlike in Europe. The Chakma population originally came from Burma and the region of Arakan, but the similarity with the other hill people of Chittagong Hill Tracts ends here for the simple reason that the cultural make-up of the Chakma is far different from that of the other group. During their stay in Arakan, the Chakma were also part of the Burmese polity and wielded significant influence in the courts

³⁵ Van Schendel, Willem. "The Invention of the 'Jummas': State Formation and Ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh." *Modern Asian Studies* 26, no. 1 (1992): 95–99.

of the Burmese kings and thus had an acculturation with the administrative practices³⁶. Before the 13th century, the Kingdom of Pegu in Burma also had close relations with India and Arakan was also integrated into this orbit with Bengal on the western end. Before proceeding to the peopling of the Chittagong Hill Tracts by the Chakma, it would be pertinent to point out that the rise and fall of different ethnic groups as clients of the dominant Burman majority in the courts of the Burma Centre on the Irrawaddy plains was a regular phenomenon³⁷. Most of the books written from an India centric viewpoint prefer to engage with the people of Arakan, Burma and this scattered Indian traveller which was the source of the study. Thai narratives on the other hand engage with the western frontiers of Burma and also the northern frontiers particularly the regions of Shan which was the source of silver. The Karen on the Western border of Thailand further, Burma being one of the most important centres of Theravada Buddhism rivalling Sri Lanka or Ceylon in the mediaeval period had very strong canonical authority flowing from the monks patronised by the monks of Burma³⁸. As clients of the Burmese state, groups like the Chakma and the Arakan imbibed aspects of Buddhist culture that gave them a great tradition and this marked the Chakma from the other indigenous groups of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is noteworthy to mention here that among the tribes of India, it is only the Chakma's who had both the script and state with no comparable example³⁹. This achievement of the Chakma

³⁶ Talukdar, S. P. *The Chakmas, Life and Struggle*. Gian Publishing House, 1988. 55-66.

³⁷ Winichakul, Thongchai. *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*. University of Hawaii Press, 1994. 62,67,97,107.

³⁸ Bowerman, Brigadier J. F. "THE FRONTIER AREAS OF BURMA." *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 95, no. 4732 (1946): 46–52.

³⁹ Talukdar, S. P. *The Chakmas, Life and Struggle*. Gian Publishing House, 1988. 3, 106, 111.

is one of the great cultural asset that led them to resettle quickly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts after their expulsion from the region of Arakan. The wars of the Arakan with the Burmese and other ethnic groups like the Chakma led to different political ramifications. By thirteenth century we have evidences of Chakma inscriptions modelled on the scripts of south-east Asia that had an origin from South India and some scholars opine that it was mostly the Tamil influence⁴⁰. After the expulsion from Arakan, the contiguous region of the Chittagong Hill Tracts that are natural borders demarcated by the rivers in the North and the East provided the setting for the Chakma.

Many of the Portuguese travellers who had mapped the region of Bengal primarily with the motive of commerce have talked in length about the region of Chittagong. The Chittagong Hill Tracts or the hills of Chittagong served as one of the main hinterlands for the port of Chittagong which is the largest port in Bengal and also served as the gateway of East Bengal⁴¹. In today's imagination it is not possible to think of the hill people as being active in the littoral sphere but the Chittagong provides an example of the Marma or the Magh people who are divided into two different regions and largely on the orbit of Burmese culture unlike the Chakma also being regularly referred to. They were referred to as pirates as the people of Arakan were referred to and the invasion of Dhaka and the constant piratical raids were all recorded⁴².

⁴⁰ Ibid., 106

⁴¹ Malekandathil, Pius. *The Indian Ocean in the Making of Early Modern India*. Taylor & Francis, 2016. 123-4.

⁴² Dasgupta, Biplab. *European Trade and Colonial Conquest*. Anthem Press, 2005. 266-7.

As a borderland, the impact is on the historical condition and is largely seen on the religious make-up of junctures and that, as also their cultural and linguistic make-up. The Chakma language belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of language and has close affinity to Bengali language which also had impacted Arakan. The original Burmese-based dialect of the Chakmas was discarded and lost and the new language was adopted on account of their movement from the original centre of Arakan to the border region and this is a classic case known as the borderland practice as they straddled the borderlands of languages with new layers of acculturation⁴³. This is also seen in the religious make-up with the character of the Theravada Buddhism of the Chakma showing clear influences of Hinduism in the adoption of deities and practices along with some indigenous practices like offering of pigs.

Other pressure emerged from the Mughals expansion after their supremacy in Bengal which led to certain treaties with the rulers of Chittagong. Pressure also emerged from the raids by the Kuki and this led to increased political interference and treaties forced on the Chakma's. The early modern period also saw renewed European interest in Bengal which was the first seat of the British East India Company and this influence led to the spread to the region of Chittagong. Thus the Chakma showed new insights and were subjected to new forms of administration with the East India Company recognising the nature of the terrain as different from Bengal. Therefore, the Chittagong Hill Tract was administered separately with a slightly different set of rules suited to the topography and practices⁴⁴. A

⁴³ Talukdar, S. P. *The Chakmas, Life and Struggle*. Gian Publishing House, 1988. 111-2.

⁴⁴ Van Schendel, Willem. "The Invention of the 'Jummas': State Formation and Ethnicity in Southeastern Bangladesh." *Modern Asian Studies* 26, no. 1 (1992): 95-128.

decision of break came with the British colonialism whereby the district was again divided and some parts were governed by some parts of Assam.

In the postcolonial period where the fixity of borders has led to a large number of ethnic conflicts which marked the landscape in the borderlands of the eastern Himalayas. Many new histories have been written about the pre-British period asserting the claims of different groups and ethnic communities and regions. These writings of histories fit into the narratives of micro-histories and are largely unconcerned with the larger questions that impacted them and also tend to reveal a presentist bias. One of the characteristic feature of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is that since history has become part of the national discourse, the question of regions assumes significance. In the case of Chittagong Hill Tracts, the tension between the aspirations of the people and the award of the boundary commission bill by Lord Mountbatten to Pakistan making this region as part of a Muslim majority East Pakistan led to considerable tensions⁴⁵. The creation of Bangladesh that was the successor state of East Pakistan also did not end this tension as this region was seen as a breakaway province resisting integration⁴⁶. In reality, it was part of a continuum of the eastern Himalayan borderlands and while the histories of the similar regions bordering the Chittagong Hill Tracts in India like the states of Mizoram and Tripura have been acknowledged and narrated, the history of Chittagong Hill Tracts has not found any takers

⁴⁵ Chatterji, Joya. *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947–1967*. Cambridge University Press, 2007. 4,60.

⁴⁶ Islam, Syed Nazmul. "The Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh: Integrational Crisis between Center and Periphery." *Asian Survey* 21, no. 12 (1981): 1211-22. <https://doi.org>.

except for a few writers⁴⁷. One may summarise this discussion by pointing to the shifting status of the Chakma and other communities inhabiting the Hill Tracts as straddling between different regions and powers beginning from the mediaeval period with shifting fortunes.

3.1.4. The evolution of the borderlands as distinct regions

While the historical revolution of macro regions has been explained in Indian history beginning with the Indo-Gangetic plains and consequent state formation and the subsequent secondary state formation in other regions based on the Gangetic model. Eastern India, particularly regions of Orissa and Bengal figure in the early inscriptions of the Mauryas and a process of secondary state formation is attributed to these regions based on the spread of agriculture and evolution of monarchy⁴⁸.

In the borderlands of the eastern Himalayas, the main forms of production are settled agriculture in the durable village communities that are situated in the river valleys of Brahmaputra and the other plains of Manipur and Tripura. The creation of borderlands is based on two important criteria of differential evolution of the regions marked by agriculture and institution building. Other forms of production are minor and include hunting, gathering and fishing and some element of pastoralism. However the two main forms of production are settled agriculture and slash and burn agriculture. In the early historic period, the megalithic tradition points to a shared culture between most of the

⁴⁷ Maitra, S. R. *Ethnographic Study of the Chakma of Tripura*. Anthropological Survey of India, Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Department of Culture, 2002.

⁴⁸ Romila Thapar. *Early State Formation and Royal Legitimation in Late Ancient Orissa*. In Das M. N. (ed.). *Sidelights on the History of Orissa* (Cuttack: Vidyapuri), 1977. 104-114.

megalithic communities⁴⁹. This differential evolution started with the intensity of agriculture and its spread over the centuries in certain core areas that were well watered with deposits of alluvial soil after the annual flooding. The Brahmaputra River and its tributaries penetrated large parts of Assam creating ideal conditions for agriculture whereby human agency transformed most of the marshland and shrubs to cultivable land including pastoral land. This was undertaken under the patronage of dynasties like the Mech and the Varman dynasty and it later received a great boost under the Ahoms⁵⁰. The Ahoms united large parts of the area not only politically but also through administrative apparatus, which is based on durable agriculture⁵¹. Similar such exercises were also undertaken by the Meitei Kingdom of Manipur⁵² and the kings of Tripura⁵³ and the Cooch Behar Kings. We see a wide spread of kingdoms and their political and administrative institutions which led to the evolution of literary and literate languages which was the part of the governing system through the issue of inscriptions and religious literature. All these forms were dependent on the employment of non-food producing groups who had to be supported by the resources of the state and the key to this was the generation of surplus. Agriculture was the main form of surplus along with trade. In sharp contrast, in the hill regions the lack of water and plain land led to agriculture of slash and burn variety that also offered subsistence and therefore did not generate any surplus. The need for surplus was

⁴⁹ Devi, P. Binodini. *Megalithic Culture of Manipur*. India Agam Kala Prakasham, 2011.

⁵⁰ Gogoi, Jahnabi. *Agrarian System of Medieval Assam*. Concept Publishing Company, 2002. 18, 28.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 47, 48, 119.

⁵² Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur - Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*. Taylor & Francis, 2005. 10.

⁵³ Long, James, and Sampanna Chaudhuri. *Rajmala: Or, An Analysis of the Chronicles of the Kings of Tripura*. Firma KLM, 1978. 15-17.

translated into frequent raids and we have examples of raiding by groups such as the Kukis and the Apatani, Shendus and many similar groups⁵⁴. In the case of Inner Asia, this has been translated as the substitution greed for need and the nomadic societies were understood as plunderers as they did not have surplus and this was because they were living in this terrain explains the different feature of a borderland. This debate was summarised by Nicola Di Cosmo and brought the views of the two opposing groups of anthropologists whom he called as the supporters of greed and need respectively⁵⁵. He explains that the people who raided due to lack of resources were known as needy and for luxury goods were known as greedy. It must thus be summarised by saying that a combination of topography and human agency constituted to create certain regions that became borderlands.

When one approaches Tripura historically, one would question whether the strict idea of borderland is a reality or needs to be modified with relation to the status of Tripura over a period of time. Like the many early historic cultures whose remnants have been found in the eastern Himalayas, the regions of Tripura also have certain remnants but no continuity to the early historic period like the region of Assam. Tripura comes into history in the 13th century largely due to the noting and references of the neighbouring societies that had exercised an important influence both geographically and historically in the evolution of

⁵⁴ Luthra, P. N. "North-East Frontier Agency Tribes: Impact of Ahom and British Policy." *Economic and Political Weekly* 6, no. 23 (1971): 1144.

⁵⁵ Cosmo, Nicola Di. *Ancient China and Its Enemies: The Rise of Nomadic Power in East Asian History*. Cambridge University Press, 2004. 13-14.

the Kingdom of Tripura⁵⁶. The Arakan region of Burma in the East and the borderlands of Bengal, particularly those from the Sundarbans in the West and Brahmaputra in the North and the Kingdom of Manipur in the north-east were some of the most important neighbours of the Kingdom of Tripura⁵⁷. One of the points asked by many historians and since there is a large-scale absence of Burmese influence in Tripura as compared to Manipur and here one may digress by pointing out to the regional particularity of Arakan, though a province of Burma and historically tied to Burma exhibited large-scale discontinuities. Since Bengal already had an articulate set of rulers and the influence of many of these kingdoms like the Kings of the three regions of Bengal were pre-eminent and served as the model in eastern India. Arakan also had large-scale influences from Bengal and was thus integrated into many aspects of economy and political and cultural forms of Bengal⁵⁸. Thus Arakan, though in Burma exhibits a sort of the similarity from Burma and was thus unable or an improbable candidate to transfer Burmese culture and influence to Tripura.

The two regions of the hill and the plains of Tripura with a different nomenclature is over the period of time coming to light in the 13th century primarily because there emerges a strong kingdom and therefore were taken seriously by the neighbours. It is at this particular time in addition to cultural influences from Bengal particularly religious influences in the form of Shiva worship became popular creating a syncretism indigenous forms of worship with Puranic Hinduism. The influence of culture also spread onto kingship and the royalty

⁵⁶ Barua, Golap Chandra. *Ahom-Buranji, from the Earliest Time to the End of Ahom Rule: With Parallel English Translation*. Spectrum Publications, 1985. Page missing

⁵⁷ Bhaumik, Subir. *Insurgent Crossfire: North-East India*. Lancer Publishers, 1996. 56.

⁵⁸ Mukherjee, Rila. *Pelagic Passageways: The Northern Bay of Bengal Before Colonialism*. Primus Books, 2011. 365.

was now coroneted and a new theory of kingship was elaborated that took into account many paraphernalia of the courts of Bengal including the literary practices⁵⁹.

One of the outcomes of this was the composition of the famous text known as the Raj Mala or the garland of the Kings and is the Tripura Rajmala. It gives list of 117 Kings including some mythical King's to claim historicity and a greater antiquity where myth and history are integrated keeping in tune with the practices of the Indian ideas of kingship⁶⁰. Thus, the Kings of Tripura were set to emerge from the lunar race as all Kings of India came from either from solar or the lunar race. By the 14th century, the invasions of the Turks begin in East Bengal right after the fall of Bengal to the Turkish invaders in the 13th century. It is at this particular period of Turkish expansion under Regal Khan that Tripura finds repeated mention⁶¹. With the rise of the Mughals in the 17th century, Tripura is again repeatedly drawn into conflicts and into the period of difference. By 18th century, the combine onslaughts lead to loss of territory and the British identify two regions as the hills and the plains of Tripura. In the last days of the Mughals, the plains Tripura was lost never to be gained back and remained as an integral part with large-scale Muslim influx⁶². Here, Tripura continued to exist and maintain its autonomy and yet Manipur is another classic instance of a region not becoming part of a Zomia though in the hills. On the contrary hill Tripura adopts a script and literacy and becomes part of a new state contrary to the

⁵⁹ Long, James, and Sampanna Chaudhuri. *Rajmala: Or, An Analysis of the Chronicles of the Kings of Tripura*. Firma KLM, 1978. 4, 5.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Mibang, Tamo. *Tribal Studies - Emerging Frontiers of Knowledge*. Mittal Publications, 2007. 86.

⁶² Long, James, and Sampanna Chaudhuri. *Rajmala: Or, An Analysis of the Chronicles of the Kings of Tripura*. Firma KLM, 1978. 3, 16, 19.

postulations of Zomia. This new region of Tripura which is articulated in the Rajmala emerges as one of the classic borderlands in the southern part of the eastern Himalayas⁶³.

3.1.6 Manipur and its borderlands- the Meitei state and Burma and the creation of borderland communities

The Kingdom of Manipur is one of the most important political and the geographical landmarks in the history of Indian civilisation, located in the eastern most extremities of the eastern Himalayas. Manipur or the land of the jewels is a comparatively recent nomenclature and the earlier name was Kangleipak. After the emergence of a state and a great tradition⁶⁴, the name change to Manipur along with many other structural changes that were part of the creation of a new socio-economic and political system. In Manipur, the geographical divide also mirrors the cultural divide and is predominantly reflected in the hill and the Valley division. This division is primarily based on two forms of production that acclimatised and conditioned the evolution of two different forms of production that led to differential surplus which was important for state building. Surrounded by hill ranges on all sides, the Imphal valley shows a clear difference in topography from the surrounding jungles and mountain ranges. Most of the villages are settled in the valley by agriculturists depending on rice cultivation and it is common knowledge that rice yields are higher and

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilization*. Mittal Publications, 1988. 89.

can support large populations that can be diverted to non-food producing activities. It was this combination of agriculture and craft production that led to the emergence of the Meitei ethnic group⁶⁵. It has taken many centuries for the rise of Manipur to become a settled agrarian society from the early beginnings.

With regard to Manipur the historian is lucky as there exists a record of history from the very earliest period and the chronicles record an unbroken history beginning from 33 A.D. and is only recently been translated into English. The chronicles of Manipur are known as the Cheitharon Kumpapa and are primarily concerned with the regnal years and the associated events of each reign⁶⁶.

The early megalithic cultures of the Imphal Valley show a clear affiliation with the neighbouring megalithic cultures of the hill people and in today's postcolonial discourse of difference that has come through after the colonial and politicised narratives the debate seems to be deep but for the archaeologists they seem to be continuous megalithic cultures⁶⁷. A decisive impact was the introduction of large-scale agriculture and in this process the draining of the marshes and the wet rice cultivation lead to increase in surplus and which is attributed to the immigrants from Silchar and Cachar with the former not being verified. The rise of this cultivation along with the Muslim immigrants from Cachar brought more areas under the plough and many of the settlements sprang up during this period. While most historians have concentrated on the later period of the 17th century this

⁶⁵ Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilization*. Mittal Publications, 1988. 56.

⁶⁶ Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur - Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*. Taylor & Francis, 2005. 1-3.

⁶⁷ Devi, P. Binodini. *Megalithic Culture of Manipur*. India Agam Kala Prakasham, 2011.

period of the 15th century is important⁶⁸. It is argued that Khagemba who brought about rapid changes like the formation of political unity and introduction of Vaishnavite Hinduism is credited with major achievements. The earlier ruler Khagemba during the 17th century was one of the important king who not only brought large-scale changes in agriculture and methods but also settled many new parts of the Valley into durable agrarian communities and also new variety of paddy known as Taothabi⁶⁹. The other aboriginal groups of the Valley like the Chakpa and the Loi were also integrated into the fold of the Meitei⁷⁰. During the rule of Khagemba and its successors and also some of its predecessors, there were constant wars with the kings of Burma and the most coveted positions were the Valley of Ava in Burma or the Valley of Manipur in India⁷¹. Both of these were significant resource base not only in terms of agricultural productivity but also in terms of craft production, predominantly brick production and also metal, wood and livestock. The range of craft production also varied to include salt production that was very scarce in the eastern Himalayas and Manipur is only example where salt was produced indigenously otherwise all salt was imported from Tibet⁷².

The base built in the 15th century Manipur by the King Khagemba, particularly the economic base and the superstructure in the form of military and administrative practices was what provided a convenient platform for the rise of Khagemba or Garib Nawaz as he

⁶⁸ Irene, Salam. *The Muslims of Manipur*. Gyan Publishing House, 2010. 2-4, 40.

⁶⁹ Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*. National Publishing House, 1991. 219.

⁷⁰ Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilization*. Mittal Publications, 1988. 14, 419.

⁷¹ Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur - Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*. Taylor & Francis, 2005. 3, 163.

⁷² Hodson, Thomas Callan. *The Meithei*. D. Nutt, 1908. 35

was known⁷³. The rise of the Ningthouja clan in 17th century as the ruling clan also unified large parts of Manipur and due to the influence of Chaitanya from Bengal and his followers, Hinduism was introduced into Manipur and found patronage in the royal court⁷⁴. Unlike many world religions, where the problem of balancing the local with the proclaimed nature of the religion in its core values need to be balanced and here the problem was easily summoned. In the case of Hinduism and the local forms of worship and other sacred and ritual practices were integrated along with the sacred geography by a process of localisation⁷⁵. This process of localisation as explained by David Schulman talks about the establishment of connection between local historical events of importance and larger histories of the apex and the Puranas and how myths enables the connection of both these⁷⁶. The rise of Manipur in the 17th century again brought about a fresh set of wars with the King of Burma⁷⁷. Most of these wars were inconclusive and we also find the economy of Manipur becoming more diversified with not only agriculture and craft production but increase in trade also. Trade was in the form of fairs and festivals and also through permanent market. Khagemba established nine markets in 1614, Sana keithel, Kha Keithel,

⁷³ Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilization*. Mittal Publications, 1988. 307.

⁷⁴ Lisam, Khomdan Singh. *Encyclopaedia Of Manipur (3 Vol.)*. Gyan Publishing House, 2011. 3.

⁷⁵ Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilization*. Mittal Publications, 1988. Xxxviii.

⁷⁶ Shulman, David Dean. *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Saiva Tradition*. Princeton University Press, 2014. 47.

⁷⁷ Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur - Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*. Taylor & Francis, 2005. 148.

Moirang Keithel, Khuman Keithel, Pheibung Keithel, Chairen Keithel, Namphaon Keithel, Konglang Keithel, Andro Keithel⁷⁸. The idea of a permanent marketplace is very important because it shows the availability of purchasing power and the surplus.

By the 18th century a significant change takes place in the historiography of Assam and Bengal, the neighbours of Manipur where we have more and more references to Manipur from the total oblivion to which it was consigned in the early mediaeval period⁷⁹. The increase in number of references also shows the engagements with Manipur both in the realm of politics, religion and trade. Manipur is also a characteristic case of a region which is near the hills but becomes the non-state where in even the European travellers started writing about the Manipur and the multi-ethnic character of the valley⁸⁰. This is brought about along with the diverse forms of production and it is this material advancement and political formation in the regional particularity of being surrounded by mountains that has gain the status of Manipur⁸¹.

In the long history of Manipur, many ethnic groups have settled and though history has been written using materials that focus on the Meitei, the presence of other groups shows the religious, cultural, military and above all the economic connections with the neighbouring societies. These economic connections with the neighbouring societies are not minimal as their impact is seen not only on Manipur but also some of the client states

⁷⁸ Kabui, Gangmumei. *History of Manipur: Pre-Colonial Period*. National Publishing House, 1991. 220.

⁷⁹ Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur - Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*. Taylor & Francis, 2005. 12.

⁸⁰ Hodson, Thomas Callan. *The Meitheids*. D. Nutt, 1908. 11, 136.

⁸¹ Sanajaoba, Naorem. *Manipur, Past and Present: The Heritage and Ordeals of a Civilization*. Mittal Publications, 1988. xxxvii.

in the hills in a large way. One of the challenges in the inward looking history is to bring about the large-scale changes in the world and its interconnections with Manipur and the north-east of India in general. With the rise of British paramountcy, the structure of Bengal and Assam in terms of administration and land revenue was changed and the British strategic interests also brought inroads into the hills. Though Manipur was impacted after the Yandaboo Treaty of 1826 that have established British paramountcy in Assam and the extension of British influence in Manipur, many historians see this as the beginnings of European influence⁸². In terms of political influence, one may be clear but the earlier centuries beginning from the 17th century witnessed large-scale changes in India due to the introduction of commercial crops after the Columbian exchange and the adoption, appropriation and accommodation of these new forms of material culture itself signified a significant break and also continuity. While horses had come to Manipur from outside and most particularly Yunnan seems to be the probable candidate via Burma, silver flowed from Shan region of Burma and frequent political interactions also point to this⁸³. Similarly, tobacco came to India in the 17th century and so rapidly spread in the eastern borderlands of Himalayas particularly in Manipur among the hill tribes that tobacco became an integral part of the lifestyle and this is singularly due to the Columbian exchange⁸⁴. Thus the making of the borderland of Manipur shows that there were both push and pull factor and these are

⁸² Roy, Jyotirmoy. *History of Manipur*. Eastlight Book House, 1973. 23.

⁸³ Parratt, Saroj N. Arambam. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur - Cheitharon Kumpapa: Original Text, Translation and Notes Vol. 1. 33-1763 CE*. Taylor & Francis, 2005. 78, 96.

⁸⁴ Irene, Salam. *The Muslims of Manipur*. Gyan Publishing House, 2010. 99.

conditioned largely due to politics and in terms of interaction with the other neighbouring regions Burma, Bengal and Assam emerges an important regions.

3.1.7 Tawang and the borderlands of Bhutan

Tawang is of few regions which are not only a physical and cultural borderland but also a borderland which shares commonalities with other borderlands of the Himalayas separated vastly in space⁸⁵. Though Tawang is situated in the eastern most region of the eastern Himalayas amidst medium mediation and subtropical to alpine weather⁸⁶, it shares much in common with the western Himalayan borderlands and parts of the central Himalayan borderlands of Sikkim. The reason being is that Tawang is part of the Tibetan culture area⁸⁷. If the map of India is viewed from Tibet, then the south-eastern border would be Tawang and the south-western border would be Ladakh⁸⁸. It was this problem of borderland that brought into historical focus in the 17th century. With the 17th century BC we see the rise of certain political developments in Tibet had brought many question in history. Situated on the borders of Bhutan, Tawang forms a contiguous region, the semi-independent region ruled by Monpa chiefs with most of the population drawn from the Monpa tribes and following Tibetan Buddhism⁸⁹. In 1642 AD Tibet was unified with the accession of the

⁸⁵ Coleman, Graham. *A Handbook Of Tibetan Culture: A Guide to Tibetan Centres and Resources Throughout the World*. Random House, 2016. 30.

⁸⁶ NYMAN, LARS-ERIK. "TAWANG—A CASE STUDY OF BRITISH FRONTIER POLICY IN THE HIMALAYAS." *Journal of Asian History* 10, no. 2 (1976): 151–53.

⁸⁷ Rgyal-Sras-Sprul-Sku, Ldan-ma. *History of Tawang Monastery*. Chhak Jampa Gyatso, 1991. 125.

⁸⁸ Mullin, Glenn H. *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation*. Clear Light Publishers, 2008. 240-1.

⁸⁹ Nanda, Neeru. *Tawang, The Land of Mon*. Vikas Pub. House, 1982. 85.

fifth Dalai Lama and the unification of the territories of Tibet happened after a very long historical period and this is why the fifth Dalai Lama has been also called as the great fifth. By 1644, the Manchu Empire was inaugurated in China. And this started a new period and it was during the rule of the Manchus that China had gained unification of the territory and this exercise began in earnest from the early period of the Manchu rule. In 1653 the fifth Dalai Lama was invited to Beijing and he went there after he had refused two earlier invitations. In 1685, the fifth Dalai Lama passed away and this news was kept as a secret by the Regent or Desi⁹⁰.

When the Manchus started exerting pressure on Tibet, they demanded to see the fifth Dalai Lama but he passed away and the answer given was that he was in secret meditation. Secretly, the search for the sixth Dalai Lama had begun and the message from the famous lake of Lhamo Latso, the patron deity Phalden Lhamo indicated the letter M from the lake. Based on this result the monks understood this as any region beginning with the letter M and there were only two candidates for this Maryul or Monyul meaning either Ladakh or Tawang as the traditional name suggested⁹¹. It was then based on further delineation and after further search they settled for Tawang. After a series of divinations and enquiries they finally zeroed in a boy and he was secretly taken and tutored without any illegal or fanfare that characterised the abbatial succession. The boy was brought to Lhasa from another monastery from where he was trained and then in 1697 it was announced that the fifth Dalai Lama had passed away and his reincarnation was identified in the body of the boy from

⁹⁰ Mullin, Glenn H. *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation*. Clear Light Publishers, 2008. 243.

⁹¹ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 181-3, 187.

Tawang⁹². The boy preferred archery and composing love poems and visiting the chang or beer houses of Lhasa rather than taking part in the religious lives. He also did not shave his hair and grew long hair much to the discharging of many people. As a result of this the conservative people were annoyed and there was dissension. Even after great persuasion he refrained from taking the vows of Monk⁹³. In large number of poems that he is written there are frequent references to Tawang which is his native place. It is during this critical juncture that Tawang comes to the notice of the larger world of Tibet and China. One of the poems talks about birds, the crane from Kongpo in Tibet and Peacock from India and he says that crane from Kongpo and peacocks from India both meet in Lhasa⁹⁴. This is a reference to the different regions of the Tibetan culture area that finally meet in Lhasa the seat of the spiritual and temporal leaders. Though the sixth Dalai Lama hail from Tawang, he did not incorporate, nor did his father from the Court of Lhasa incorporate or seek to incorporate Tawang into Tibet. This was a non-question for them as many of the reincarnate lama's could be born in any part of the Tibetan culture area. The fourth Dalai Lama held from Mongolia and was the throne holder of the post of the Dalai Lama but never did incorporate Mongolia and Tibet into one territory⁹⁵. This is also tied up with the Inner Asia nature of kinship where the institution of the Dalai Lama was a harmonious blend of religion and politics. We may summarise this discussion by talking about the emergence of Tawang from the status of a borderland to status of relative importance in

⁹² Mullin, Glenn H. *The Fourteen Dalai Lamas: A Sacred Legacy of Reincarnation*. Clear Light Publishers, 2008. 254-5.

⁹³ Ibid., 254.

⁹⁴ Aris. *Hidden Treasures & Secret Lives*. Routledge, 2012. 159.

⁹⁵ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 140-2.

the 18th century. Thus, Tawang becomes drawn into Inner Asia and Chinese politics only because of the Tibetan connection and now has become part of the narrative of the border question of India and China. This is also because of the 18th-century cartographic survey undertaken by the Ching Empire⁹⁶.

3.1.8 Rise of the Koch kingdom and the creation of borderland and the foot hills of Himalayas

In the eastern Himalayan region, the Tibetan culture area comprising of Sikkim, Tibet and Bhutan ends abruptly at the gateways or the doors. The dooars⁹⁷ are so called because they are like the Gateway to India and it signifies shift in landscape and territory. On the north of the dooars are the Himalayan Mountains and to the south lies the plains of Bengal and this ancient region was known as Pundravardhana and had a special character in terms of physiographic formation⁹⁸. Power vacuum collapsed after the fall of the famous Pala dynasty of Bengal that included territories in Bihar and Assam. It is at this time that the borderlands of Assam, the region of Goalpara there arose a set of chieftains called the Koch after defeating the other chieftains who were known as the Bhuyans⁹⁹. The Koch are noticed in history from the 15th century and there is a long lineage of rulers that continues with all the problems of political compulsion brought about from the borders of Bengal

⁹⁶ Sebes, Joseph S. "China's Jesuit Century." *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 2, no. 1 (1978): 170–1.

⁹⁷ Ray, Subhajyoti. *Transformations on the Bengal Frontier: Jalpaiguri 1765-1948*. Routledge, 2013. 5.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁹⁹ Nath, D. *History of the Koch Kingdom, C. 1515-1615*. Mittal Publications, 1989. 112.

now under the Mughals control and Assam under the Ahom control¹⁰⁰. The emergence of this dynasty was rooted in a topography that was contiguous and also in a state of power vacuum with the Himalayas in the North and other natural boundary formations in the South. The collapse of the major ruling dynasty of the Pala led to the rise of the first Koch King known as Vishwa Singha and his illustrious rule was continued. With the important historical landmark that led to its breakdown, divided the kingdom into two, one-based in Assam called the Koch Hajo and the other based in Bengal known as Cooch Bihar¹⁰¹. It is this latter kingdom that survives on account of their tactical alliances with the Mughals and later with the British while the former was overtaken by the Ahom kingdom and became a part of it¹⁰².

The Paucity of literature on the Kamata kingdom is also largely because of the fact that in postcolonial India many kingdoms have become part of some linguistic states. The use of history has led to certain demand for linguistic states basing on the historical and dynastic claims¹⁰³. The Koch has fallen a prey to this type of history writing and therefore are not patronised officially. Thus, we have few writings on the Koch dynasty which are of scholarly nature though there are many popular works. Here lies the problem of popular works that try to valorise the kingdom at the cost of historical scholarship guided by political necessity¹⁰⁴. This again reminds us of the need to go back to the sources and reassess the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Sengupta, Nitish K. *Land of Two Rivers: A History of Bengal from the Mahabharata to Mujib*. Penguin Books India, 2011. 127.

¹⁰² Nath, D. *History of the Koch Kingdom, C. 1515-1615*. Mittal Publications, 1989. 50.

¹⁰³ Baruah, Sanjib, Gulliver's Troubles: State and Militants in North-East India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 41 (2002). 4178-82.

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.kamatapur.com/history/>.

place of the Koch in history. As a political entity, the kingdom of Cooch Bihar merged into the Indian union and thus had a very long lineage from the 15th to the 20th centuries and the negotiation of this long lineage is one of the important points that has led to the survival of this kingdom and its expansion. The answer is to be found in the agrarian structure and the coinage system that displays prosperity on account of the success in agriculture and the ability to mobilise taxes that provided for the upkeep of soldiers in the Administration. Secondly the ability to negotiate treaties for which certain conditions are to be met also shows that the idea of stability from outside firstly by the Mughals and later by the British East India Company and the British Crown led to the guarantee of sustenance of the Koch kingdom. This guarantee of success led the Koch to reproduce many institutions and evidence for this is available in the form of inscriptions¹⁰⁵. The table below 3.3 gives a list of some of the important rulers of the Koch kingdom and also some landmark events in their history¹⁰⁶. One may conclude by saying that the physiographic region and the consequent power vacuum led to the neglect of growth of political institutions and its implantation from outside. An indigenous response to this was the rise of the Koch and it spread over parts of North Bengal and Bihar. Finally the division of the Koch into two regions shows the boundary between Bengal and Assam.

Table 3.3

Sl. No	List of the Rulers of Koch Dyansty	Date of Reign A.D.
1.	Biswa Singha (Undivided Koch)	1515-1540

¹⁰⁵ Nath, D. *History of the Koch Kingdom, C. 1515-1615*. Mittal Publications, 1989. 214-5.

¹⁰⁶ Baruah, Swarna Lata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. Appendix C.

2.	Naranarayan (Undivided Koch)	1540-1581
3.	Naranarayan (Koch Behar)	1581-1584
4.	Lakshminarayan (Koch Behar)	1584-1622
5.	Raghudev (Koch Hajo Kamrup)	1581-1603
6.	Parikshit (Koch Hajo Kamrup)	1603-1613

3.2.0 The evolution of borderland regions

The spread of civilisation in the Gangetic valley and the subsequent urbanisation during the six century BC is well theorised and is known as the second urbanisation referring to the Indus Valley civilisation as the first urbanisation in Indian history. In a later period, beginning with the post-Gupta period which saw the emergence of regions in Indian history and this period is theorized as-early Medieval India. The markers and process of this transformation from the ancient to the early historic phase to the early mediaeval is marked by the structural transformation that saw the emergence of the regions with the unique personality which was articulated through the spread of vernacular languages. Going to the structural transformation, we see that the spread of irrigation formed the technological aspect and the peasantisation of tribe into castes was the social component and the religious core relate was the appropriation of folk deities into the Puranic Hinduism. These three interrelated factors constitute the processes that explain the emergence of regions much like agriculture and the resultant. The agrarian expansion explained the spread of agriculture to eastern India whereby pastoralism was also displaced. During the first period of state formation in north India, agriculture was a resource base and the Prakrit and later Sanskrit languages will be preferred medium of inscription starting from the Mauryan

period. With the emergence of regions, Sanskrit lost its pre-eminent status and most of the inscriptions employed Sanskrit primarily for the invocatory part only and not for the operational part which was in the regional languages. Patronage was not only for instrumental processes like inscriptions but also for other literary and aesthetic pursuits and thus the regional lords patronise the vernacular languages. In the case of the borderlands, though the emergence of these regions can be chronologically dated, there is no such overarching theory that serves to explain the rise of these regions.

Agriculture no doubt formed a primary resource base but this does not explain only the fertile agrarian regions. Therefore agrarian expansion and the subsequent state formation in the Valley regions of the Eastern Himalayas explains the rise for a durable resource base and resultant surplus. The question therefore now is, can the emergence of different kingdoms in the Eastern Himalayas be ascribed to the age of expansion alone and the dependence of the hill regions explained as part of this process is a question that has not been fully theorised. We therefore do not have any clear-cut model that fully explains the emergence of borderland regions.

Chapter- 4

Borderlands of Western Himalayas

4.1.0 Approaching the Western Himalayas

Approaching the Western Himalayas, one immediately gets the feeling of headache due to altitude sickness and the difference between the plains of India and the Highlands of Tibet is clearly felt¹. Therefore, some of the popular writers had called the Western Himalayas as the Lamaist Himalayas to refer to the region that is Tibetan in topography and seen as an extension of the Tibetan plateau and Tibetan Buddhist culture². Indeed, the Western Himalayas were largely seen as part of the Tibetan culture area in the Indian imagination and not considered to be the core regions³. The Turkish invasion of northern India in 1206 AD and the consequent expansion into Bengal and Bihar led to the destruction of the great monasteries of Nalanda⁴. A century later, after most of the monks had fled to Nepal and Tibet, Buddhism failed to exist in India and the chief abbots announced the end of Buddhism in India⁵. In the popular imagination, they did not take into account the

¹ *The Himalayan Club Newsletter*. Himalayan Club, 1985. 82.

² Hedin, S. *Trans-Himalayas: Discoveries and Adventures in Tibet*. Asian Educational Services, 1999. 329, see also Norbu, Dawa. *China's Tibet Policy*. Routledge, 2012. 151 and A.C., SINHA. "Recent Trends in the Himalayan Studies : An Appraisal of the Significant Publications in 1975-76." *Indian Anthropologist* 6, no. 2 (1976): 46–60.

³ Norbu, Dawa. *China's Tibet Policy*. Routledge, 2012. 151.

⁴ (Jo-nang-pa). Tāranātha. *Taranatha's History of Buddhism in India*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1990. 317-318.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 319,

Himalayan regions where Buddhism had survived⁶. The point of stress here is that during this period till the 15th century A.D., many parts of the Western Himalayas had not entered into the Indian imaginary and were identified as part of western Tibet.

One of the striking features of the Western Himalayas that had led the earlier writers to view towards geographical determinism is the fact that the topography of the Western Himalayas with the exception of Kumaon and Garhwal is largely similar. One encounters the similarity in the form of a treeless and dry landscape predominantly with mountains with little or no perspiration and some snowfall⁷. It is only in the regions of Kumaon and Garhwal that one finds forests and valleys that are cultivated. In this vast treeless settings, the topography is punctuated only by a few valleys that are fit by the rivers. Ladakh, Lahul, Spiti and Kinnaur reveal these types of landscapes⁸. Subsistence agriculture and long-distance trade along with nomadic pastoralism are the main sources of production here. This is also a zone of geological fault line where the Eurasian landmass collided with the Indian plate known as the Gondwanaland some 13 to 15,000,000 years ago during the Miocene epoch and the effects are felt even during the later Holocene⁹. In terms of latitude, this region should have exhibited a tropical or alpine type of vegetation but on the contrary exhibits a vegetation that is more montane and in some cases tundra. This is one of the

⁶ Sharma, Janhwi. "Buddhist Markings in the Western Himalayas." *India International Centre Quarterly* 27/28 (2001): 70–72.

⁷ Ahmad, Afroz. "Environmental Impact Assessment in the Himalayas: An Ecosystem Approach." *Ambio* 22, no. 1 (1993): 4–9.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Smith, Warren W. *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*. Westview Press, 1996. xix-xx.

exceptions throughout the world and the important marker of this exceptionalism as determined by altitude¹⁰.

Altitude is therefore, the prime variable in the creation of this western Himalayan eco-zone. To explain this, one may contrast the heavily wooded and forested eastern Himalayas that are dominantly tropical with the dry and treeless landscape of the Western Himalayas¹¹. As India is predominantly tropical influenced by the monsoonal patterns and Tibet by the effect of altitude, the eastern Himalayas receive copious amounts of rainfall from both the south-west monsoon and also the retreating north-east monsoon¹². In contrast, the monsoon clouds laden with moisture from the oceans on account of the current are sucked towards the Himalayas on account of the extreme high pressure hot wind formations. The plateau therefore, has the effect of a suction pump and within the Tibetan plateau, there is a high pressure heat system and the low-pressure cold wind system that stretches as far as the Siberian low-pressure¹³. If it were not for the Himalayas, this region would be heavily forested. In fact, the entire Tibetan plateau was underwater under the Tethys Sea during the Miocene period and occasionally one comes across certain remnants of this in the streams and rivers where the washed out sediments reveal fossilised elements¹⁴. What is to be emphasised is that over a period more appropriately, the geological time and not

¹⁰ Ibid., xxii.

¹¹ Ahmad, Afroz. "Environmental Impact Assessment in the Himalayas: An Ecosystem Approach." *Ambio* 22, no. 1 (1993): 4, 7.

¹² Singh, R. L. *India: A Regional Geography*. National Geographical Society of India, 1971. 312-3.

¹³ Smith, Warren W. *Tibetan Nation: A History of Tibetan Nationalism and Sino-Tibetan Relations*. Westview Press, 1996. Xxii.

¹⁴ Nábělek, John, GyörgyHetényi, JérômeVergne, Soma Sapkota, BasantKafle, Mei Jiang, Heping Su, John Chen, Bor-Shouh Huang, and Hi-CLIMB Team. "Underplating in the Himalaya-Tibet Collision Zone Revealed by the Hi-CLIMB Experiment." *Science* 325, no. 5946 (2009): 1371–74.

historical time the gradual uplift of the Tibetan plateau led to the prevalence of the monsoon influence India and the later evolution of the eco-zones that facilitated the settlement patterns flowed from these. Thus, while altitude influenced the Tibetan plateau, monsoon influence India and large parts of India are based on agriculture and the personality of India is agrarian. In contrast, the monsoon does not reach beyond the Himalayas and only few clouds manages to slip over and give less rainfall to the regions of Ladakh and the Western Himalayas¹⁵. As the result of this the fertile agrarian plains are contrasted with the Pastoral cold deserts of the Western Himalayas which are also Highlands. It is only in the areas on the banks of the rivers like the mighty Indus that one finds good possibility for agriculture and we have the agrarian settlements producing barley and more recently maize¹⁶.

The two forms of production, agriculture in the river valleys and pastoralism in the other regions are the major forms associated with the Western Himalayas and had sustained the societies over the millennia. In addition, we have the rise of trade and the connection with Inner Asia including the regions of the Turkic borderlands of modern day Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tibet and China and also extending as far as Russia to the north through these regions¹⁷. The southernmost destination across Punjab and Delhi were from where many commodities originated¹⁸. At the other end of the spectrum Punjab connected to the sea and the ocean bond trade is passed through this area. Trade was itinerant in the early centuries and at peak by the 16th century when the caravan

¹⁵ Singh, R. L. *India: A Regional Geography*. National Geographical Society of India, 1971. 360.

¹⁶ Bora, Nirmala. *Ladakh: Society and Economy*. Anamika Pub & Distributors, 2004. 22.

¹⁷ Tuttle, Gray, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. *The Tibetan History Reader*. Columbia University Press, 2013. 457-9.

¹⁸ Rizvi, Janet. *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*. Oxford University Press, 1996. 103-4.

trade revived and got a second lease of life after the collapse of the silk Route trade¹⁹. The trade from the Western Himalayas again revived in 18th-century primarily owing to the European demand for wool²⁰. We may summarise this discussion by emphasising that altitude was the main factor that led to the emergence of this regional particularity which fostered two main forms of production and trade later.

4.1.1 Ladakh and Zaskar

The historian is more comfortable in Western Himalayas in Ladakh where there is an abundance of sources but these had been only partially utilised and thus when one reconstructs the history of Ladakh there are only a few landmark works. Primary sources are not fully exploited though they are abundant in material to reconstruct the political history of Ladakh from the early period²¹. Before the discussion of Ladakh a few preliminaries will be made to place the region in proper perspective. The term Ladakh in its original rendering means a high land and is self-explanatory in its various dimensions that the name of this region derived from its status as the high-altitude region²². Many authors also talk about Ladakh and western Tibet as it is a contiguous regions and this clubbing of both the regions is in fact one of the contributions of the European travellers

¹⁹ Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 60.

²⁰ Hiner, Susan. "Lust for 'Luxe': 'Cashmere Fever' in Nineteenth-Century France." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (2005): 77-9.

²¹ Petech, Luciano. *A Study on the Chronicles of Ladakh (Indian Tibet)*. Calcutta Oriental Press, 1939. 87.

²²"Ladakh." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. *Encyclopædia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite*. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011.

who visited western Tibet through Ladakh following the age-old trail²³. Secondly, Ladakh is also referred to almost frequently as little Tibet keeping the Buddhist nature of societies of Ladakh and its language and culture as a Tibetan derivative²⁴. A naive understanding could validate this assertion but on most certain grounds one may raise certain objections. The first objection being that by using this approach one tends to view Ladakh from Tibetan perspective thereby making Ladakh an extension of the Tibetan region. It is not wrong to emphasise that Ladakh is part of the Tibetan culture area but the crucial difference is that after the ninth century A.D., when the Tibetan empire collapsed, Ladakh and the Western Himalayas were the scene of a Buddhist revival and thus goes out of the control of Tibet during the Mongol period of the 13th century²⁵. During the ascendancy of the Mongol in China and their subsequent patronage to the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, a census was conducted in Tibet and Tibet itself was divided into 13 myrarchies and Ladakh was not a part of this. Ladakh has the distinction of being a borderland of India and also of Tibet and it is the status of being a model that had led to its unique historical evolution. As part of the evolution most of the cultural currents were drawn from Tibet but mediated by the local conditions. Most of these historical conditions were due to the rise of Islam and its trading in Asia that led to Ladakh's interaction with the regions beyond Baltistan. The other important political interventions were from the Valley of Kashmir in the South and the regions further south like Jammu and later Punjab.

²³ Jina, Prem Singh. *Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh*. Indus Publishing, 1995.

²⁴ Vaala, David. *Ladakh: The Culture and People of "Little Tibet."* Schiffer Publishing, Limited, 2013.

²⁵ Petech, Luciano. *The Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.* Istitutoitaliano per il Medio edEstremoOriente, 1977. 5.

The early history of Ladakh is less explored and one has to turn to Tibetan history of the early period to understand that before the rise of Tibet as an American empire in the world scene in the seventh century A.D. Under the Emperor Songtsen Gampo, there was the Kingdom of the Zhang Zhung that led to the rise of Tibet²⁶. The first emperor of Tibet had to eliminate the threat from the West and therefore the King of Zhang Zhung was married to his sister and she lured the King into a trap after which the Kingdom of Zhang Zhung ended and was incorporated into Tibet²⁷. Some of these cultural influences continue even today in Ladakh and shall be explained in detail when we examine the history of Kinnaur²⁸.

After the collapse of the Tibetan empire which was a warrior nation, Buddhist revival started in the Western Himalayas and western Tibet and after this we have the merging of myth, folklore and text in the narratives of the history of Ladakh. A H Francke was one of the earliest historians following Alexander Cunningham to write on the history of Ladakh based on the traditional textual history known as the Ladakh Gyalrabs²⁹. The title itself is important because it signifies imperial history or simply translated which means the story of the kings of Ladakh. There were two major traditions of history writing in Tibet, the dharma histories or the histories of the religion which became the dominant trend of writing history and the second is the history of the Kings of which, the history of Ladakh is a

²⁶ Norbu, Namkhai. *The Necklace of GZi: A Cultural History of Tibet*. Narthang, 1989. 21-24.

²⁷ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 30.

²⁸ Klimburg-Salter, Deborah. "Tucci Himalayan Archives Report, 2 The 1991 Expedition to Himachal Pradesh." *East and West* 44, no. 1 (1994): 14.

²⁹ Francke, August Hermann. *A History of Western Tibet: One of the Unknown Empires*. Asian Educational Services, 1907.

representative³⁰. The second genre of history writing disappeared as the histories are written in Tibet mainly by the lama historians who were also the literary elite. In contrast Ladakh had served the form of history writing that speaks of the succession of royalty and is not fully imbued with the religious perspective. Luciano Petech was one of the most important historians who made use of it entirely and his famous work the Kingdom of Ladakh published in 1977 remains a landmark to this day³¹. The other recent histories were by John Bray which is an edited volume on the history and culture of Ladakh. Other works of a general nature gather to the demand of the tourist and are not deeply academic and Janet Rizvi's Ladakh is one such work. The title of the book "Ladakh crossroads of the high Himalayas" is a book that needs some more detailed footnotes from the primary sources³². Other important works include works on art like Skopurski's³³ study of paintings or in a similar book on trade titled Islam and the silk Route and another recent addition by Sulmaanwasif Khan titled "Muslim, Trader, Nomad, Spy" talks about the heterogeneous composition of the caravans³⁴. But these are specialised works focusing on one or two aspects of interest.

The regional particularity of Ladakh start with the second diffusion of Buddhism and the establishment of a dynasty by a king named Nyima Gon³⁵. The later successors establishing

³⁰ Martin, Dan. *Tibetan Histories: A Bibliography of Tibetan-Language Historical Works*. Serindia Publications, Inc., 1997. 13-5.

³¹ Petech, Luciano. *The Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.* Istitutoitaliano per il Medio edEstremoOriente, 1977.

³² Rizvi, Janet. *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*. Oxford University Press, 1996.

³³ Snellgrove, David L., and Tadeusz Skorupski. *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*. Prajña Press, 1977.

³⁴ Khan, SulmaanWasif. *Muslim, Trader, Nomad, Spy: China's Cold War and the People of the Tibetan Borderlands*. UNC Press Books, 2015.

³⁵ Rizvi, Janet. *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*. Oxford University Press, 1996. 57-8.

new dynasty known as the Namgyal dynasty and most of the historical documents focus on this ruling house. With the large agricultural resource base in the Nubra Valley watered by the Indus River and suitable for growing barley which is the only crop that can survive in this high altitude as the air is rarefied³⁶. Other minor crops and shrubs also grew along with apricot's that became one of the important items of trade. The shrubs provided the much needed fuel in addition to the yak dung which also served as important source of fuel³⁷.

In the higher reaches of regions like results, Zaskar, in places like Padum, there is more availability of water from the mountain streams depending on the snowmelt from the mountain ranges and this in turn irrigated many stretches of land with verdant landscapes³⁸. The other important source of surplus for the ruling house passed through the nomads of the Cheung tang where temperatures goes below -25°C and the nomads on horseback felt hot when they even came to Leh the capital of Ladakh³⁹. The major surplus from the nomadic region is wool collected from the Tibetan antelope. This acquired great importance and most of the wool are found in the bushes where the antelopes graze themselves and also the shearing yielded special wool known as pashmina. By the 17th century the word Cashmere became a fashion statement in Europe and this was primarily the item of export from the Mughals courts to the Persian and Turkish regions and also to

³⁶ Ibid., 35.

³⁷ Norberg-Hodge, Helena. *Ancient Futures*, 3rd Edition. Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017. 5.

³⁸ Deegan, Paul. "The Road Less Travelled." *Geographical* (Campion Interactive Publishing) 73, no. 7 (July 2001): 14.

³⁹ Rizvi, Janet. *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*. Oxford University Press, 1996. 121.

parts of Europe and Egypt⁴⁰. They were used for different purposes like tablecloths, dresses, robes, turbans, frocks and also accompanied lacework and macramé⁴¹. It also provided employment to a large number of people in Kashmir Valley and a class of artisans developed over dependent on this particular trade. Other important centres that link the shawl trade were Multan in Lahore and the famed Multani merchants had connection to Ladakh, and thus Ladakh became part of the great caravan trade⁴². As part of this network, the Namgyal dynasty also experienced progress but at the same time it was political pressure from the regions the northwest and Namgyal was forced to marry a Muslim lady known as Jarl Khatun⁴³. This marriage was justified by certain theocratic devices invented by the Lamas who use this earlier maker as devices of representation and posited that the Queen was in fact the reincarnation of a Tara. The son of this union was known as Sengge Namgyal meaning the line of the Namgyal ruling family⁴⁴. He proved to be a real lion in the sense of military prowess and conquered large parts of the frontier regions and also fortified the city of Leh. Further the bazar of Leh, the capital was also built along with various other monasteries⁴⁵. Many of the monasteries were also endowed with larger number of property and even to this day and largest monastic in Ladakh, Hemis Monastery and 51 villages and restriction⁴⁶. Unlike Tibet, which was ruled by the Lamas and became

⁴⁰ Hiner, Susan. "Lust for 'Luxe': 'Cashmere Fever' in Nineteenth-Century France." *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (2005): 76–7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 77-8.

⁴² Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 230.

⁴³ Rizvi, Janet. *Ladakh: Crossroads of High Asia*. Oxford University Press, 1996. 239.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 67-9.

⁴⁵ Rizvi, Janet. *Pashmina: The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond*. Antique Collectors Club Limited, 2009. 42.

⁴⁶ Rajesh, M. N. *Gompas in Traditional Tibetan Society*. Decent Books, 2002. 124.

a Buddhist state or Sikkim which was ruled by a Chogyal or a Dharma Raja, Ladakh was ruled entirely by Kings and though the monks had some important role in politics and society, they were not as important or decisive variable in the politics of Ladakh⁴⁷.

In 1640, a new dynasty known as the Gorkha dynasty came to power in Nepal and one of the first acts of this dynasty was to close the borders between Tibet and Nepal. The immediate effect of this was the stopping of the wool trade⁴⁸. At the other end, Ladakh also stopped trade with Tibet and this led to enormous pressure to get wool from Tibet. It therefore led to a battle between Ladakh and Tibet that ended with the Treaty of Tingmosgang that not only allowed for trade and specified the political domains of both Ladakh and Tibet but it also allowed for special privileges to the old trade⁴⁹. Since trade became one of the most important position of Ladakh, more and more political intervention followed. The Afghan invasion of Kashmir also impacted Ladakh to some extent and defined the migration of some Kashmiri Muslims to Ladakh. The Ladakhi society, based on the Tibetan model was polyandrous, the excess women were at many times married off to men from other regions. Some of the Muslims from Central Asia and Kashmir who married the Buddhist women of Ladakh started a new community known as the Argohons⁵⁰. The exit of Afghans from Kashmir to other larger geopolitical interests developed to solve expansionist but could not succeed since the Ching Dynasty of China

⁴⁷ Petech, Luciano. *The Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.* Istitutoitaliano per il Medio edEstremoOriente, 1977. 21, 104-5.

⁴⁸“Tibet Justice Center - Legal Materials on Tibet - Treaties and Conventions Relating to Tibet - Peace Treaty Between Ladakh and Tibet at Tingmosgang (1684) [372]”.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Rizvi, Janet. *Pashmina: The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond*. Antique Collectors Club Limited, 2009. 40.

developed interest in Tibet. At this time Ladakh was attacked by the Sikh army from Punjab and after their victory both Kashmir and Ladakh came under the rule and while Kashmir was directly ruled by the Dogras of Jammu, Ladakh was ruled indirectly⁵¹. By this time the Mughals Empire declined in the 18th century and in its place the British East India Company took over the reins of administration. The rise of the British Empire led to large-scale rivalry throughout the world from other European powers and at this time some other developments happened that impacted worldwide trade. The rise of steamship navigation was assumed to have been the reason that brought an end to caravan trade but it continued in Ladakh which is a subject of recent book and its ramifications felt all over Central Asia⁵². Unlike the British Empire which was the strong naval power, Russia was primarily a land empire and did not have access to warm water ports and the southward push was very strong ever since the time of Peter the Great. As part of the southward push, the ports of Bandar Abbas in Iran and Karachi in India were seen as important outlets, as Russia already had significant role in the Caspian trade and a scene of the Caspian Sea network. This period is known in world history as the Great Game and it finally ended with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which recognised the limits of both Britain and Russia. It is commonly stated that the borders of both this regions should not meet and as Tajikistan was directly related to the north-western borders of Kashmir and Ladakh something to be done urgently. In the north, Ladakh bordered East Turkistan which was already under the

⁵¹ Petech, Luciano. *The Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.* Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977. 146, 147, 149.

⁵² Steensgaard, Niels. *The Asian Trade Revolution: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade.* University of Chicago Press, 1974.

control of China since the 18th century and though this was a border it did not allow for free movement on account of the inhospitable terrain as there were no settlements even for nomads near the border⁵³. Therefore, Tajikistan was under the control of the Russian Czars and as a part of regulations, a part of geographical reality was started and it is of today that formally separated Afghanistan from India by taking some territories from Tajikistan and appending the same to Afghanistan. This is known as the Wakhan corridor and is only 13 miles in breadth and also populated by people who are not from Ladakh or Kashmir Afghanistan but by nomads from Kyrgyz region and this stands out as something different on a map⁵⁴.

With the onset of British colonial polices, the route to Tibet after the young Husband expedition seemed to be clear and Ladakh again became part of the strategy game and new border regimes were initiated.

In the current scenario, Ladakh is being approached from the point of view of strategic and security interests for India and trade is not an important factor at all. In the pre-modern period, the truth was quite opposite as trade was dominant in the borders of Ladakh that functioned as trade routes. After the rise of China in 1949 and the incorporation of Tibet and its final annexation to China in 1959, trade with Ladakh totally ceased. Therefore, it would be pertinent to dwell on the nature of trade in Ladakh. When Warren Hastings became the Governor General of India, one of his interests was to send emissaries and

⁵³ Malik, Nadeem Shafiq. "Wakhan: A Historical and Socio-Economic Profile." *Pakistan Horizon* 64, no. 1 (2011): 53–60.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

missions over the high Himalayas to find a road to China⁵⁵ and it was this exercise that led to interest with Tibet and was also the subject of a book by Kate Tetschler titled ‘the high road to China’. Contrary to popular imaginations of Tibet always being a closed country, the 17th-century was quite different in Tibet from the 18th century. Truly 17th-century as Luce Boullonise explains in a paper of gold and mask in Tibet that a large number of foreign firms situated in Tibet in the capital Lhasa and trading in many of the commodities like wool, musk which were very important items in Europe, came not only for its scent but also for medicinal properties and herbs like rhubarb and rhododendron and host of other products some of which came from Siberia⁵⁶. Tibet also had a route to Beijing via Chengdu as this was one of the few regions apart from Kokonor that led the route to Mongolia. It took nearly 120 days for the caravan to start from Ladakh and enter Lhasa and most of the luggage included food material in the form of Tsampa and salt also was another important commodity that was brought back⁵⁷. Most of the salt in the Himalayan regions originated from the salt lakes from Tibet and were made into bricks and loaded into the yak caravans. Similarly, the other commodity that was made into bricks was tea from China. This was one of the staple foods from Ladakh and all over the Tibetan culture area since the eighth century when they became habituated to include this as an integral part of the diet⁵⁸.

⁵⁵ Teltscher, Kate. *The High Road to China*. A&C Black, 2013.

⁵⁶ Tuttle, Gray, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. (ed) *The Tibetan History Reader*, by Luce Boulnois, *Gold, Wool and Musk: Trade in Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century*. Columbia University Press, 2013. 475.

⁵⁷ Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 177.

⁵⁸ Sen, Tansen. *Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of India–China Relations, 600–1400*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 227.

As late as the 20th century, there were caravans and some important families of Ladakhis and Kashmiri Muslims who had settled in Tibet and were established in Lhasa. Among the Kashmiri Muslims, were also the traders and butchers who had a significant presence in the main temple square of Barkhor in Lhasa where their presentiment today⁵⁹. In fact, there is also a mosque known as the Kache Lingka meaning the mosque of the Kashmiri. It is interesting to note that apart from Kashmiri Muslims, there were also two other types of Muslims known as Chinese Muslims or Hui but these were seen as different from the Tibetans⁶⁰. Similar to Ladakh the polyandrous nature of Tibetan society and an excess of unmarried women and some of them married the Kashmiri Muslims along with the nature or some other significant trading communities in Lhasa⁶¹.

One of the important families is that of Abdul Wahid Radhu who can trace the lineage from the Ladakh from the 18th century⁶². A memoir of this family retraces the annual trade and the apprenticeship of younger male members into the caravan trade. In addition to the trading contacts, monastic networks were an important factor and as it is well known in the Tibetan culture area that every family had dedicated at least one son to the monastery and in case of some of the monks who wished to go for higher studies, the local village monasteries did not suffice⁶³. Therefore, Lhasa was the most favoured destination for the

⁵⁹ Asian Highland Perspectives 40: Research Articles, Folklore Collections, Reviews. Asian Highlands Perspectives, by Bettina Zeisler, "Mountains, Monasteries and Mosques." 2016.381-94.

⁶⁰ Gaborieau, Marc, Gudrun Krämer, Denis Matringe, John Nawas, and Everett Rowson. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam Three*. Brill, 2007. 4-5.

⁶¹ "The Muslims of Tibet | by JamyangNorbu | The New York Review of Books."

⁶² Arpi, Claude. "The Life and Time of Abdul Wahid Radhu, the Last Caravaneer."

⁶³ Mann, R. S. "Role of Monasteries in Ladakhi Life and Culture." *Indian Anthropologist* 15, no. 1 (1985): 46.

monks and nuns from all the traditions. Here in the great monasteries they met with students from all over the Tibetan culture area including Mongolia, Kalymikia, Buryatiya. In fact, one of the great lamas of Ladakh, Kushok Bakula's name is rumoured not only in Ladakh where the international airport is named after him but also in Mongolia where he was sent as an ambassador representing the government of India since he had a great deal of knowledge about the plight of Buddhists in these regions under communism⁶⁴. As a borderland Ladakh and multiple connections with Kashmir and Punjab in the South and Tibet in the East that gave this borderland an economic boost and at the same time also reaffirmed the status of Ladakh's as a borderland.

4.1.2 Lahul and Spiti

Spiti is the largest district of India as of date and combines with Lahul as an administrative unit whereas both of them are in fact separate and the earlier name of Spiti was Piti and the prefix S was not pronounced in the local language because of its tonal nature⁶⁵. Technically speaking, and the great Himalayan range divides both Lahaul and Spiti separately and as mentioned earlier the geological events of this place were seen in the Pliocene and Miocene and it also happened hundreds of million years ago. Around 250 million years ago could be seen here in the form of fossilised organisms that were washed away by the Kang-yu and Pappun-yu where we find the artefacts known as Shaligram Sand in fact they are

⁶⁴“Who Was Bakula Rinpoche for Mongolia?” The Mongolian Observer (blog).
<https://mongolianobserver.mn/bakula-rinpoche-mongolia>.

⁶⁵“Lahaul & Spiti, District Website, HP”.

washed stones⁶⁶. It was the inaccessibility of Spiti that made it to be free from the invaders till the 17th and 18th century⁶⁷. However, the early history connects with the rulers of Tibet and we are on firm ground when we talk about the history of Buddhism in Spiti. After the rise of Tibet in the seventh century and its subsequent fall in the ninth century, there were a series of efforts at the building Buddhism and is known as the second transmission of Buddhism. According to the religious history of the Lotsawa Ringchen Zangpo, one hundred and eight monasteries were built under his patronage and also his patron the King Yeshe-O who was the king of the Kingdom of Guge of which Ladakh, Lahaul and Spiti were parts of. The number hundred and eight seems to be a conventional number and cannot be verified archaeologically but the important monasteries that stand to this day are Tabo and Alchi, the latter being in Ladakh. The monastery of Tabo is noteworthy as it is the only continuously functioning Buddhist monastery in India since 996 A.D⁶⁸. The official name of Tabo is the sacred doctrinal enclave of Tabo which means it is in reality a theological college. Built of mud brick, the structure has 24 more than 1000 years and has recently celebrated its centenary in 1996⁶⁹. After the 10th centuries we do not have much information and Spiti except that it was a part of a Ladakh and ruled by the kings of Ladakh under their different chieftains⁷⁰. As in the case of Ladakh, both Lahaul and Spiti came

⁶⁶ Parcha, S.k., and Shivani Pandey. "Ichnofossils and Their Significance in the Cambrian Successions of the Parahio Valley in the Spiti Basin, Tethys Himalaya, India." *Journal of Asian Earth Sciences* 42, no. 6 (November 11, 2011): 1097–8.

⁶⁷ Francke, August Hermann. *A History of Western Tibet: One of the Unknown Empires*. Asian Educational Services, 1907. 115.

⁶⁸ Hāṇḍā, Omacanda. *Tabo Monastery and Buddhism in the Trans-Himalaya: Thousand Years of Existence of the TaboChos-Khor*. Indus Publishing, 1994. 67, 90-2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 7, 173.

⁷⁰ Petech, Luciano. *The Kingdom of Ladakh: C. 950-1842 A.D.* Istitutoitaliano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977. 55, 143.

under the influence of the neighbouring regions and after 1846 Spiti were separated from Ladakh in administrative terms and made as part of the Kangra district⁷¹. The prime reason for this was that the wool trade passed through Spiti through the deserts of Changthang which was actually one of the major wool producing areas since it was inhabited largely by nomads and therefore this particular economic motive made Spiti to become part of the trade networks⁷².

Like Spiti the case of Lahaul is also similar and was known in ancient period as the southern country below Tibet. The Chinese traveller Huiyen Tsang refer to the lower country in contrast to Tibet which is a higher country. Both Lahaul and Spiti were part of the western Tibetan kingdom of Guge and like Spiti, Lahaul was also cut off from the trade routes till its re-emergence in the 17th and 18th centuries on account of the wool trade⁷³. As the division of Lahaul and Spiti was more practical, Lahaul fell into the hands of the neighbouring king of Kulu and the second law whole under the reign of the kings of Champa. Another set of events took place in the 19th century with the rise of the Anglo Sikh War after which the British became more interested in Lahaul on account of the trade routes that passed to Ladakh and particularly the shawl and wool trade and it was this shawl and wool trade which had earned large amounts of revenue that prompted them to administer Lahaul directly⁷⁴. The other regions that became part of British India after the Anglo Sikh wars and the consequent treaties were not administered directly. Though the

⁷¹“History - Lahaul&Spiti , District Website, HP.”

⁷² Waller, Derek. *The Pundits: British Exploration of Tibet and Central Asia*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015. 13, 102 176.

⁷³ Dilaik, Gopal and M.H. Syed. *Himachal Pradesh*. Bright Publications, Delhi. 41.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 57.

political history and institutions maintain certain official histories the larger histories of this region were not disturbed by the political events for centuries together and their histories were predominantly written based on the religious events locally and more importantly in Tibet.

As we had tried to trace the events of the history of Ladakh in earlier pages, a similar such situation mirrors in Lahaul and Spiti and the Kingdom of Zhang Zhung which was to the west of Tibet and when one tries to explain the cultural make-up of the western Himalayas, the kingdom of Zhang Zhung and its artefacts are important⁷⁵. It is common knowledge that the Kingdom of Zhang Zhung that laid to the west of Tibet and was part of a larger quality known as Olmo Lunring or Olmo Tagzig and this was the seat of the Bon religion founded by the prophet Shenrab Miwo⁷⁶. Most of the prophets and markings on the stones to the influence of this religion from Zhang Zhung it is interesting to note that in Tabo which is one of the most sacred Buddhist centres, we have nearby many stupas belonging to the Bon religion. The capital of Zhang Zhung, Khyung Lung was the abode of the Eagle and known as the Silver Palace of the Garuda and located in the upper Sulej valley⁷⁷. Very few works had been done on this religion and a recent work by the archaeologist John Vincent Bellezza clearly points to the existence of this religion in Lahaul and Spiti⁷⁸. We also have unmistakable evidence in the form of inverted swastika which is a characteristic feature of the Bon religion. Furthermore the capital was located nearby as identified by the

⁷⁵ Norbu, Namkhai. *The Necklace of GZi: A Cultural History of Tibet*. Narthang, 1989. 17-22.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Kværne, Per. "Bon and Shamanism." *East and West* 59, no. 1/4 (2009): 19–24.

⁷⁸ Bellezza, John Vincent. *The Dawn of Tibet: The Ancient Civilization on the Roof of the World*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014. 246.

scholars and the earlier map made in an cryptic form also clearly mentions the four major rivers of Central Asia and according to scholars it is conversant with the political formations of the borderlands of Tibet⁷⁹. Furthermore, we also have heaps of horns of animals piled up that are offered to the local Lha. This is the terms of which the Lhasa the capital of Tibet derives as the abode of the goats and was earlier known as a Rhasa or the abode of sheep and goat. The worship of the local deities was part of the residual tradition of the Bon religion and Buddhism could not domesticate this aspect or fully eradicate it and it therefore functions as part of the folk tradition of Buddhism in Lahaul and Spiti⁸⁰ and are outlined in the following map.

⁷⁹ Kværne, Per. "Bon and Shamanism." *East and West* 59, no. 1/4 (2009): 23–24.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Map of Nepal and Part of Tibet 1907-1909



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

4.1.3 Kinnaur

When one comes to Kinnaur, we see that it has slightly different make-up historically and also ethnically from the regions of Lahaul and Spiti. The language of Kinnaur is also allied to one of the old extinct languages of the Tibeto-Burman group which was also part of the

Kingdom of Zhang Zhung and later of Tibet⁸¹. After the collapse of Buddhism, Kinnaur became aloof and though we see some spread of Buddhist activity in the form of monasteries, politically it was isolated. We have the rise of the State of the Bushahr which also continue to function under the able and valiant rulers like Raja Ram Singh who had reported of the Mughals attacks⁸². In the 16th and 17th centuries there were incursions by the Gorkhas of Nepal as it was easily accessible by one route near the Sutlej. Kinnaur has three main ranges and when one comes to the lowest, that is the Dhaulatar ranges that the ruggedness nature of landscape is eased and greenery and more settlements are visible⁸³. In the upper ranges, it is described as a true cold desert. After the invasion of the Gorkhas of Nepal, the Sikhs helped to stop this invasion and were later succeeded by the British after the Anglo-Sikh War and Kinnaur became part of the British territories⁸⁴. In the valleys of Kinnaur we find important monasteries given below the brief description that are the only source for reconstructing the history from earlier period. The monastic narratives known as Namthar records the succession of the hierarchs of the monastery and also the order and they give us an idea of the aspects of continuity and change not only in the monastery but also in terms of shifts and patronage⁸⁵. Since the religion of some of the most important events to have been recorded, the monastic history largely reveals religious

⁸¹ Nagano, Yasuhiko; & LaPolla, Randy J. (Eds.). (2001). *New research on Zhangzhung and related Himalayan languages. Bon studies 3*, Senri ethnological reports 19. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology. In Khan, SulmaanWasif. *Muslim, Trader, Nomad, Spy: China's Cold War and the People of the Tibetan Borderlands*. UNC Press Books, 2015.

⁸² Ahluwalia, Manjit Singh. *Social, Cultural, and Economic History of Himachal Pradesh*. Indus Publishing, 1998. 27-30, 124.

⁸³ Negi, Sharad Singh. *Himalayan Rivers, Lakes, and Glaciers*. Indus Publishing, 1991. 65.

⁸⁴ Ahluwalia, Manjit Singh. *Social, Cultural, and Economic History of Himachal Pradesh*. Indus Publishing, 1998. 30, 42, 56.

⁸⁵ Handa, O. C. *Buddhist Monasteries of Himachal*. Indus Publishing, 2004. 174-5.

traditions. The inaccessibility of Kinnaur though its location graphically is very near the main arteries of communication that had made Kinnaur borderland and this applies particularly to a parking lot. The accompanying map and list of monasteries would elaborate on the regional specificities of this region including the spread of monasteries⁸⁶.

4.1.4 The other regions of North West Himalayas

The western regions of the North West Himalayas indicate the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the present day and is a source of contention primarily because of the fact that the dominant community of Afghanistan, the Pashtuns are concentrated not only in Afghanistan, primarily in the eastern and southern parts but also in the western part of Pakistan known as the north-west Frontier province. Today the North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan had been renamed as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province⁸⁷. Most of the people of this province are Pashtuns and the links with their ethnic brethren in Afghanistan is very clear and also very strong. Effectively, this region forms the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan and was also during the Mughals period it was unsettled and unwavering because it was not under the full control of the Mughals and after the rule of the Emperor Shah Jahan, it was lost forever to the newly established dynasties⁸⁸. One of the basic problems here is that the boundary was demarcated and therefore remained a source of contestation. Following into the full details of this border and the borderland a small detour to the Northern areas would be more fruitful. The Northern areas of Kashmir

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa | Province, Pakistan | Britannica.Com."

⁸⁸ Chandra, Satish. *Medieval India: From Sultanat to the Mughals Part - II*. Har-Anand Publications, 2005. 128, 142, 218.

and Gilgit is the borders between the Mughals region and later the dominion of Kashmir under Dogra. The modern day regions of Tajikistan and Afghanistan on the western side and East Turkistan on the northern and eastern side were the two major areas were clearly marked cultural differences that were accentuated by the topographic differences⁸⁹.

It was only after the second Anglo-Afghan War between the British and the rebellious tribes of Afghanistan, that the border became demarcated and came to be known as the border on the line⁹⁰. Before this, there was no clear idea of the border and one of the reasons is that the clear idea of border is the only way to add modern cartographic imagination that percolated to many parts. In the case of China, it was the European Jesuit Fathers like fr. Mathew Ricci who started the mapping of the country and their fixed clear boundaries but the Chinese did not modify their mapping practices. In India, the British East India Company set up the Survey of India headed by a Surveyor General and this Survey is older than even the founding of the United States of America⁹¹. These winds of modernity did not touch the regions of Afghanistan that was primarily ruled by tribal chieftains. As they were not under the sway of any single ruler it was difficult to deal with them and more complicated was the fact that there was no single monarch or emperor who could be the national unity and thus there were many minor princes, Sheikhs and other strong potentates. It is in this scenario that the British wanted to define the ill-defined borders between the regions of Punjab and Afghanistan. This was the source of indignation and therefore the

⁸⁹ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 334, 336.

⁹⁰ "Durand Line | Boundary, Asia | Britannica.Com".

⁹¹ Waller, Derek. *The Pundits: British Exploration of Tibet and Central Asia*. University Press of Kentucky, 2015. 16.

constant rebellion that led to the Anglo-Afghan wars⁹². As part of this war the classic statement is that, the British won over Afghanistan but, like all rulers who defeated Afghanistan could never rule it.

At the confluence of this region, between modern-day Afghanistan and Tajikistan lies the region of two borderlands that played an important role in allowing travellers and people of mixed populations to come to India during the Mughals period and later⁹³. This was the region of the Pamirs and had been characterised by a difference in population from the general population of Tajikistan containing some ethnic minorities and also religious peculiarities clearly an account of isolation. While most of the people of Tajikistan are Sunni Muslim, the people of the region of the borderland are Shia Muslim and also belong not to the mainstream sect but to the Ismailis and worship the Agha Khan as their leader. The power of this ethnic group and the borderland can be seen from the fact that during the partition of India they made a claim for a special status of the Ismailis under the Aga Khan. The peculiar make-up of this region comes before the emergence of the cartographic state and it was under the control of the emirate of Bukhara that had very important links with the Mughals⁹⁴. In fact, under the early Mughals the period of Babur were known as the Timurids to signify that this ruling house descended from Timur or Tamerlane and the term Mughal became popular after that⁹⁵. After the collapse of the ruling house of Bukhara, it was replaced by different khanates ruled by the Khans and this was the Khanate of Khiva

⁹² "Durand Line | Boundary, Asia | Britannica.Com".

⁹³ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 13.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 180.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 151-53.

and later on the northern side was the Khanate of Astrakhan⁹⁶. This border the Russian territories of the Czar and during the time of Peter the Great, when he heard about the rise of the Mughals dynasties in India, he wanted to send ambassadors to India but at the same time was not very conversant with the new ruling Mughals. Therefore, through the Indian merchants stationed in the Khanate of Astrakhan, Peter the Great tried to find out what honorific should be used to address the Mughals. Should they be addressed to the Mughals of India or as the Mongols⁹⁷? So the borderlands of the northernmost regions are less studied today because of the illegal occupation of this region by Pakistan⁹⁸. One of the reasons for the lack of knowledge is also compounded by the ruggedness of geography as there are very few passes between the northern borderlands of Kashmir and the region of Xinjian that was known as East Turkistan. Similarly, on the north-western side, also connecting Afghanistan and Tajikistan was the Wakhan corridor that came into being as a result of the Great Game between the Russians and the British, most of the movements were through the passes⁹⁹. One point to be kept in mind is that, due to the inhospitable nature of the terrain and the lack of any inhabited area on the other side of the border in the regions of East Turkistan, this area was termed as *terra incognita* or a place where people did not live. It was controlled originally by the Raja of Hunza, a princely state administered by the British India as part of the princely state system but which had a long history¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 191-3. 28, 162-3.

⁹⁷ Schuyler, Eugene. *Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia: A Study of Historical Biography*. C. Scribner's sons, 1884. 462.

⁹⁸ Malhotra, Brig (Retd) V P. *Security and Defence Related Treaties of India*. Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2010. 71.

⁹⁹ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 13.

¹⁰⁰ Geerken, Horst H., and Annette Bräker. *The Karakoram Highway and the Hunza Valley, 1998: History, Culture, Experiences*. BoD – Books on Demand, 2017. 10.

This was the state populated by Muslims but did not fall into the orbit of the Muslims of Kashmir or Punjab or Pashtuns or East Turkistan or Tajikistan or the other Turkic regions. In fact this was a region which is not drawn into the larger network of regions on account of it being a very inhospitable terrain covered largely with snow¹⁰¹. In this high altitude region one of the important pastimes was polo that was played between different royal families and the raja of Hunza invited the king of Yarkand to play polo and this tradition continues even today with teams from both these regions playing polo¹⁰². The circulation among these three high altitude Himalayan Muslim regions that were not drawn into the orbit of larger ethnic communities shows its characteristics as the classic Himalayan borderland. This borderland is partly Tibetan in culture deriving from the Balti language and ethnically mixed with stock of the Dardic people and is represented today by speakers of the Shina language. The two important princely states on this borderland were Hunza and Nagar. There is less material for the reconstruction of the earlier history as the focus of history was not much directed towards these regions. Detailed mention of these regions is seen in the Imperial Gazetteer of British India where these princely states are mentioned. The reason for their being mentioned in detail is that they form the southern end of the Great Game just below Afghanistan and this effectively separated India from Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The access to this region was only through the passes as the mountains are among the tallest in the world and in the regions of Gilgit and Baltistan have many

¹⁰¹ Huttenback, Robert A. "The 'Great Game' in the Pamirs and the Hindu-Kush: The British Conquest of Hunza and Nagar." *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1975): 1–2, 14.

¹⁰² Snellgrove, David L., and Tadeusz Skorupski. *The Cultural Heritage of Ladakh*. Prajña Press, 1977. 98

mountains, in the range of more than 500 that are really tall peaks¹⁰³. According to the dealings with the larger perverse were the Sikhs and later the British and the Dogra of Jammu and Kashmir, these rulers of the two states were perceived to be the most loyal¹⁰⁴. Unlike the other Muslims of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, these two regions or princely states were never ruled directly by Kashmir on account of their differences and they also did not like to be clubbed along with Kashmir which used the character of the borderland status both in terms of history and also in terms of their cultural practices¹⁰⁵. As a result of this, the Subsidiary Alliance with a princely state worked well and this princely state represents the northernmost frontiers of Kashmir. Incidentally, the term Kashmir had come to refer to only the Valley of Kashmir and to the disputed regions but it was not so in the pre-modern period and this tendency of looking at history backwards is not only dangerous but also gives us only a presentist view. One may conclude this section by saying that these two kingdoms were very important as they formed the last outposts of the Indian influences as they orbited on these to the regions beyond.

4.1.6 Chitral

Chitral region is one of the most scenic and at the same time inaccessible and also a physically demanding place which is used in a sense of exotica making it a borderland that still continues to invoke the mystery as one of those few really regions about which not

¹⁰³ Mason, Kenneth. "Mountain Names in Hunza." *The Geographical Journal* 61, no. 1 (1923): 71–71.

¹⁰⁴ Huttenback, Robert A. "The 'Great Game' in the Pamirs and the Hindu-Kush: The British Conquest of Hunza and Nagar." *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1975): 4, 9, 17.

¹⁰⁵ *Indian and Foreign Review*. Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1974. 22.

much is known and this adds to the suspense. Chitral is the extreme northernmost part of present day Pakistan. During the Mughals Empire and later the British Empire it was nominally under its control and on the map one can easily locate this region as a large territory¹⁰⁶. The completeness of this discourse would be filled only when one looks at the neighbouring region of Nuristan which literally means the land of light and both the regions of Chitral and Nuristan are supposed to have been filled with light¹⁰⁷. The question is when did this light shine on and one gets the quick answer that there was darkness everywhere and the light dispelled the darkness. Both light and darkness are used here in the metaphorical sense of religion with Islam claiming to be the light and the pre-Islamic pagan religions resembling darkness that had to be dispelled¹⁰⁸. In this exercise of light and shadow, the real elements of power are clearly seen and the two regions are taken for analysis because of their geographical, cultural and religious contiguity not to mention about the ethnic particularity and contiguity. In 1895, Afghanistan's expansionist dreams was laid at the base of Nuristan which was then known as Kafristan or the land of Kafir, which in Islamic usage means unbeliever and therefore this was the land of the unbelievers and it was also known as the land of the Kalash Kafir¹⁰⁹. One of the problems and explanations is that this religion was not Islamicized and could not see the light of the day and explanation is that it was not fully on account of the terrain. Under pain of death, the people of this region were forcibly converted to Islam but even today retained many of

¹⁰⁶ *Imperial Gazetteer of India: Provincial Series*. Superintendent of Government Printing, 1909. 165.

¹⁰⁷ Leitner, Gottlieb William. *Kafiristan: The BashgeliKafirs and Their Language*. Section 1. Dilbagroy, 1880. 5-7.

¹⁰⁸ Dupree, Louis. Nuristan, "the Land of Light" Seen Darkly. American Universities Field Staff, 1971.

¹⁰⁹ Grover, Amar. "Children of a Lesser God." *Geographical* (Campion Interactive Publishing) 74, no. 1 (January 2002): 38.

their pre-Islamic traditions. Thus, the region came to be known as Nuristan where light had finally arrived¹¹⁰.

On the other side of the border lies the state of Chitral which was earlier a kingdom and later a district and populated by two main groups of people, the Khowa and the Kalash and one may mention that both these languages do not belong to the dominant group of languages found in this area. They do not belong to the regular Indo-European languages whose branches the variants of Pushto, Punjabi, Kashmiri and various other Persian and Turkic related dialects. Further, the other great group of languages found in Gilgit and Baltistan are affiliated to Tibetan language¹¹¹. One may also be reminded here that the language Burushaski is also one of the languages found in the Himalayas¹¹². David Southworth professor of linguistics had also recently talked about the Dravidian group of languages in the Himalayas as remnants because it only points to the ethnic mix rather than ethnic homogeneity¹¹³. Plurality is thus one of the defining factors in this region characterised by the valleys which are divided and therefore host ethnic communities in their secure environments. It thus explains the sustenance of local dynasties that could not be incorporated into larger political units and thus dynasties like the Rases had continued to survive. In the case of Chitral among the two ethnic communities, the Kalash were not Islamicized and therefore the Himalayas were the subject of exotica, they became the figure

¹¹⁰ "NURISTAN – Encyclopaedia Iranica".

¹¹¹ Alberto, and Augusto Cacopardo. "Unknown Peoples of Southern Chitral: Part I: The Dameli." *East and West* 45, no. 1/4 (1995): 233–4.

¹¹² "BURUSHASKI – Encyclopaedia Iranica".

¹¹³ Sharma, D. D. *Studies in Tibeto-Himalayan Languages*. Mittal Publications, 1994. 92.

of a detailed play of exotica for various reasons¹¹⁴. Firstly, this was the land which was not fully Islamicized, Hinduized or even had Buddhist population and therefore had certain pagans. Further the people of this region of Chitral looked like Europeans and this was also the route through which Alexander the Great had passed and in the 18th century the large number of theories dealing with the origins of various physical stocks gave rise to racial theories. At the intersection of travel narratives, race science and expansionist imperial policy, the production of Chitral as an exotic land started in the 20th century¹¹⁵.

However, one may also note that the absence of the Mongolian or any other phenotype is noteworthy here and this is also reflected in the intermarriages only within thereby preserving aspects of culture¹¹⁶. Their religious practices had been identified as belonging to the early period of the Rig Veda and strangely did not follow the other three Veda influences implying that the connection with the early Indo-Aryans was cut off at a very early date and this remains an interesting deviation of the normal linear narratives¹¹⁷. Scholars on the early Rig Veda like Michael Witzel and others had pointed to the survival of the early ideas of cosmogonist and creation among the Kalash of Chitral¹¹⁸. It also has to be understood that as they were mainly pastoralists living in inaccessible valleys and

¹¹⁴ Leitner, Gottlieb William. *Kafiristan: The BashgeliKafirs and Their Language*. Section 1. Dilbagroy, 1880, Grover, Amar. "Children of a Lesser God." *Geographical* (Campion Interactive Publishing) 74, no. 1 (January 2002).

¹¹⁵ Kingsley, Bonnie M. "The Cap That Survived Alexander." *American Journal of Archaeology* 85, no. 1 (1981): 39.

¹¹⁶"In Search of the Origins of Kalash | Cogniarchae".

¹¹⁷ Erdosy, George. *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia: Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity*. Walter de Gruyter, by Michael Witzel, "Rig vedic History: Poets, Chieftains and Polities", 1995.322.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, by Kenneth A R Kennedy, "Have Aryans been identified in the prehistoric Skeletal Record from South Asia? Biological Anthropology and Concepts of Ancient Races. 40.

furthermore had cordial relations with the Royal family who therefore did not impose their own religious traditions of Islam on the Kalash which explains their survival during the mediaeval period and also to the modern period¹¹⁹. However, the impact of the modern nation state of Pakistan had added many Islamic elements to their way of life. In all their religious practices and also cultural practices that are historically recorded one can find early influences and also certain aspects of the residual influence of the early traditions even though they are impacted very little on the traditions that had come up later. The idea of the Kalash people being a remnant of Alexander's army was understood in the last few decades and which was taken as the internalisation of the spread of European knowledge¹²⁰. It meant that only in the 17th and 18th century, when the British influences and other European influences spread in large mainly in Himalayas, did the ideas of Alexander percolated here and therefore new myths arose. A similar example given is of the idea that Jesus died in Kashmir which also has the source from many books based on the travel writing of a Russian traveller Nicolas Notovitch who came to India and more specifically the Hemis monastery which was the largest monastery in the 19th century¹²¹. Careful examination reveals that these were not secondary myths that had antiquity and the idea of Alexander and his memory were already there as the example of the village of Malana in Himachal Pradesh with its attendant artefacts shows¹²². Similarly Alexander the Great was known in the Persian speaking world as Sikandar. The problem seems to be of a different

¹¹⁹ Hunter, Sir William Wilson. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*. Trübner & Company, 1886. 476.

¹²⁰ Kingsley, Bonnie M. "The Cap That Survived Alexander." *American Journal of Archaeology* 85, no. 1 (1981): 39.

¹²¹ Hanson, James M. "Was Jesus a Buddhist?" *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 25 (2005): 78-9.

¹²² BENNETT, CASEY C., and FREDERIKA A. KAESTLE. "Investigation of Ancient DNA from Western Siberia and the Sargat Culture." *Human Biology* 82, no. 2 (2010): 143.

nature in the fact that important myths were neglected by historians whereas these were taken up for description and analysis by popular writers had created this confusion and chaos. One may conclude this section by pointing out that the region of Chitral an important backwater in the Himalayan narrative and giving credence to the fact that geography is an important element in the preservation of local cultures.

4.1.7 Baluchistan

Mughals India and Safavid Iran were the two leading gunpowder empires along with the Ottoman Empire of Turkey who formed the third but whose influence was not much in south Asia and hence only the first two were taken into account. One is reminded of an important painting commissioned by the Mughals Emperor Jahangir whose title means the ruler of the world and in this painting, he along with the Persian Emperor Shah Abbas are standing side by side with the Mughals Emperor's hand on the right shoulder of the Persian Emperor and the Persian Emperor's left hand on the Mughals Emperors left shoulder¹²³. Both of them are standing on a globe and while the right leg of the Mughals Emperor on the globe his left leg is rested on a lion whereas the Persian Emperor's right leg is resting on a lamb. The painting reveals many significant realities and the devices of representation also point to new ways of representing territory throughout. It is common knowledge that Iran and India were ruled by the Safavid and Mughals dynasties respectively and their territories were coterminous. The narrative in a linear fashion proceeds to the modern period with the decline of the Mughals Empire and the ascendancy of the British who had to deal with the new dynasty Persia, the Qajar dynasty which was the successor of the

¹²³ Beach, Milo Cleveland. *Mughal and Rajput Painting*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. 105.

Safavid. The demarcation of the boundary between British India and Persia which later became Iran rested on the question of Baluchistan and the Baluch nation which was divided into two with 80% of the people settled in Pakistan and another 20% in Iran¹²⁴. In the modern history of India, two important debates have occupied centre stage that deal with the political formation of the nation-state. One is the decline of the Mughals Empire that began in the 18th century and second is the Partition of the country based on the legacy of the Mughals Empire and the Princely States to which the British became heirs. Conclusive narratives that had conditioned the chain of events rested on an interpretation of history beginning with the decline of the Mughals Empire and the ramifications in the British period with highly subjective interpretations of a modernist nature that had to be emphasised dictating the question of a religious state versus secular polity represented by the competing ideas of Pakistan and India during the freedom struggle of India. The North western regions that later became Pakistan on the basis of Muslim majority population that was achieved after ethnic cleansing during the events of 1947 but nevertheless had Muslim majority populations rested on a reading of their status of the Mughals Empire and its decline. According to this communal historiography the Mughals Empire was Muslim and as Muslim rulers, they were the sovereigns of their own land and thus could not share power with the future India that was read by them as Hindu majority state and not as secular state in the offing. It also fitted in well with the British idea of divide and rule and the communal narrative of history. The colonial census of the British starting from 1891 and other policies made this task easier by ascribing it a fixed identity which understood them as Muslims. Therefore, to the observer, the question was put as to whether the Baluch subject was a

¹²⁴ Tyagi, Vidya Prakash. *Martial Races of Undivided India*. Gyan Publishing House, 2009. 6-7.

Muslim or not and if you answered in the affirmative which always was the case in Baluchistan as no Marxist movement and no tradition of atheists or any other religious minorities who are not Muslim were articulated, the statist question posed by the Britishers already had an answer¹²⁵. The point is that the people of Baluchistan were Muslims without any doubt was only one dimension of their identity and ethnic identity was also an important dimension that asserted itself and always not religious identity which asserted itself¹²⁶. Many of the sub-regional identities in the Indian subcontinent raised their political origins to the fall of Mughals Empire in the 18th century as in the case of Hyderabad, Awadh and other places. Mainstream scholarship on the Mughals also has focused on this aspect of the decline of the Mughals Empire in 18th century and the rise of successor states¹²⁷. As regards the question of Baluchistan, the rise of this region was a much earlier event during the period of Emperor Akbar who had lost Baluchistan and this became a place which could not be controlled by both the Mughals and the Safavids of Iran¹²⁸. Thus it formed the borderland for both the Mughals and the Safavids in the true sense as it was not just the border but a place inhabited by large number of people and therefore it was a homeland that separated two empires, a large swath of territory that separated to Borders and contained within itself much more than a thin strip of a border but allied large area

¹²⁵ Commissioner, India Census. *Census of India*, 1901: Baluchistan. 3 Pts. Government Central Press, 1902. 47.

¹²⁶ Ayres, Alyssa. *Speaking Like a State: Language and Nationalism in Pakistan*. Cambridge University Press, 2009. 62, 71, 185.

¹²⁷ Alavi, Seema. *The Eighteenth Century in India*. OUP India, 2007.

¹²⁸ Baloch, I. *The Problem of "Greater Baluchistan": A Study of Baluch Nationalism*. Coronet Books, 1987. 102.

of land. The kings of Baluchistan were known as the Khans of Kalat and the following table 4.1 gives the list of the rulers along with map¹²⁹.

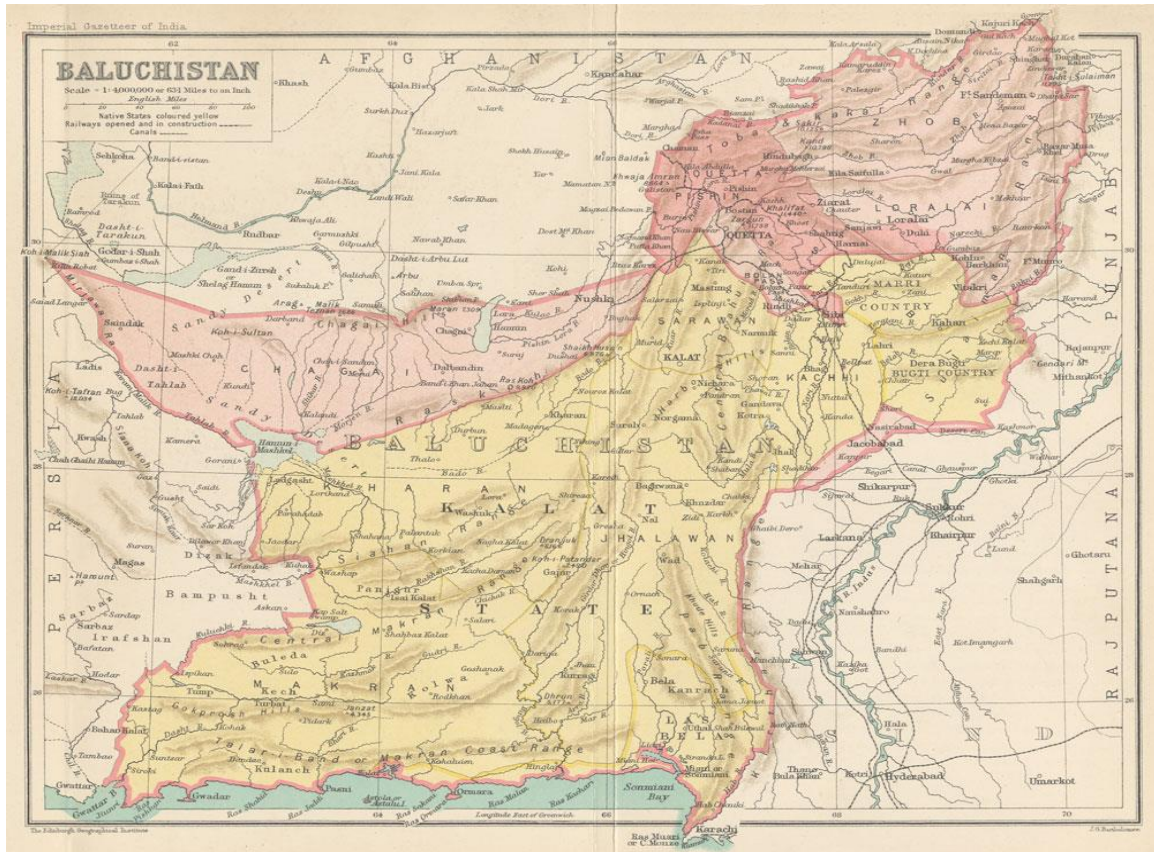
Table 4.1

Sl.No	List of the Rulers	Date of Reign
1.	Mir Ahmad 1	1666-1667
2.	Mir Mehrab	1695-1696
3.	Mir Ahmad 11	1713-1714
4.	Mir Muhabbat	1730-1731
5.	Mir Muhammad Nasir Khan 1	1750-1751
6.	Mir Mehrab Khan	1816-1817

We may summarise this section by pointing out how the region that was Baluchistan, initially under the control of both the Safavids of Iran and the Mughals of India was one of the first regions to slip out of the control of both the Empires as it was the one which is situated the farthest. In this sense Baluchistan, as the borderland acquired a personality and a system of administration as early as the 16th century and this explains for the durability of this region in terms of its emergence and continuation of the culture.

¹²⁹ Axmann, Martin. *Back to the Future: The Khanate of Kalat and the Genesis of Baluch Nationalism, 1915-1955*. OUP Pakistan, 2012.

Map of Baluchistan 1907-1909



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

4.1.8 Afghan Borderlands

The question of Afghanistan's position as a South Asian or Central Asian entity is not yet resolved clearly for many reasons including the rise of area studies in the modern period. The rise of area studies in modern period divided the world into different regions based on certain geo-strategic perspectives in the post-war period. South Asia comprising largely of the Indian subcontinent along with Bhutan and Maldives became the clear region of South Asia. Central Asia included Tibet, Mongolia, Xinjiang and the five republics of the former Soviet Union known as the “Stans”, (but Tibet is now a days included as part of east Asia

as explained earlier)¹³⁰. Afghanistan, therefore does not fit into the Central Asian republics, not only because of their heritage of being under Soviet rule but also the early heritage of not being absorbed by the expanding Czarist Russian state which stopped on the borders of British India and Afghanistan¹³¹. Secondly, unlike the Central Asian states that had commercial and migratory ties largely to Russia, Iran and Turkey, Afghanistan looked more towards India, though there were some connections with Persia¹³². Tajikistan is conceived of as little Iran for the simple reason that a Persian culture and language are dominant here though Islam is followed here it belongs to a different sect. In the case of Afghanistan also a common language of Persian dialect is mutually intelligible with Persia but the similarity ends here between Afghanistan and all the other regions surrounding it¹³³. One of the most important definitions of Afghanistan is the ethnic plurality though the Pashtuns predominate here and the notions of masculinity, bravery and the territory had conditioned the idea of the Afghan state¹³⁴. But this idea of creating a one state was also a compromise between the different ethnic groups of the Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras etc¹³⁵. As no single ethnic group predominates in Afghanistan totally, the rise and fall of the different groups is related to their political location and the fate of Afghanistan over the centuries as it was parcelled out between different dynasties¹³⁶. Some of the most important

¹³⁰ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 12.

¹³¹ Ibid., 13.

¹³² Branch, India Army General Staff. *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan: Mazar-i-Sharif and North-Central Afghanistan*. Akadem. Druck- u. Verlagsanst., 1972. 24, 238.

¹³³ Ibid., 72-76.

¹³⁴ "Afghanistan-PoliticalprocessHistory-Geography|Britannica.Com."

¹³⁵ Canfield, Robert L. Review of "*The Hazaras of Afghanistan: An Historical, Cultural, Economic and Political Study, by Sayed Askar Mousavi*". *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 2 (1999): 321-22.

¹³⁶ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge University Press, 2000. 46-50.

dynasties that ruled Afghanistan were the Mauryas, the Kushans and the later Muslim rulers of the Ghazni. Many parts of Afghanistan are also parcelled between the Safavids of Iran and the Mughals of India like Baluchistan but the terrain here was more daunting and the fighters were more fierce. As the number of rulers and their locations are difficult to be encapsulated in a very short space it would suffice to say that no single ruler could hold Afghanistan permanently for a more than a century. Compounding this instability was the fact that apart from the Mughals of India and the Safavids of Iran, the Ottomans of Turkey and the Romanovs of Russia also started meddling in the affairs of Afghanistan to a very great extent. As a result of this Afghanistan became involved in the power politics with neighbours as a bond and the logical end of this was the Great Game of the 19th century¹³⁷. It was during this time that we have the rise of another dynasty of Afghanistan under a famous King Dost Mohammad who unified large parts of Afghanistan under the leadership of the Durrani clans of the Pashtuns¹³⁸. The problem with Afghanistan was that all loyalties were based only through the ethnic group and the clan was the most stable unit over a period of time. It was actually the clan of the Pashtuns that spread over large part of central Afghanistan that led in articulating this kingdom¹³⁹. However, as part of the Great Game large territories of the Pashtuns were ceded to the British and became part of the North-West Frontier Province of British India. Therefore this had led to a series of small wars that had been unnoticed in Indian history¹⁴⁰. The effect of the small battles was that the area

¹³⁷ Alder, Garry. "Big Game Hunting in Central Asia." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 9, no. 3 (May 1, 1981): 318–30.

¹³⁸ Rashid, Ahmed. *Afghanistan: The Tug of Tribalism*, 1989.

¹³⁹ Hunter, Sir William Wilson. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*. Trübner & Company, 1886. 476.

¹⁴⁰ Gagankumar, 'Small Wars' on the Frontier: The Raj and the Army, c. 1800-c.1900.

had become permanently hard and there had been no stable institution to save the institution of the clan and all efforts had to be mediated through the clan leader. The Pashtunwali or the code of the conduct of Pashtun was the most important cultural tradition and the clan of the functioning of the societies and was based primarily on loyalty towards family, friends and clans¹⁴¹.

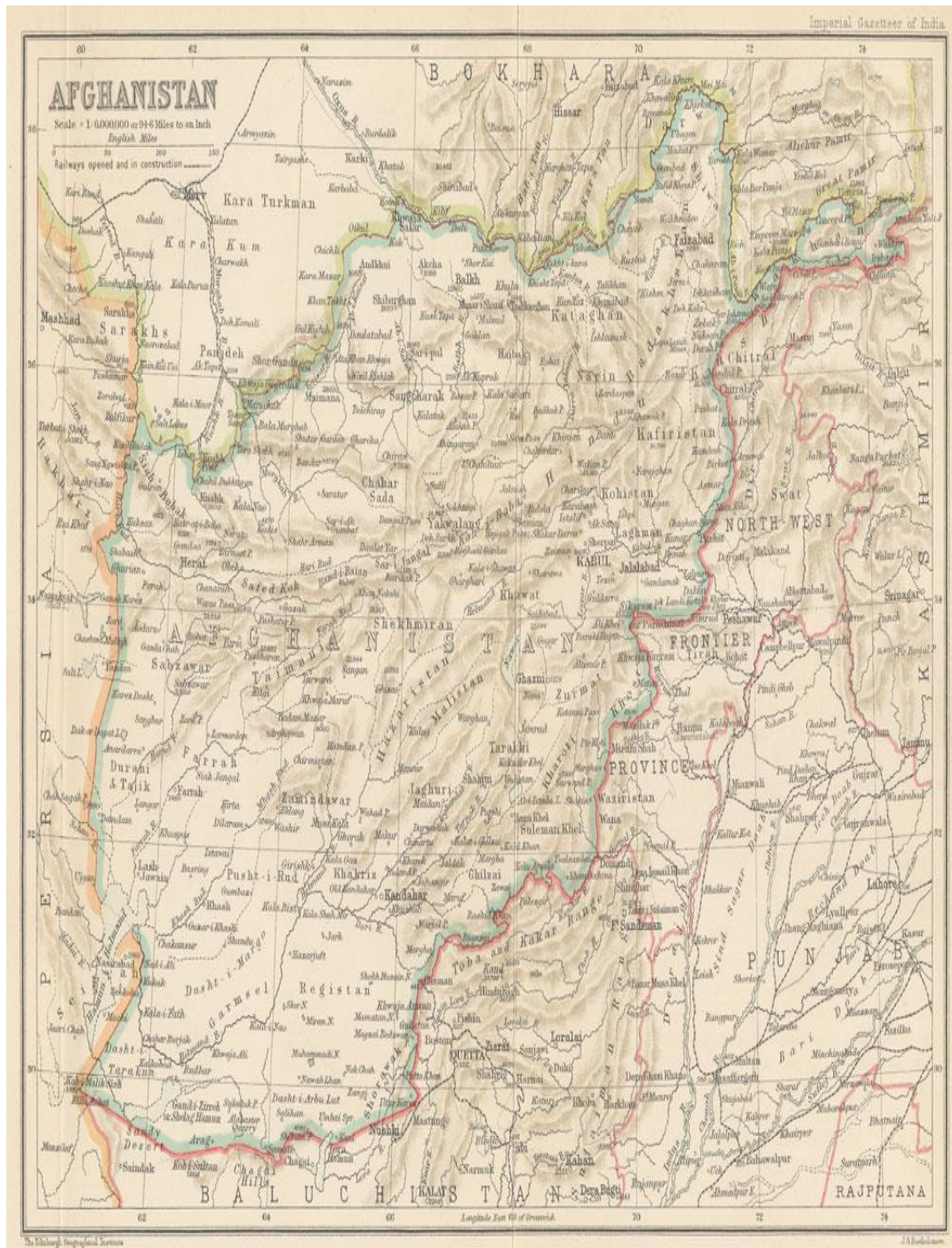
In the accompanying maps, the vicissitudes of the history of Afghanistan is illustrated for greater clarity. One may suffice to say that as a borderland that could not evolve in a stable institution's, the effect of geography on policy is too great. Further, this contradiction is also mirrored in the rise of the clan as the antidote to the non-evolution of any other stable institution and also stable economic system that is visible today also¹⁴². Afghanistan therefore presents a picture of being a cultural and political oddity without any large-scale linkages or being engulfed in the orbit of India, Iran or the Turkic regions of Central Asia to which most of its neighbours had fallen into the orbit. While Tajikistan is predominantly Persian in culture, the other regions are oriented towards Turkey. It is only the ethnic minorities of Afghanistan that have different orientations but unlike other regions they are not to very large degree and therefore the geographies of the constraining factor and the process of stability in Afghanistan is drawn from history and bears the weight of history. The concept of Zomia has sought to be played event of this region during 2002 to understand the lack of permanent institutions¹⁴³.

¹⁴¹"Afghanistan-PoliticalProcess|History-GeographyBritannica.Com."

¹⁴² Perry, Alex, and Johnny Michael Spann. "Inside the Battle at Qala-I-Jangi." *Time* 158, no. 25 (December 10, 2001): 50.

¹⁴³ Scott, James C. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press, 2010. 16.

Map of Afghanistan 1907-1909



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.

4.2.0 Summary:

In this chapter an overview of the borderlands of the western Himalayas was taken up to understand the regional particularity and also the place of this discontinuous region in the narrative of Indian history. Broadly speaking, the Tibetan highlands of the region identified with Ladakh as the centre and form one core area and the other regions nestled high in the Himalayas are smaller and minor but had yet separated the Indic regions from the Central Asian regions and reveal traces of these and stretch as far as Afghanistan. It is here in this region that we find many cultural traits of very ancient past being preserved as in the case of the Swat and the neighbouring regions. Going south west, we see the two regions of Afghanistan and Baluchistan south ward are defined by geographical and ethnic identities more than the religious identities. Therefore, this gives us an idea of the multiplicity of identities that were formed during the mediaeval period when they were articulated early and how a misunderstanding of this would lead to not only a misunderstanding of the borderlands to and also of the peculiarity of the nation state in South Asia. One may therefore conclude by saying that the influence of geography mediated by the external powers and production patterns had combined to make the borderlands of the western Himalayas as one of the ethnically heterogeneous and also politically fragmented regions. Far from seeing this as disruptive, one may say that the regional variation actually gives agency to the borderlands.

Chapter- 5

Travellers accounts of Eastern Himalayas

5.1.0 Introduction:

This chapter begins with a brief survey of the main trends in travel writing and then proceeds to understand the application of these methods in the context of the eastern Himalayas. Beginning, by defining some of the important problems and prospects employed in the analytical framework of travel writing the chapter would then proceed on to elaborate some of the concepts and categories employed. The next part of the chapter will primarily focus on a detailed study and analysis of some of the important travel writing on the Himalayas and try to understand their representations based on certain concepts which form a thematic unity and that the condition and the understanding of regions which are then reproduced and thus form a genealogy. Religion, gender, cultural life and landscape were some of the broader themes taken up by the European travellers and they had therefore become generalized as representative markers of certain regions of eastern Himalayas. This in turn had led to the representation of the eastern Himalayan region as a different zone. Categories such as gaze, infantilization, objectification etc. are studied under the larger rubric of the concept of Orientalism and its attendant theories. Certain problems associated with Orientalism also studied along with the application of areas of Orientalism to the travel writings in the context of eastern Himalayas.

5.1.1 Travel writing as a source of history:

The earliest writers on India from Europe were the Greeks who created a representation of India as a land of philosophers or sophists and kings with boundless wealth and religious practitioners whose clientele included the common people¹. These are represented in the works of the Greek traveller Megasthenes whose celebrated work *Indica* emerged as one of the important landmarks in travel writing. However, Megasthenes did not visit India and the original was lost and is available to us only in the fragments of the writings of Strabo, Plutarch and Arrian². The idea of an insider writing on certain aspects and an outsider writing is clearly visible in these writings on India.

To examine this point in detail, one needs to talk about the area of survey and the subject matter and we zero in on the Mauryan Empire which was the period of discussion of the *Indica*. Going by this logic, if one were to write a history of ancient India and more specifically of the Mauryan Empire, which was the largest empire in India till the Mughals rivalled it in the 17th century, we get conflicting pictures when we use other sources. The other important source of the study of the Mauryan Empire are the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, which is primarily a treatise on economics and statecraft and thirdly the inscriptions of Asoka³. All the three sources speak divergent languages and if one were to write a history using only one set of sources, the literary source would give us an understanding of Mauryan state and society from very normative and statist point of view taking into account

¹ Thapar, Romila. *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*. Oxford University Press, 2012. 57.

² Megasthenes, and John Watson McCrindle. *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*. Thacker, Spink, 1877.

³ Thapar, Romila. *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas*. Oxford University Press, 2012. 218.

more space on empire building, control of subjects and the need to maximize revenue. There is a clear focus on the need to contain dissent and use means other than the military for this purpose⁴.

Similarly, when one starts looking in the inscriptions of Asoka, one gets a clearer picture in terms of the spatial and temporal span as the inscriptions can be located accurately in time and space since they give clear ideas of the regnal year and also the year in which the inscription had been written. Though precise, the inscriptions are very short and therefore do not yield large amounts of data. They are primarily concerned with royal proclamations and record gifts to religious dignitaries and constantly speak of the need to maintain harmony in society. There is also a proclamation of the emperor Asoka of the need to replace the battle drum with the drum of dharma⁵. For the Greeks, the idea of the King as a superordinate person is found here. More economic donations were given to the monasteries and there is also talk of the propagation of the concept of dharma as a means to unite the population on a basis of equity⁶. Buddhism is given preferential treatment in these inscriptions. But at the same time if one were to read only the Greek texts the picture would be entirely different as the aspect used in Greek equal lengths to understand the Indian order. One of these is the division of Indian society into seven classes which is totally wrong in the Indian context. What also appeared to be strange was that some facts which the Greeks recorded were dismissed as piece contributed to certain exotic ideas of India and have only been decoded. The most important example is that of the gold digging

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Sircar, D. C. *Inscriptions of Asoka*. Publications Division Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, 2017. 48.

⁶ Ibid.

ants that bring out gold from the deep recesses of the earth. This were dismiss as some fantasy imagination and till recently was not taken for serious discussion and only was shown to illustrate how the foreigners viewed Indian society through the narrow and unstable categories. Recently, in the highlands of the Himalayas in Ladakh, ethnographic documentation of some of the gold panning activity leads us to reveal the link between the Greek writers and their fantastic representations of the gold digging ants⁷. The point here was that while the ants brought out soil from the topmost layer by burrowing, it would to build burrows, the soil was taken by a number of people who then clearly sieved the samples and used mercury to separate the impurities in the flowing waters of the streams and rivers of the Western Himalayas. This particular representation is not a fantastic tale but something that was real and to be recorded. This section thus, makes a case for travel writing and is on the premise that it will amount to certain aspects of society and economy which form the prime focus, while other aspects gets subsumed. As such, travel writing is a different source and offer multiple ways of approaching the subject since its content is being authored from a different viewpoint that is from outside. Secondly the thematic ordering is different and more importantly the dominant categories and concepts which inform the other sources may or may not exist in the travel writings and they may alternatively employ certain sets of concepts and categories.

⁷ McCartney, Eugene S. "The Gold-Digging Ants." *The Classical Journal* 49, no. 5 (1954): 234.

5.1.2 Problems of travel writing:

Before going into the description of travel writings and the structure and methods of travel writing, it would be prudent to understand some of the pitfalls of travel writing so as to expose the limitations of the sources. The classic question of the insider versus outsider debate is reflected in travel writing and whether there is a collective silence on the part of insiders or certain features which they found not worth recording had been noted in travel writing. If one were to be limited only to the selection of themes, modern day writing on contemporary topics driven largely by ideological bias also reveals this to a large extent. A recent review of two of the most important books in the 20th century-one written by the noted British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm on the 20th century and another book bearing a similar title written by a liberal historian Niall Fergusson makes interesting reading. According to the reviewer, if one were to read both these books, one would end up understanding that we are living in two different planets rather than in one world⁸. So stark is a difference that the modern day readers may not pardon the writers for their deliberate skirting of events. However, the modern day reader does not have any such comforts when it comes to analyzing the premodern society. This historical distance is one of the important problems in travel writing and is of a different nature. The distance here is of the observer coming from a Western society and the subject coming from an entirely different society and both are informed by their own conceptual frameworks that mediate the understanding of reality. It is this unresolved paradox that had brought about certain limitations on travel writing. One of the examples that can be cited here is a case of attempting an equivalent as evident in the treatment of economic phenomena. In the case

⁸ Ferguson, Niall. *Civilization: The West and the Rest*. Penguin Publishing Group, 2011. Hobsbawm, Eric. *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2007.

of many premodern societies, the absence of any market mechanism or large-scale exchange prevents the subject from giving clear economic values to understand these practices. This may immediately sound as irrational and the term wasteful has been employed as a convenient label to understand its purposes. The practice of Potlatch among the North American Indian tribes were seen as wasteful as many items of economic utility were wastefully consumed in a ceremony⁹. Recent anthropological study understands these practices as a societal mechanism of redistribution whereby inequalities in society are reduced and egalitarianism is maintained for the reproduction of society. Representations of these kinds had thus led to certain generalizations which again created a genealogy and this is one of the problems of travel writing.

Associated with this problem, is a problem of value judgment as most travel writers understood events from an emic point of view and not from an etic point that reflected an internal understanding. This takes the form of cultural translation and one of the important examples given is the relation of body parts to kinship relations. In south Asia, hair and blood are taken as markers of identity and kinship relations are modelled on the same and these are metaphorically explained to other social relationships¹⁰. In Central Asia, the term bone is more important than the term hair. The examples here are Anuloma and Pratiloma marriages with the former being allowed and the latter being prohibited according to the ancient Sanskrit texts. The logic here is that the term Loma or the hair is indicated by the two prefixes as with the grain and against the grain. The second term Pratiloma mentioned against the grain and in this case is meant to convey the relationship of a lower caste man

⁹ Rodrigues, Eddie, and John Game. "Anthropology and the Politics of Representation." *Economic and Political Weekly* 33, no. 42/43 (1998): 2711.

¹⁰ Tripāṭhī, Candrabālī. *The Evolution of Ideals of Womenhood in Indian Society*. Gyan Books, 2005. 88.

marrying higher caste women¹¹. The other one, Pratiloma stands for prohibited relations. Similarly, these are reproduced in local variations all over south Asia with metaphors of blood and parallel other body parts. In Central Asia, the term bone signifies an order of stratification and kinship union¹². From the same bone means from the same ancestor i.e. from the same lineage and to sort out methods to legitimize some chief as springing from the legendary Genghis Khan as belonging to the same bone (yesun). In contrast, the term pure and impure bones meant superordinate and subordinate strata of society. Thus, the view from inside and outside are considerably divergent in many cases and create cases of contention in terms of cultural translation which is one of the problems of travel writing.

Some of the problems associated with travel writing include value judgement on generalization and both of these are also related to the earlier program of outsider versus insider. One essay reminded of the classic statement by Clifford Gertz, the great anthropologist who, after a successful research work on Islam in the libraries and detailed analytical studies of texts visited the field in Indonesia and in Morocco. He found that there was a great deal of difference between a textual and the contextual in terms of Islam as depicted and as practiced. This led him to comment, “A way of seeing is a way of not seeing”¹³. This powerful statement clearly brings us to the question of the frames of reference that we adopt and it is these referential practices that lead us to different understandings. We therefore understand that categories and concepts that one uses are

¹¹ Sharma, Rajendra K. *Indian Society, Institutions and Change*. Atlantic Publishers & Dist, 2004. 116.

¹² Norbu, Dawa. *Red Star over Tibet*. Sterling Publishers, 1987. 85-6.

¹³ Rajah, Ananda. *Remaining Karen: A Study of Cultural Reproduction and the Maintenance of Identity*. ANU E Press, 2008. 7.

unstable in many cases and only few categories and concepts that are universal and Trans historical. The supposedly universal seeming categories are embedded within certain cultural mattresses that lead to a very wrong translation of meanings. Before the 17th century, the term race did not exist and though there was difference, skin color was not the only marker of difference but a fixed form. It was only with the rise of racial theories and the later marriage of race with science that these theories got fixated¹⁴. In the post-war period, the ideas of race had taken a beating and have now become obsolete replacing the term race with ethnicity to signify culture and physical stocks or phenotypes¹⁵. In the current scenario, race is replaced by critical race theory and a post-racial society which is the state of art. In tracing the career of the concept of race, we have been able to identify that prior to the 17th century such a concept did not exist though synonymous concepts existed. The high point of this concept is during the 19th century it produced a racist society throughout the world and the deconstruction of the same is happening today¹⁶. Similarly, other concepts like gender are also in equal trouble on account of the proliferation of different gender identities beyond the traditional binaries of male and female, though the confusion between sex and gender has been resolved. In reading travel writing, we get clues to different ways of observation and also deductions and various forms of representation. While ethnocentrism is another major problem, it is not confined

¹⁴ Hardimon, Michael O. "The Ordinary Concept of Race." *The Journal of Philosophy* 100, no. 9 (2003): 437.

¹⁵ Hirschman, Charles. "The Origins and Demise of the Concept of Race, Population council". Vol. 30, No. 3 2004. 385-6, 412-15.

¹⁶ Wheeler, Roxann. *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010. 33, 299.

to travel writing alone and is pervasive in all viewpoints even in the modern world. In travel writing, one gets the cultural registers of certain phenomena that may at many times seem very outlandish or bordering on the absurd and also we get situations with any lack of equivalents which is also perplexing. The best example which can be quoted in 'this regard is the labelling of ethnic religions and folk religions as regions without any religion since they do not follow any identifiable world religions. Africa is the prime example of this fact and coupled with the lack of writing, with the exception of Ethiopia, travel writing represented Africa as a dark continent from the 17th century in contrast to the earlier representations which also had some shades of positivity about them as seen in the borderlands representation by Europe¹⁷. As a consequence, the history of Africa had become the anthropology of Africa, since the historicity had been denied to this region.

Along with ethnocentrism which is an important conceptual device of ordering, teleology also plays a very important part and the telos of the societies with world religions, particularly the Semitic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is linear and posit the movement of history in one direction towards that end. This end is seen in very certain terms as the day of judgement or the last day in all the three religions. A similar moment of time towards future direction that the incremental is encapsulated in the idea of progress which is again a Western context¹⁸. Societies that do not follow linear time but follow a quasi cyclical model of time like the Hindus therefore have an unequal balance of representation. Similarly, the lack of forward movement and progressiveness had led to

¹⁷ Hall, Kim F. *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. Cornell University Press, 1995. 25.

¹⁸ Thong, Tezenlo. *Progress and Its Impact on the Nagas: A Clash of Worldviews*. Routledge, 2016. 15-57.

certain societies being labelled as static, backward and also primitive on account of their lack of ideas of incremental growth and forward movement. In a recently published book titled “Progress and its impact on the Nagas”, Tezenlo Thong argues that the entire world view of the society had been turned upside down with the introduction of new ideas of time and the idea of progress which posits a movement forward and had led to an internal critique and also brought about a lot of damage. In this case we see the representation is fixated with chronopolitics and such aspects were seen as natural or simply real by many of the traveler’s and hence were taken for elaboration.

In 1978, Edward Said published the famous book titled *Orientalism*, in which he argued that the representations of the Orient or the East, created by the West or the Occident in the form of travel writings and later writings had brought about certain stereotypes¹⁹. It is the perpetuation of the stereotypes that also led to colonialism and the making of the White man's burden. As a consequence, Said prompts us to read these texts in the direction of a power game, wherein the European and western quest for power is articulated in the form of travel writing that represents the western mission²⁰.

Some of the concepts that Said used had been found to be helpful in decoding the travel writing's and ‘gaze’ is one of the important tools along with a few others that Said had employed which had also been replicated by many of his followers. Though, there is a critique of *Orientalism*, some of the important arguments raised by this book had withstood the critiques, particularly the relation between power and knowledge production with regard to the other societies. In this aspect, the whole literature in travel writing and by

¹⁹ Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014. 26, 58, 334.

²⁰ Ibid., 157, 181.

extension the critique on travel writing had taken a new trajectory after the publication of the book showing its impact.

Another problem which we get with regard to travel writing is the question of applying certain general features of travel writing to the Himalayan regions, particularly the eastern Himalayas. Is one justified in adopting the travel writing practices of other societies to the eastern Himalayas, though both of them may be borderlands? This brings us to the question of the specificity of the eastern Himalayan borderlands and we find that this is one of the main areas of contestation that cannot be fully dismissed with black-and-white and has huge shades of grey. We can understand this by the appropriation, accommodation and addition often leading to evolution of certain hybrid forms. Many examples can be marshalled in this regard and hunting is another important example where it is not seen as a form of production but only as a cultural aspect²¹. It is not to deny that there are cultural and political elements in hunting but hunting as a cultural aspect and a political tool of legitimization of the warrior elite. Its entry into a chiefly society is vastly different from the everyday hunting as this has more of a ceremonial and economic aspect rather than a pure production aspect²².

Keeping such generalizations and devices of representation in mind, we can move to the region of the eastern Himalayas and the representations of this region by the travellers. We see that most of the travellers who came to the eastern Himalayas actually visited the Court of the Mughals and therefore it is their contrasting representations of two others, the

²¹ Momin, Mignonette and Cecile A Mawlong, (ed) *Society and Economy in North-East India*, (ed). C Nunthara, *Land Control, Land Use and Kingship Structure in Lushai Hills*, Daya Books, 2004. 81.

²² Ibid.

Mughals and the eastern Himalayas, both of these were different from the British Society. The golden age of travel and Europe impact on Mughals India was primarily during the rise of the great Mughals and more specifically during the reign of Emperor Akbar and his successor Jahangir. The idea of the great Mughals and the pomp and splendor and opulent lifestyles led to the growing fame of India as a prosperous land. Most of these were actually based on the life of the nobility at the court ceremonials with costly carpets, diamonds and other semiprecious stones decorating the architecture in the city of Agra and later Delhi, both of which were the seats of the Mughals Empire. The court ceremonials, the display of wealth, the attendant ceremonies and the paraphernalia all gave the travellers a sense of awe and unbelief. Therefore, the representations of the Mughals Empire largely were seen as the wealth of the peasants and artisans being squeezed by a ruling elite composed mainly of landowners and military men who were both part of the Mughals state apparatus. All this was possible because of the large surplus generated by the Mughals and the efficiency of the surplus extracting mechanism known as the Jagirdari system. It was not a feudal system but a patrimonial bureaucracy with the Emperor at the top²³. This large surplus generated was primarily because of the agrarian prosperity in the plains of the Gangetic Valley that was the core area of the Mughals territory. In this system, the yield was favorable and the surplus extracting mechanism that depended on the stability of the Mughals rule also was efficient and a large swath of land, the densely Valley composed of the plains of North India was contiguous. There were no mountains or any other discontinuous geographical features in this plane land except for Pasture. The same applied

²³ Blake, Stephen P. "The Patrimonial-Bureaucratic Empire of the Mughals." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 39, no. 1 (1979): 78–81.

also to another prosperous region Bengal, which was the richest province in India when the British arrived and was to continue later for many more centuries. Both, the Gangetic Valley and Bengal that formed the basis of agrarian surplus were in fact fed by rivers and had a very large stretch of plane land conducive for agriculture. Thus, the representations of most of the travellers who came to India conflated the Mughals experience as the Indian experience and the Mughals territory was counter posed to the Indian Territory. The Central regions or the core regions of India were seen as the central region and the contribution of travellers and later orientalist who followed this tradition equated India with certain regional particularities of North India and Bengal²⁴. As a result of this identification, the Hindu religion was identified with the practices of northern India and more particularly with the Gangetic Valley and generalized. Many such aspects were generalized and it is this generalization based on the early travellers which formed the template²⁵. As the tie had been cast, the travellers more East ward beyond Bengal encountered a new landscape and people who were beyond the contours of the settled agrarian society of Mughals India. Therefore, the process of representing these regions and peoples needed certain divergences from the unending continuity of North India in the villages of modern day Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal. South India was seen as the mirror image and later categorization which revolves around South India. Therefore, the Asiatic Society of Bengal which was dependent on the Fort William College produced the narrative based on these

²⁴ Goswami, Manu. *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space*. Orient Blackswan, 2004. 192-3.

²⁵ Oaten, Edward Farley. *European Travellers in India: During the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, the Evidence Afforded by Them with Respect to Indian Social Institutions, & the Nature & Influence of Indian Governments*. Asian Educational Services, 1991. 26, 104, 119, 138.

early travellers²⁶. A mirror effort was taken up in Madras Presidency at Fort St George that was called as the Madras school Orientalism by Thomas R Trauttmann in his book of the same name²⁷. In this context, one can clearly discern patterns between the production of knowledge and the representation of regions learned from societies. Therefore, the Asiatic society founded certain images of India and these images were built upon the earlier generalizations and this is where we get the list of travellers for analysis which forms the core of this chapter.

5.1.3 Ralph Fitch travels to Eastern Himalayas.

Ralph Fitch was one of the early travellers to India and not the earliest Englishman but the most preferred among the earliest Englishman who left behind writings that gave a comprehensive picture of India. As EH Carr, the noted historian prescribes before studying any text, the prequalification is to study the author. He says, study the historian before you study the text and therefore it would be prudent to locate Ralph Fitch in the larger context. During the age of discoveries, that is during the 17th century which was actually the heyday of navigation when the discovery started with the great discovery of America in 1492 at the end of the 15th century, new technologies buoyed by the compass, Astrolabe and other innovations in cartography gave clear ideas of the earth's surface. At this time the great idea was to get to India and the Portuguese navigator Vasco da Gama came to Kerala in

²⁶ Kejariwal, Om Prakash. *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past, 1784-1838*. Oxford University Press, 1988. 34, 221.

²⁷ Trautmann, Thomas R. *The Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India*. Oxford University Press, 2009. 1.

1498²⁸. However, this did not end the story as it only started a new story-the period of European competition for the riches of Asia. Primarily inaugurated by the Princess of the Iberian Peninsula, Spain and Portugal, the navigators tried to take new Territories in the name of the respective kings. Being catholic nations, rivalry also had to be resolved by the highest authority of the Catholic Church-the Pope. Thus the papal bull of 1560 marked an imaginary line and divided the territories of Asia between Spain and Portugal and therefore all regions to the east of China were left to Spain and to the west were left to Portugal²⁹. The Spaniards were successful therefore in colonizing the Philippines that was taken in the name of King Philip of Spain. Similarly, the Portuguese could get Macau, and outposts in China and also Goa in India³⁰. Goa was the model town of Lisbon like Sao Paulo in Brazil and both these towns were now known as little Lisbon. As the British were not Catholics but Anglicans, which is a variant of Protestantism, after the severing of connections during the reign of Henry VIII after his marriage with Annie Boleyn, the Anglican Church became practically autonomous of any ecclesiastical interference. The turning point in British naval supremacy was the defeat of the Spanish Armada by Sir Francis Drake and the capture of huge sums of gold³¹. It was this singular episode that spurred the imagination of many of the Englishmen to travel to lands far off. It is in this context that Ralph Fitch's worldview was formed, the worldview of an expanding England during the period of the

²⁸Fernandez-Armesto, Felipe. *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature*. Simon and Schuster, 2001. 383.

²⁹Davies, Arthur. "Columbus Divides the World." *The Geographical Journal* 133, no. 3 (1967): 337-8.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 339.

³¹"Sir Francis Drake | English Admiral." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

collapse of feudalism and the rise of a new market and economy. In this period of boom, there was increasing patronage towards travel and it was seen as a vocation not only for people from the teds of society but also from the cultivated sections, in sharp contrast to the crew of Christopher Columbus that comprised mainly of convict's and some other members of the social underclass, Ralph Fitch was a gentleman traveler. One of the reasons for this is that, during the period of Columbus, the travellers were mostly unwilling to go beyond the seas since they believed that the earth would end and they would fall into an abyss. As geographical knowledge was not fully developed, such concepts had to be explained only by religion and thus idea of hell was paramount in the minds of the mediaeval man. Even mercenary elements or soldiers of fortune hesitated to join voyages to far-off lands as the age of discoveries had still not taken off. This is one of the reasons why most of the crew in the ships of Columbus's voyage included criminals who were promised pardon from the sentences if they undertook to be part of the voyage. The great age of discoveries in the next century also conjure with it new imageries and it was also the great age of pirates. Travel to far-off lands was undertaken not just by adventurers but also by criminal elements in large numbers who formed piratical networks and also by another group of administrators and non-breeding sections in addition to an overwhelming majority of merchants and traders³². It is this heterogeneous composition of travellers after the fear of catastrophies in the high seas was dispelled, that prompted many cultivated Englishmen to chart the high seas. Ralph Fitch's long journey can be seen in this trajectory. Furthermore, his travel route was also the same which encompassed the British Empire

³² Fernandez-Armesto, Felipe. *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature*. Simon and Schuster, 2001. 398-412.

later on and the regions where British knowledge on the other societies was pre-eminent. These were the regions of the Levant and the near East which included parts of Mesopotamia³³. Incidentally the term near east was borrowed from the ancient Greek worldview which had only five countries in its imagination that included Africa, Libya, Adriana and India in addition to Europe. With the coming of Great Britain to the Centre stage of world politics, the near east became Middle East and the Centre shifted from ancient Greece to Britain. Since Britain was in the middle, regions to the East world became the Middle East. The purpose of this digression is to only place Ralph Fitch in the context of the emerging British supremacy in the age of discoveries and the beginnings of the learned societies in Britain. As a gentleman, he was supposed to be educated in the three main branches of Learning-grammar, logic and rhetoric in addition to the study of the classics. Thus, Ralph Fitch's writings have to be mediated through these journeys in his life to assess the impact of seminal events on his personality and so would help us to fully understand and analyze his writings.

After travelling to the Levant and the Middle East including Mesopotamia, Ralph Fitch entered India and after acquainting himself with Goa and the Mughals territories where he spent considerable time which is reflected in his output and deep description of the places in the Gangetic plains and the people and their customs³⁴. He had developed a fairly clear idea about India based on two things-first hand observation and the earlier interactions with the works and ideas of Europeans. Some of these experiences with the early Europeans were not Englishman but the Portuguese was not in good taste as the Portuguese had

³³ Prasad, Ram Chandra. *Early English Travellers in India: A Study in the Travel Literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods with Particular Reference to India*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1980. 30.

³⁴ Ibid., 28, 47-62.

already established themselves and also their reputation for rough behavior troubled not only the Englishman but also the Indians. Though, Ralph Fitch did not make a great statement of this, his discomfort with the Portuguese is clear and is also manifested in the arrest of some of the Englishman by the Portuguese who thought that they were spies. Notwithstanding this he did not encounter any large-scale Portuguese presence in northern India but it again surfaced in the borderlands. The stereotypical image of India that one gets from the travel writing post 16th century and later becomes hardened and set the template for what is India³⁵. This had become shorthand for certain references about India including the presence of idolatry among the Hindus, religiosity among the populist, fatalistic perceptions and also the ideas of the commoners and the royalty. In short, Fitch was comfortable in dealing with the Indians and thus the length of his travels to all the important places of northern India explains this fact. One of the aspects he dealt with this was also to try to be in the presence of Muslims but as Oaten had evaluated him and one of the major shortcomings of Fitch was the lack of space given to the Mughals Emperor³⁶. Among other aspects, one also has to mention the fact that Fitch along with another Englishman was imprisoned by the Portuguese in Mesopotamia on charge of being a spy³⁷. At the other extreme he was treated well in India and was thus able to penetrate the surface and the analytical accounts of representation. As such, his writings is one of the pioneering efforts on British and European travel writings in India and therefore can be said to have

³⁵ Spencer, Jonathan. "Orientalism Without Orientals." *Anthropology Today* 5, no. 2 (1989): 18–19.

³⁶ Oaten, Edward Farley. *European Travellers in India: During the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, the Evidence Afforded by Them with Respect to Indian Social Institutions, & the Nature & Influence of Indian Governments*. Asian Educational Services, 1991. 106-111.

³⁷ Prasad, Ram Chandra. *Early English Travellers in India: A Study in the Travel Literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean Periods with Particular Reference to India*. Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1980. 27.

been informed by the prehistory of travel writing. By prehistory, it is meant here to demonstrate the Portuguese presence and also the fact that as the Portuguese had become a familiar sight, there was some familiarity with the Europeans and this becomes clear when one encounters the voluminous output of texts that were credited to the Portuguese³⁸. As Boxer has remarked rightly in the beginning of the article that the Portuguese were no philosophers and therefore the texts also bear the imprint of these and are more oriented towards the pragmatic side³⁹.

Patna, one of the most important cities in eastern India and a thriving centre of trade was the springboard to the eastern regions and also to the Himalayas from whence caravans traversed northwards and East wards. It was near the Kingdom of Cooch Behar where Ralph Fitch has mentioned about. In Cooch Behar, the concept of landscape is clearly perceptible and Fitch encountered the low lands of Bengal tapering to another region full of bamboos and canes⁴⁰. The borderland character of this region is also evident when Fitch talks about Koch Behar as not being very far from Cochin China⁴¹. This had been contested by later writers like Sir Edward Gait who said that this was a misunderstanding as Cochin China located in present-day Vietnam is very far away as also the supply of pepper. Apart from these two misunderstandings, Fitch's depiction of Cooch Behar reads well and as the author was already acquainted with the landscape of India, the gradual change in landscape from the lowland plains of Bengal to the regions of North Bengal that border Bhutan and

³⁸ BOXER, C. R. "Some Remarks on the Value of Portuguese Sources for Asian History, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries." *Portuguese Studies* 1 (1985): 193–203.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Baruah, SwarnaLata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. 216.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Sikkim and geographically distinct is encountered, though he did not articulate it fully⁴². This region is known today as sub Himalayan West Bengal and is a geographical region marked away from the mountain ranges of the North that have a towering presence and the great Plains of Bengal, that continues even to this day to be one of the most densest settlements in the world. The topography of this region, covered with bamboo and cane is accurately depicted by Ralph Fitch. The other descriptions of Cooch Behar as a land of plenty with adequate production of cotton and silk is also accurate⁴³. What is missing in these narratives is that, while Ralph Fitch travelled from Cooch Behar and took the usual route that the traders had been accustomed to taking, he did not mention anything about the trade networks and also the networks that link North Bengal with Dhaka. Both Patna and Dhaka, formed important transit points for the trade networks that connected Bengal with the neighboring regions. This was one of the most important points that had gone unnoticed since the British had trade interests like the Portuguese earlier⁴⁴. John Deyell quotes the Portuguese writer Pires, who quotes another early writer saying that Bengal formed the natural outlet of the Himalayan regions towards the sea. The regions of Cooch Bihar were thus known as the deewars or doors as it formed the doorway to India and more particularly to Bengal and this strategic point which are also the intersection for many merchants and merchandise to come which is pointed out in the earlier chapters had been somehow missed by Ralph Fitch. He was also conversant with Bhutan and the nature of

⁴² Ryley, John Horton, and Ralph Fitch. *Ralph Fitch, England's Pioneer to India and Burma: His Companions and Contemporaries, with His Remarkable Narrative Told in His Own Words*. Asian Educational Services, 1998. 112-7.

⁴³ Foster, Sir William. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921. 24-5.

⁴⁴ Mukherjee, Rila. *Pelagic Passageways: The Northern Bay of Bengal Before Colonialism*. Primus Books, 2011. 106.

landscape and trade between Bhutan and Cooch Behar and also Assam⁴⁵. This is further elaborated by S L Baruah in her work titled, 'A Comprehensive History of Assam' that had emerged as one of the seminal works and here she talks about how Ralph Fitch's travel to Cooch Bihar in the 16th century details the administrative setup and the socio-economic conditions⁴⁶. This is contrasted with a later account of a Jesuit traveler Stephan Cacella who also visited Cooch Bihar and the adjoining territory of Kamrup⁴⁷. Other later travellers are also brought in to substantiate point and the issue that the author makes is that of pointing out the difference between Cooch Behar and the neighboring regions.

Some of the peculiarities of the Cooch Kingdom are a portrait by Ralph's which is also continued by later travellers and we generally find a high prevalence of religiosity here when Ralph Fitch says that the people have high veneration for animals and treat them very gently and if they are old and lame they keep them until they die. In fact he talks about the ruling king as Sukhaldeghe, though the ruling king at that time was Narayanan and as he was one of the greatest kings of Cooch Behar, the question arises is that Ralph had not mentioned him?⁴⁸ The answer also is seen in this high state of religiosity wherein it was predicted by astrologers that the Kingdom in Narayana was under the influence of the planet Saturn and it was a very bad year for him and therefore she had installed the administration in his brother's hands for a year. Similarly, another peculiar custom that Ralph Fitch noticed was life span of years of the people that he described as marvelously

⁴⁵ Foster, Sir William. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921. 27.

⁴⁶Baruah, SwarnaLata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. MunshiramManoharlal Publishers, 1997. 216-7.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 443.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 216-7.

great and drawn by devices and it was very astonishing for him to observe such a practice. In reality these practices were followed by many groups of people and more so by tribal people and in different parts of India and Southeast Asia where earlobes were elongated by inserting heavy weights or with wooden plugs and one can even see a residue of such practice even to this day⁴⁹. Before going to Assam it would also be pertinent to mention some other aspects which, were not seen by Ralph Fitch or the aspects that he did not think it was worth recording. In the narrative of history, the absence of any fact, phenomena or explanation and has to be theorized and this is more so relevant when one employs certain conceptual categories. While discussing about the people of Cooch Behar the heyday of the Cooch Kingdom, Fitch did not mention anything about their racial affiliations. One can easily contrast this with the 18th-century travellers who were supposed to be more imbued with a scientific understanding had all depicted the Cooch people as belonging to the Mongoloid or Dravidian racial groups. These travellers include Hudgson, Buchanan and Latham⁵⁰. There had been much discussion on this topic and this was carried on and forwarded by later colonial travellers and administrators the most famous of all was David Risley⁵¹. Racial classification based on measurement of certain anthropometric features including the cranial index established the concept of race in a scientifically acceptable way which had then caused much damage to Indian history. It has also percolated to the postcolonial period with ample discussions on the primary origins of the Cooch, with the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 202.

⁵⁰ Martin, Robert Montgomery. *Puraniya, Ronggopoor and Assam*. W. H. Allen and Company, 1838. 36, 662.

⁵¹ Srivatsan, R. "Native Noses and Nationalist Zoos: Debates in Colonial and Early Nationalist Anthropology of Castes and Tribes." *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 19 (2005): 1986–98.

question whether there were Mongoloid or Dravidian races. Ralph Fitch's account is free from this classification as the dominant thinking in Europe did not embrace race as a marker of difference or more so skin color as a marker of difference. It was precisely during the period of enlightenment that race and racial discourse became a dominant frame of reference and optic to gaze at the other⁵². It goes to the credit of Ralph Fitch that though he was able to observe the physiognomy and also depicted about the earlobes and other features and is a marker of difference. This absence of the category helps to retrieve certain historical narratives that were not tainted not only because they are western but also because of the simple fact that these dominant concepts also entered the realm of the indigenous where they were accommodated and set a discursive trial. Even today, after discarding the concept of race, the racial affiliations of the Cooch had still not been stalked from being discussed. Rather they only continue the colonial and later trends as the impact of the new writing of history has not fully fallen. On the contrary this concept had been internalized by many of the indigenous people much to their detriment.

He also mentions in brief about his travel to the Kingdom of the Tippera or Tripura⁵³ and this was contiguous to Bengal region of Arakan is also mentioned and he also refers to the port of Chittagong which is sometimes under that control of the Kingdom of Arakan⁵⁴. Along with this is another important group of the borderland, the Mog are mentioned and

⁵² Hall, Kim F. *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*. Cornell University Press, 1995. 4, 6, 12.

⁵³ Foster, Sir William. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921.26-9.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 29.

are affiliated to Arakan. He also rightly mentions the wars of the Mog with the neighboring kings of Tripura. We also know that there was invasion of Dhaka by the Mog pirates⁵⁵.

Crossing the hills for a distance of five days of journey from Cooch Behar, Ralph Fitch reached Bhutan and he calls this place as Bhotia, though there is no such place by the name identifiable and it may either be Sikkim or Bhutan and most probably Sikkim on account of the name of the ruler who is known as Dermain⁵⁶. This is because of his understanding of the region as ruled by the dharma raja. It is the concept of the noble and righteous idea of a monarch who was known as the Chos-Gyal meaning the king of dharma⁵⁷. Two important points he mentions is the presence of Chinese merchants and people with very different attempt to wear cloth particularly for the winter. He refers these groups to the people from the attempt to wear particularly the boots that seem to be from Moscow or Tartary⁵⁸. In this connection, one may understand that the term Tartary refers to the Mongol's or the Mongol Tartars after the Mongolian invasion of Central Asia and the borderlands of Europe. The important points which he mentions about the society seem to point towards Yunnan as he mentions that the main merchandise which they bring from the other side of the mountains are horses in very large numbers with each person owning up to around 5 to 600 horses⁵⁹. Furthermore wool is also mentioned in good number and we know that this was the period when the wool trade had not yet become very strong in

⁵⁵ Dasgupta, Biplab. *European Trade and Colonial Conquest*. Anthem Press, 2005. 267.

⁵⁶ Foster, Sir William. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921. 27.

⁵⁷ Rahul, R. "The System of Administration in the Himalaya." *Asian Survey* 9, no. 9 (1969): 696-7.

⁵⁸ Foster, Sir William. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921. 27.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

volume and noticeable⁶⁰. However, wool was one of the important items. The depiction of the people with hats, woolen clothes, different boots and people without beards suggest that they were traders from Yunnan or eastern Tibet⁶¹. Along with the horse trade about which serious research is going on in the present period showing that Bengal was the recipient of two varieties of horses, the kochi or the horses of Central and West Asia and the Tanganyika or the horses of Yunnan. Therefore, Ralph Fitch's short depiction of Bhutan and its commercial products is clear. The other important product which he talks about but does not mention clearly is the tail of certain animals. These are in reality, the yak tails that were used as symbols of royalty and also as devotion. Though he had missed the second part it clearly points out that these were used for ceremonial purposes in the elephants of China and Pegu⁶². The yak tail could not be fully identified by him for the simple reason that he was not conversant with the animal yak. In the Hindu tradition also and in the other traditions of the Indic religions, yak tails are used to fan both the deity in the temple and also the royalty in the palace and also used in the processions along with the parasols.

The other borderland regions that Fitch had talked about is the region of Pegu in Burma. These are the regions of Burma and the great town of the Macao is taken for treatment in length to as a very strong city. He talks about the old and new town like many of the European influenced towns that had overgrown themselves and the new town is the seat of royalty with a king in a centre who was founded on prosperity of trade⁶³. A detailed

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, see also Yang, Bin. "Horses, Silver, and Cowries: Yunnan in Global Perspective." *Journal of World History* 15, no. 3 (2004): 284-6.

⁶² Foster, Sir William. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921. 5, 30-33.

⁶³ Ibid., 36.

description of the palace of the king which is the middle of the city and walled and surrounded by moat and is also alluded to along with the pagoda or idol stand is covered with tiles of silver and gold. There are four white elephants and these signify the prestige of the king and called the king of the white elephants. He also narrates that if any other king has more white elephants then the king of Pegu would wage war with him as it is a status of the new King of Pegu. He talks about the king's principal wife, a concubines, and he sitteth in judgement in the way the court is conducted⁶⁴.

Some of the important commodities distain for Pegu were the painted cloth from the south eastern coast and the white cloth of Bengal which was exported in large quantity and also the opium from India. He also talks in detail about the connection of Pegu with the south-east Asian regions of Sumatra and Borneo and also of Bengal. The merchandise also included gold, silver, rubies, sapphires, alloy, and pepper, lead and tin⁶⁵. The further regions beyond Pegu and the Buddhist idea of monasticism are also dealt with in detail. He also presents the Portuguese presence not only in Pegu but also as far as parts of Indochina and China⁶⁶. The prosperity of the Pegu and its link with Bengal on one side and south-east Asia on another side are very convincing. One of the arguments put forth by Rila Mukherjee is that the economy of Bengal was predominantly integrated with the economy of south-east Asia and not north India and it is only with the economic reforms of Sher Shah that the economy of Bengal became more integrated with northern India⁶⁷. This was

⁶⁴ Ibid., 31-4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 34-8.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 41.

⁶⁷ Mukherjee, Rila. *Pelagic Passageways: The Northern Bay of Bengal Before Colonialism*. Primus Books, 2011. 106.

the period of Emperor Akbar, the first of the great Mughals and his greatness depended on two important issues-economic and political stabilities. The latter was primarily due to strong institutions and also due to the long rule from 1565 to 1605. It also depended on wealth to the institutions of the state that were from the surplus in agriculture and also the legacy of Sher Shah's economic reforms⁶⁸. Thus, in a way Ralph Fitch was one of the earliest people who recorded the transition in the economy of Bengal whose presence in south-east Asia began to shrink. Further he was also right in pointing out that Arakan was more in the orbit of Tripura. From the above descriptions of the travels of Ralph Fitch, we see that the personality of Cooch Behar, Tripura and Pegu along with Bhutan comes alive as regions that were discontinuous and not part of the plains of Bengal both politically and also in turn of the societal and economic make-up. He also talks about the borderlands of Bengal near Arakan including the modern day islands that were known as the island of Sundarbans once.

Ralph Fitch's work may be seen not as a first but one in a line of a pioneering effort by the early British writers and his contribution to this elaboration is to map the field for the later writers and as such he displayed less of subject bias practices and is more objective in its work exemplified by the nature of his writings. For example, he talks about certain practices like ear piercing and also certain religious practices. He does not enter into the realm of value judgement and reports as novelty though the element of differences is very clear.

⁶⁸ Habib, Irfan. "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India." *The Journal of Economic History* 29, no. 1 (1969): 39-44.

5.1.4 Mughals India during the time of Tavernier:

It would be fair enough to include of another French traveler who is a contemporary of Tavernier, Jean François Bernier who also lived in the court of the Mughals during the heyday that is during the 17th century and witnessed the greatness of the Mughals. The splendor of Mughals India was primarily due to its representation in Europe not only as a prosperous country but also because of the embellishments and artistic accomplishments⁶⁹. Primary among them were painting and architecture of the reign of Emperor Jahangir and Shah Jahan respectively⁷⁰. Most of the European ideas and influences that came via painting and architecture were of immense importance in shaping the future prints of aesthetics in the Mughals Empire. The idea of the halo as the decorative device on top of the super ordinate person's head signifies that he was imbued with religiosity and it conveyed semi divine or divine status⁷¹. It was also situated in time when India was the richest country in the world and India along with China, ended 50% of the world's trade⁷². Since, these material and tangible images of the prosperity were conveyed for all posterity, they were the objects of enquiry and also because of the adoption of European designs and motifs like the halo, like the orb and many other devices like the globe, a familiarity with the decorative media and installations was already established⁷³. This was because of the simple fact that both the European and the Mughals court used these devices of

⁶⁹ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste. *Javernier's Travels In India*, Banga Basi, 1905. 86-90.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 86-7.

⁷¹ Beach, Milo Cleveland. *Mughal and Rajput Painting*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. 100, 105.

⁷² Habib, Irfan. "Potentialities of Capitalistic Development in the Economy of Mughal India." *The Journal of Economic History* 29, no. 1 (1969): 72.

⁷³ Ramaswamy, Sumathi. "Conceit of the Globe in Mughal Visual Practice." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 4 (2007): 756-7.

representation in the same visual and architectural language. One crucial difference of the whole thing was the embellishment with high-quality materials like precious stones, gold and silver that actually turned all travellers towards the court⁷⁴. It was this aura and the combination of the court ceremonial with an array of animals like elephants and horses that led to the image of the Mughals as one of the greatest rulers on earth which was also represented by the European travellers⁷⁵. In contrast to these representations in the Mughals Empire, the travellers also wrote on the borderlands. It is this contrasting picture of a rich and fertile Empire bordered by inaccessible territory and a poor economy, which did not attract much attention and therefore while Mughals India remained the focus of attention marginal subjects were not attracted much to city⁷⁶. One may mention borderlands and also other subjects like the men which were only rarely represented by later historians basing on the travel writers like Tavernier and Bernier.

Compared to the early English travellers like Ralph Fitch, Thomas Stefan, John Mildenhall, William Hawkins and Sir Thomas Roe the last two being ambassadors and emergent adventurers William Finch and Nicholas Whittington along with other group of travellers like the chaplain's namely Edward Terry and Henry Lord and also the religiously inclined Thomas Corvat, Tavernier and Bernie came in the later period which formed one crucial difference that is as the ideas in Europe changed and as products of changed civilization

⁷⁴ Asher, Catherine Blanshard, and Catherine Ella Blanshard Asher. *Architecture of Mughal India*. Cambridge University Press, 1992. 132-3,185.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 138, 175, 230, 262, 285.

⁷⁶ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2 - Scholar's Choice Edition*. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 215, 234.

they were also a harbinger of these ideas⁷⁷. Secondly, they also stayed for longer periods and left behind detailed accounts and it is here that we get clear ideas about the borderlands and our study of Assam seems to confirm this. What is more striking about Assam is that there is a new set of articles that are exotic and they include rhinoceros hide's and horns, aloe wood and musk in addition, the other articles mentioned are iron and ivory along with manufactured silk⁷⁸. Many other fruits and herbs are also mentioned and of special interest for Tavernier was the abundance of shellac of a red color and this was opinion of Tavernier and this was the best they could find in Asia and he also mentions the use of other types of silk in Assam. Tavernier's description of Assam is not the effect of political events and he's knowledgeable of them and talks in great detail about the invasion of the Mughals particularly of Mir Jumla who led an invasion of Assam but was repulsed⁷⁹. Of special interest for Assam the silk produced on the tree is made by an animal⁸⁰. In reality this is actually the silk cotton and also referring to Mulberry cultivation by the silkworms. This is evident from the fact that Tavernier records the expertise of the Ahom's in the making of guns of various kinds, match-locks, artillery and also big cannons. He was also under the impression that gunpowder entered China from Assam. More detailed information is available on the elephantry that was one of the mainstays of the Army and since Assam is one of the few regions that has considerable forest cover and also surrounded by hills that are the natural habitat of elephant's⁸¹. Another aspect which was striking is the employment

⁷⁷ Foster, Sir William. *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*. H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1921. 49, 62, 122, 188, 234, 289.

⁷⁸ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2 - Scholar's Choice Edition*. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 220-22.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 217.

⁸⁰ Baruah, SwarnaLata. *A Comprehensive History of Assam*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997. 165.

⁸¹ Ibid., 397.

of various hill people to gather the elephant and specific mention is made of a group of the tribe of Moran. The Moran were affiliated to the Ahom by tracing a common ancestry and also some similar shared cultural traits. This is one of the important descriptions on the training and use of elephants in warfare that contributed to a great shift along with the use of horse. Some of the important places included were Kamrup which is a capital where the King resides. He also mentions about the tomb of the king and a burial custom rather than the cremation which is undertaken for the Hindus. Some other aspects that are striking are the salt making from various methods like boiling of the bark of the banana tree as a substitute for the real salt. From all his writings it is clear that Assam was seriously starved of salt and salt literally was worth its weight in gold⁸². This will further be explored in the section on trade with Bhutan. Another aspect that struck Tavernier was the instance of dog eating which he says was rampant. Further he also talks about the seashells and the tortoise shells out of which bangles were made and these bangles were worn by both men and women and formed one of the most important sets of personal attire. These were cremated along with the body of the person who had passed away⁸³.

When you come to Assam, Tavernier's accounts are very useful in recreating the history of the region and had been used as such in the rewriting of the modern history of Assam and for many reasons. One of the primary reasons, for the constant historical engagement with a history of Assam is the making and unmaking of the borders of Assam. According to Rajen Saikia, the shape of Assam had been changing and the borders have been constantly

⁸² Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2* - Scholar's Choice Edition. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 221-22.

⁸³ Ibid., 223-4.

redrawn on account of the political demands and conditions of the day⁸⁴. As such, it is not only the borders that are being redrawn as a cartographic exercise but also as a historical exercise in defining what is Assam and what lies beyond. In this exercise, the bond of contention and this necessitates not the central region of Assam comprising the Brahmaputra valley but the borderlands, namely the plains in the North bordering Bhutan and the hills in the north-east and south-east. This is the region that Tavernier had depicted as the area from which good quality of elephants are found⁸⁵. If we discuss some of the wildlife, one gets an idea of the exotica that arose among people with regard to new animals. It is well known that after the Columbian exchange many new animals came to the old world from the new world along with crops. Some of the animals of the old world were also not known to India and these included Tiger, Turkey and the Zebra, both of which were depicted in paintings of the Mughals along with the other European imports⁸⁶. Though the elephant were known and depicted in a wide variety of forms in India, there was a crucial difference between the Asian and African elephant not only because of the cultural significance attached to elephants in India and Southeast Asia, where white elephants were held in great esteem as processors of spiritual power and therefore the Kings always were in search of white elephant⁸⁷. Laos, Burma and Thailand are the three countries where the white elephants are one of the auspicious cultural symbols drawing from extent from cultural beliefs and also the early Buddhist ideas of the Buddha's birth with a white

⁸⁴ Saikia, Rajen. *Social and Economic History of Assam*. Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2002. 12-13.

⁸⁵ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2 - Scholar's Choice Edition*. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 206.

⁸⁶ Koch, Ebba. "Jahangir as Francis Bacon's Ideal of the King as an Observer and Investigator of Nature." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, no. 3 (2009): 300.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 280.

elephant associated with the myth. The white elephants were in reality Albino elephants and their exotic value was because of their difference. On the contrary the African elephants which the Europeans had known were easily differentiated from the Asian elephants on account of their ear lobes that were white and also because of the two lips at the end of the trunk, whereas the Asian elephant had only one lip. This aspect was not liked and therefore not painted in Mughals paintings. Exotica, with relation to animal life and formed one of the important narratives throughout the world and was more so during the 16th century and later on account of the large-scale transfer of plant and animal life between the old and new world owing to the Columbian exchange and many such animals and plants⁸⁸. It is said that during the first encounter with the Native Americans who in the new world, the Spaniard's on horseback were understood to be one single animal with eight limbs rather than two separate animals so comprising the horse and the rider⁸⁹. The point of digressing from the main topic and elaborating on this is to understand the climate of opinion and the favorable audience that generated a yearning for exotica and tales from far-off lands. In this context Tavernier also look for exotica and the rhinoceros and its horn were the most important exemplars of this aspect. The rhinoceros's horn was supposed to have magical powers on account of its hardness and also used as an aphrodisiac in Middle Eastern cultures. In Middle Eastern cultures, particularly among the Arabs of Yemen, the Horn of the rhinoceros signified power and utility and was also used as a handle for a

⁸⁸ Fernandez-Armesto, Felipe. *Civilizations: Culture, Ambition, and the Transformation of Nature*. Simon and Schuster, 2001. 97, 242.

⁸⁹ Gates, Arthur Irving, and Mrs Celeste (Comegys) Peardon. *Practice Exercises in Reading*. Teachers college, Columbia University, 1932. 59.

dagger that was part of the attire and single manhood⁹⁰. It is not clear whether this association with Middle East had been worked out. And one may therefore say that the hardness of the rhinoceros, its skin and horn merited special phenomena and that was different and known for its robustness and found only in the locality of Assam and therefore elevated to the status of an exotic animal and one can glean references about the flora and fauna in Tavernier's writings⁹¹.

In addition, musk and aloes wood were also other two important items in high demand not only in Europe but also in West Asia, not only because of their smell but also because of their medicinal properties. Musk was produced by the musk deer as a secretion from the glands and also cast an exotic scent. Like a low wood, which in that also gave smell and also produced some ambience associated with an exotic otherworldliness, it immediately caught the attention of Tavernier⁹². Part of the reason is that since the ancient world frankincense was one of the most sought-after material for which kings waged war against one another and was also used in many of the religious ceremonies and many important networks from the highlands of Arabia to Damascus and places like Ctesiphon emerged as some of the most important trading marts of the old world⁹³. As a continuation of their properties, musk and other items emanating powerful smells and scents gained currency. Only in recent years had there been a new understanding of the history of the material culture not from an economic point of view but from a sensory perspective leading to works

⁹⁰ "Daggers Drawn in Yemen - Latimes".

⁹¹ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2* - Scholar's Choice Edition. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 220-22.

⁹² Ibid., 201-2.

⁹³ "The Story of Frankincense." Middle East Institute. <https://www.mei.edu/sqcc/frankincense>.

on the history of the senses. It is in this idea that this perspective fits in and shows how certain commodities associated with the social and sensory life of India gets transferred to Europe.⁹⁴ One has to keep in mind that the basic work of Tavernier was for European audience and he represented not all of what he saw but what the European audiences wanted. The European audiences were already having certain ideas of the Orient after the Crusades and particularly were interested in the material goods which they encountered which were being used by the Turks and the Arabs. When we talk of European audience, we are talking of different layers of European society that had just been restructured after the fall of feudalism. Feudal Europe consisted of the ecclesiastical society which was the literary elite and the nobility, most of whom were illiterate including the kings of many countries as literacy was not a tool that gave any value addition. In addition, to both these dominant groups were the vassals and the serfs who comprised the predominant majority of population of Europe. Therefore, after the Crusades and the Black Death, the demise of feudalism in England and France had already started, though the old order had not ended fully. On the remnants of this order rose strong monarchy and a new class of bourgeoisie centered in the towns. These towns were now dotting the landscape of Europe and aided by the geographical discoveries spreading the networks to all parts of the known world. The key driving force in the societal expansion of European merchants and the producing classes of the higher strata were collectively known as the bourgeoisie⁹⁵. The urban-based bourgeoisie with their broader visions and anti-feudal attitudes, were the main consumers of this new literature. In fact, this class was a forward-looking class and had set utopian

⁹⁴ "Project MUSE - Sandalwood and Carrion: Smell in Indian Religion and Culture by James McHugh".

⁹⁵ Anderson, Perry. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. Verso, 1996. 148-50.

visions and Mark's called this bourgeois as an emancipatory class for it hastened the death of feudalism. In contrast to the localized worldviews of feudalism, the worldviews of the bourgeoisie was more expansive and cosmopolitan⁹⁶. Unlike the nobility who used writing for the Church Fathers and the Friars was only instrumental with regard to religion, the bourgeoisie used writing not only for practical purposes but also as a new media of communication and leisure. It is this context of the urban-based bourgeoisie's interest that the regions of the far off parts of the world were represented and packaged to set their interests⁹⁷.

This becomes clearer when we talk about the aspects of certain commodities. Since the travellers preferred to look only at these commodities which were in short supply and for this, they relied on informers who would translate between English and the local languages in the case of Tripura it becomes more clear. Tavernier says that he got all the information about Tripura from three merchants who travelled to Arakan, Pegu, Dhaka and also Patna⁹⁸. From the information of the merchants, he makes it clear that he is only generalizing but adds a point that only if this is true, that is the versions of the merchant can be taken at full face value. He does not allow any great opinion about the natural produce of Tripura and says that are mentioning except gold which is exported to China and in return silver is brought back that is minted as Coins which was the first circulation in the Kingdom⁹⁹. The circulation of merchants in Arakan and other places also points to the transfer of

⁹⁶ "Glossary of Terms: Fe." <https://www.marxists.org>.

⁹⁷ Anderson, Perry. *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism*. Verso, 1996. 191.

⁹⁸ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2 - Scholar's Choice Edition*. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 214-6.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 216.

commodities but this point is not elaborated by Tavernier. He does not seem to have travelled to this region and therefore has not commented elaborate claims but is clearly aware of the borderland nature of the Tripura. His lack of intimate knowledge of geography has also resulted in certain incorrect facts about the borders of Tripura as leading to China. Bhutan is also the most important regions about which Tavernier had dealt at length. What is striking at the first glance of representation of Bhutan in Tavernier work is the importance given to trade and commodities along with the landscape and very surprisingly not devoting much space to religion¹⁰⁰. This is highly contrasting because literary narratives of Bhutan speak of this nation as an extension of Tibet and also about its religious nature. Among the most important items that are mentioned about Bhutan, two of them stand out-rhubarb and musk; both of these were in high demand in Europe and were eagerly awaited by the perfume and the apothecary¹⁰¹. This was because the birth of modern medicine and many other common diseases had led to severe consequences including loss of life that led to a higher mortality rate both among the adults and children and therefore this panacea for this was to be found in the secret medicines¹⁰². The medicines were not to be secret but were very rare and had to be precluded with great difficulty and this added to the mystique surrounding it. The question now is how this medicine reached Europe from Bhutan. It is here that one notices the travels of Tavernier through Persia and Arabia being

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 201-2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Tuttle, Gray, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. *The Tibetan History Reader*. Columbia University Press, 2013. 508-10.

employed in full form as they add to the missing puzzles of the traveler's itinerary¹⁰³. Patna, as he says rightly was the most important meeting places for the travellers and had a market where the treasures of the mountains like the above mentioned rhubarb and other items could be easily exchanged and sold off to merchants travelling to Multan and from there to different parts of Iran like at the Dabel and Tabriz¹⁰⁴. Tavernier is clearly on track when he talks about the connections between these regions and also the potential they had in the propagation of trade and establishment of networks. He also mentions about some of the important types of furs and the clothes that can be made from these. Tavernier goes into great detail about other drugs which are obtained from the Himalayan regions and does not make a distinction between Tibet and Bhutan¹⁰⁵. Whereas in reality many of these items are sourced from Tibet by the Bhutanese merchants about which Tavernier is unaware of¹⁰⁶. This is also because of thriving trade between Tibet and Bhutan particularly the transfer of rights to Tibet from Bhutan and the cultural influence on Bhutan by Tibet. In short, there was political trouble in Bhutan due to which the Tibetan lama Zhabdrung Rimpoche came with his followers and separated the political disorder and was instrumental in establishing the stability of the new ruling house of Bhutan¹⁰⁷. Tavernier speaks eloquently about the new ruling house of Bhutan, the ruler or the raja and is into Russian bodyguards. But surprising is that he does not speak about religion that had become a later day obsession

¹⁰³ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2* - Scholar's Choice Edition. Scholar's Choice, 2015.208.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Tuttle, Gray, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. *The Tibetan History Reader*. Columbia University Press, 2013. 457-8.

¹⁰⁷ "ShabdrungNgawangNamgyal - RangjungYeshe Wiki - Dharma Dictionnary." <http://rywiki.tsadra.org>.

among all the travellers travelling to Tibet and Bhutan. Further one of the most important aspects of Tavernier's travel is that this was one of the few periods in Tibetan history, particularly during the 17th century when it was open to trade and the large number of trading companies with networks as far as Lhasa and it was because of this aspect that the networks spawned. Tavernier's description of Bhutan as a borderland reveals its connection with not only Patna but also the regions of Persia, Turkey, Armenia, Russia and also the Tartary¹⁰⁸. These connections are revealed through the social life of commodities and while the rhubarb and the drug were much priced in Europe, exotic items of higher value that were priced in Bhutan included Amber¹⁰⁹. Amber was originally sourced from the regions of Poland and Baltic Europe and from thence through the Caspian's networks to Persia and from there to Kabul and from thence to Multan which is a great fit for merchants of many nationalities who travelled to large parts of India and all the regions north and the west and east¹¹⁰. Multan was connected to Patna and Tavernier gives two important routes to Bhutan, one through Patna and North ward through Bengal and the other through Gorakhpur, immediately beyond which lay the domain of the King of Nepal. This actually was another borderland and an abode of marshes and mosquitoes known as the terai¹¹¹. There is reported to have been an information on Gorakhpur by the Bhutanese and on this count Tavernier's observation on the regions of the Himalayas is very correct.

¹⁰⁸ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2 - Scholar's Choice Edition*. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 203.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 204.

¹¹⁰ Tuttle, Gray, and Kurtis R. Schaeffer. *The Tibetan History Reader*. Columbia University Press, 2013. 469-75.

¹¹¹ Tavernier, Jean Baptiste, and Valentine Ball. *Travels in India, Volume 2 - Scholar's Choice Edition*. Scholar's Choice, 2015. 206.

One summarizes the ideas of Tavernier as saying that he was a product of his time and interested in recording those commodities, ideas and practices that seem to be of value to European Society at that particular point of time. His knowledge of medicine gave a clear idea about the description of drugs and their trade. The origin and nativity of each of these plant and animal and mineral materials is right and his association of these with the territories and the different borders is on the dot and the perspective of the eastern Himalayas which Tavernier had given about the main polities is also very correct. But he is wrong on certain counts when he talks about the borders with China and also about his self-confessed eagerness to generalize based on very few sources that were distilled through informants¹¹². On the whole one can only applaud which Tavernier has given a generalized picture of the Himalayan region. While Tavernier's ideas about the Mughals world have been the subject of intense research, the conclusions about the Himalayan regions have largely remained uninitiated. One can only agree with the secondary writers who had analyzed Tavernier and say that his detection of the eastern Himalayas is an extension of his ideas of Mughals India.

¹¹² Ibid., 201, 212-3.

Chapter- 6

Travel writing and the Representations of Borderlands of the western Himalayas

6.1.0 Introduction

Western Himalayas had fascinated not only the traveller but also the pilgrim, the trader and later the spy along with the nomad who had the most lasting presence here. The same is the name of a book recently published detailing the multi-faceted nature of co-travellers in a caravan¹. Unlike any other region of the world, Western Himalayas have a certain inhospitable terrain on account of the altitude and secondly the secretive nature of the society of Tibet which led to another mystique². Thus, the travel writing on Western Himalayas were seen as a determined effort to penetrate an inhospitable land that held the key to Tibet, for it is through this region that people travel to Tibet, though there are also other travellers from Russia to Tibet who came via Mongolia and also from China. An associated question arising with this is that it can be studied through the travellers to Western Himalayas under a theme or are they all travellers who wanted to travel to Tibet and used Western Himalaya only as a springboard. This question does not have any satisfactory answer given the present state of knowledge but one clear indication is that in the present analysis of the state of our discourse on Western Himalayas, the trend is towards

¹ Khan, Sulmaan Wasif. *Muslim, Trader, Nomad, Spy: China's Cold War and the People of the Tibetan Borderlands*. UNC Press Books, 2015.

² Holdich, Sir Thomas Hungerford. *Tibet: The Mysterious*. Frederick A. Stokes, 1906. 6.

understanding the regional particularity on its own terms rather than as part of the spillover of Tibetan influence.

Though one can find shades of postcolonial influence in these readings that tend to support the colonial idea of regions and the residual regions that were seen as the cultural backwaters of larger regions, new ideas also have informed these understandings. While the large country of Russia was identified with Russian culture and people were identified as the great Russians, other regions bordering Russia like Belarus of the modern day, and similar other small countries were known as the Little Russians³. The patronising idea of the Great Russian as the ideal representative of the Russian nationality and ethnicity led to reactions articulated in diverse forms including church records from the 15th century⁴. Similarly, many parts of south-east Asia were also seen as an extension of China⁵. Likewise, parts of the borderlands of Bengal were also viewed in this way. Another glaring example is the Tamil kingdom of Jaffna in Sri Lanka that was seen as created by Indian influence⁶. The problem with all the approaches is that the little histories are all collapsed into a larger narrative that ultimately becomes the dominant narrative edging out certain possibilities. This idea therefore negates hybridity as a condition and whose concept enables the agency and any region particularly the borderlands regions now studied from the perspective of a region and not derivative discursive area of larger macro regions⁷.

³"Little Russia." <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?LittleRussia.htm>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Wang, Gungwu. *China and Southeast Asia: Myths, Threats and Culture*. World Scientific, 1999.

⁶ Rasanayagam, C., and Mudaliyar C. Rasanayagam. *Ancient Jaffna: Being a Research Into the History of Jaffna from Very Early Times to the Portugese Period*. Asian Educational Services, 1993. 272.

⁷ Goswami, Manu. *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space*. Orient Blackswan, 2004. 4, 29.

Keeping this approach in mind, Western Himalayas, whether they were used as a springboard or as a destination revealed certain facts and themes that were also not fully consonant with the Central Tibetan region and also was with the neighbouring Mughals India.

A large number of travellers visited Western Himalayas for a variety of purposes and that included Jesuits, other evangelists' travellers in the service of the East India Company, linguists and other assorted group of travellers including certain Orientalists. The first westerner to visit Ladakh was a Portuguese layman named Diogo d' Almeida who reported to the Portuguese authorities, the bishop of the church of Goa, which was the headquarters of the Portuguese mission in India about this strange land of Ladakh that was ruled by strange Christians⁸. However, this was mistaken to be the Nestorian Christians of the East on the borders of China, about whom the Portuguese had certain ideas since the time of Marco Polo⁹. In fact Nestorian Christianity was one of the religions of the courts of many of the polities of Inner Asia of the Tatar kingdoms and was thus collectively known as Tartary or Chinese Tartary to refer to the presence of Mongol Tartars¹⁰. Since then, this representation of a lost Kingdom of Christians and the lost years of Jesus Christ combined in strange ways to produce myths of the lost Christians and Jesus' lost years in India and Central Asia¹¹. A considerable output of scholarship on this topic has emerged today that

⁸ Jina, Prem Singh. *Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh*. Indus Publishing, 1995.

⁹ Twitchett, Denis C. *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 3, Sui and T'ang China, 589-906 AD, Part One*. Cambridge University Press, 1979. 34.

¹⁰ Twitchett, Denis C., Herbert Franke, and John King Fairbank. *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 6, Alien Regimes and Border States, 907-1368*. Cambridge University Press, 1994. 319.

¹¹ Hanson, James M. "Was Jesus a Buddhist?" *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 25 (2005): 75–77.

cannot be fully relegated to the realm of myth or secondary orality. In fact, the geography of the myth also shows the travel of the myth from the higher ranges of Afghanistan to the bordering regions well before the impact of the printing press or European travellers to imply that there is some kernel of evidence¹². Similar evidence is also traced to the earlier period during the period of the Mauryan Empire when Chandragupta Maurya sent embassies to these parts of West Asia and Africa and that included the ruler Ptolemy 11 Philadelphus of Egypt and it is theorised that most of the Indian influences reached as far as this point and were stored in the repository of the great library of Alexandria that was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world and from thence disseminated to the Western world through the Egyptian magi¹³. The magi again figure in the early biblical narrative as the three wise men from the East and these are identified as the three magi priests from the East who followed the religion of the magi¹⁴. The discovery of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts in Egypt had also complicated this problem¹⁵. As of date there is no conclusive evidence to prove that Jesus spent the lost years in Ladakh or Kashmir, though parallels are striking between Buddhism and Christianity. The main argument is that the early and later Jewish religion did not speak of compassion but of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth whereas this was supported by the message of Jesus who unlike the other Jewish prophets of the old Testament did not repeat the same ideas of Yahweh and practical compassion by asking his followers to show the other cheek. Similarly, Jesus is credited with walking on the water just like the Buddha walk on water and there are many striking

¹² Kaiser, Andreas Faber. *Jesus Died in Kashmir*. Abacus, 1978.

¹³ Hanson, James M. "Was Jesus a Buddhist?" *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 25 (2005): 76.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Kaiser, Andreas Faber. *Jesus Died in Kashmir*. Abacus, 1978.

parallels that have been generalised¹⁶. To make the long narrative short, one need to understand that there was always a European obsession with a lost colony of Christians and the legend of Prester John, the king of Africa and more specifically Ethiopia presiding over a colony of Christians was one of the fantasies of early modern Europe¹⁷.

Even if these people were not Christians, the idea was to evangelise them and the Jesuits or the Society of Jesus founded by Ignatius of Loyola spearheaded this campaign with a rare military zeal. This military zeal was inherited from the residue of the crusading spirit of Europe and it is no wonder that the earlier name of the organisation is known as the soldiers of Jesus and later renamed as the Society of Jesus¹⁸. The Jesuits as the followers of this order were known for one of those Catholics orders like the Capuchins who travelled to far-off lands to spread the word of God¹⁹. In the early days of the 17th century, it was primarily an Iberian affair with the Spaniards and Portuguese competing to win over the heat and soles. The Spaniards met with large successes after the discovery of the New World and the destruction of the Inca Empire at the Tenochtitlan by the Spanish conquistador, Hernando Cortes. Inca ruler Atahualpa refused to embrace Christianity for many reasons and one of the primary reasons was that the sun would fail to rise if you left the fate of his forefathers and then all his people would be doomed to death. Even under great duress, the Inca ruler did not submit to any and was given a choice of the method of

¹⁶ Hanson, James M. "Was Jesus a Buddhist?" *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 25 (2005): 82-4.

¹⁷"Prester John | Legendary Ruler." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

¹⁸ Potter, Roland. "ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA, SOLDIER OF CHRIST." *Life of the Spirit* (1946-1964) 12, no. 136 (1957): 172-76.

¹⁹ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 107, 309.

death and was burnt at the stake. The popular imagination continued to haunt the Spaniards and in the local imagination of the Indians he was known as another saint of the Catholic tradition -San Juan de Atahualpa²⁰. Today Christianity in Latin America is at a considerable distance from the Roman Catholic faith of the Iberian Peninsula as it incorporates many of the residual traditions of the American Indian beliefs, creating a situation of hybridity²¹. As the Catholic tradition was opened to the admission of new saint's to the pantheon of saints, the Catholics were at a considerable advantage to influence and imbibe the local traditions through the medium of miracles. Holy men and women performing miracles were selected after careful scrutiny and were beautified and later declared saints. French history brought about Joan of Arc who became the patron saint of large parts of France. In their ignorance, the early travellers may have identified Ladakh and the Buddhist monks wrongly as Christians²². However, the story does not end here because of the Jesuit missions that continued in this vein.

6.1.2 Antonio D' Andrade visit to Western Himalayas

Antonio D' Andrade was one of the earliest European travellers and the pioneer and the first to visit different places in India²³. He was born in 1580 Portugal which was at its power and prosperity after having been fully cleared of the effects of the Crusades, the Iberian Peninsula witnessed the first ethnic cleansing in 1492 during the time of the rulers, Queen

²⁰ Cardoza-Orlandi, Carlos F., and Justo L. González. *To All Nations From All Nations: A History of the Christian Missionary Movement*. Abingdon Press, 2013. 157.

²¹ Ibid., 177.

²² Jina, Prem Singh. *Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh*. Indus Publishing, 1995. 13.

²³ Ibid., 13.

Isabella and King Ferdinand and how soon the ruling houses of Castile and Aragon were united. The last Muslim stronghold of Granada held by the king Boabdil Surrendered without a fight and gave the key to the victorious armies from Castile²⁴. It is said that the King further composed a poem admonishing her son and the fate of the Kingdom of Granada and it accuses the king Boabdil of: ‘he wept like a woman, for a kingdom he could not defend like a man’²⁵. After this, all the Muslims and Jews of the Iberian Peninsula were either forcibly converted to Roman Catholicism or forced to leave. After the revival the Crusades, this is one of moments of crowning glory for Christendom after the recovery of Spain from 700 years of Muslim rule that was seen as an interlude. The point of raising this issue was that Antonio D’ Andrade was a product of a particular context wherein, there was an idea of muscular Christianity taking place. In fact the Society of Jesus-the organisational Jesuits was originally known as the soldiers of Jesus keeping their knowledge of the soldiers who thought for the cross²⁶. Furthermore, Antonio D’ Andrade was also scored in the Catholic literature that had become eclectic and was no longer only focusing on theological studies. It is keeping these aspects in mind that we see the multifaceted nature of the travels of Antonio D’ Andrade. In the 17th century, when East India Company’s presence was felt primarily in the three presidencies of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, large parts of India were unexplored and from their base in Goa²⁷, the Catholic Mission started heading to different parts of the country and had met with initial success in

²⁴ Fernandez-Armesto, Felipe. *1492: The Year Our World Began*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013. 35.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Potter, Roland. “ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA, SOLDIER OF CHRIST.” *Life of the Spirit* (1946-1964) 12, no. 136 (1957): 172–76.

²⁷ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 5, 9-12.

converting some of the indigenous Christians of Kerala²⁸ to Roman Catholicism, though it triggered a split between the followers of the earlier tradition who called themselves the Orthodox Christians and followers of the Orthodox Church whose patriarch would be headquartered at Antioch²⁹. Thus, there emerged a Christian community that was active in Goa and from here the first traveller to Ladakh, Diego D' Almeria hinted about the presence of certain lost Christian community's in the borders of Cathay, which was essentially the name for China originating from the Khitan Kingdom that bordered Chinese Tartary³⁰. Based on these leads Antonio D' Andrade travelled to Delhi with the intention of going to the Himalayan regions that was far beyond and of whose geography he was not fully clear of³¹. Proceeding from Delhi after a stay at the Mughals court to where he understood the complexities of travelling in India, he seized the opportunity when he heard that a group of Hindu pilgrims were planning a month long travel to the mouth of the Ganges where the famous temple of Badrinath was located³². He gives a detailed analysis of the travel from Delhi to this borderland and specifies that it was ruled by the Raja of Srinagar and this was not the Srinagar of Kashmir but the Srinagar in Garhwal³³. Further north, he travelled to the region of Kumaon and beyond to the source of the river Ganga³⁴. This is one of the most important parts of his trip and shows the real borderland where the river Ganga

²⁸ "St. Gregorios Abdul' Galeel, Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan."

²⁹ "Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East."

³⁰ Jina, Prem Singh. *Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh*. Indus Publishing, 1995. 13.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Allen, Charles. *A Mountain In Tibet: The Search for Mount Kailas and the Sources of the Great Rivers of Asia*. Hachette UK, 2013.

³³ Hunter, Sir William Wilson. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*. Trübner & Company, 1885.

³⁴ Jina, Prem Singh. *Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh*. Indus Publishing, 1995. 14.

emerges from the Indian side of the Tibetan plateau from the mouth of the glazier. This region is very important as it is mentioned in the Hindu texts particularly the Puranas that had talked about geography and also in the later pilgrim maps by the 12th century A.D.³⁵. The Puranas date back to the fourth century A.D.'s other technical maps modelled on the influence of the Arabic cartographers which reached India during the period of the Delhi Sultanate also did not precisely mapped the Himalayan regions³⁶. Antonio D' Andrade's description of the region of the mouth of Ganga and the passage from their two Ladakh is unparalleled³⁷. The clearest reason for this is the noticeable shift in the representation of regions from the perspective of sacred geography to one of physical geography. In reality, he wanted to go to Tibet and his intentions were revealed after questioning when he was arrested by the officials of the raja of Srinagar. After questioning by the authorities, he resumed his onward journey as he was not seen as a great source of danger and went to Ladakh³⁸.

This begins a new episode in the history of travel writing in Ladakh with the journey of Antonio D' Andrade reaching Tsaparang. Antonio D' Andrade was warmly welcomed by the ruler of the Kingdom of Guge and his idea of starting a mission there to spread the word of the Lord was almost nearing fruition when there is a rivalry between the Buddhist monks and his ideas³⁹. This led to a clash orchestrated by the brother of the ruler of the Kingdom

³⁵ Gole, Susan. *Early Maps of India*. Sanskriti, 1976. 8, 38.

³⁶ Ibid., 27, 30.

³⁷ Jina, Prem Singh. *Famous Western Explorers to Ladakh*. Indus Publishing, 1995. 13-14.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Mullooly, Michael McCann. *Jesuit Missionary Efforts in Tibet*. University of Wisconsin--Madison, 2003. 20, 25.

of Guge and the king was dethroned which led Antonio D' Andrade to retreat back⁴⁰. The original intention of Antonio D' Andrade was actually go to Tibet and it is here that there is a lot of confusion about his writings. One of the earliest confusion is about the travel to Kashmir that never happened because he referred to the raja of Srinagar and meant it to be the Raja of Srinagar in Garhwal. Therefore, the chances of him visiting the Valley of Kashmir do not exist and this cannot be based on a singular reference only to the raja of Srinagar whereas the associated facts are absent. Similarly, his visit to the lake Manasarowar in western Tibet which is sacred to the Hindus, Jains and Buddhists is also wrong because he did not visit the region but only came close to it in the Kingdom of Guge. We therefore get a clear picture of the regions of Garhwal, Kumaon and the borderland tends to the northern parts of Ladakh and western Tibet. The capital of the Kingdom of Guge was situated in Tholing which is just hundred and 50 miles from Leh, the capital of Ladakh⁴¹. He does not mention the name of the capital and like his successor Desideri who mentioned the name wrongly as Latha, Antonio D' Andrade did not view much reference to this region. It is interesting to know that he was the cause for religious rights in the Kingdom of Guge as it is a combination of two factors. One was the isolationist nature of Tibet who wanted to keep all foreigners out after certain problems with the Nepalese in the 17th century and hence did not allow any foreigners as they were supposed to be the enemies of the Dharma⁴². This also included Chinese and other traditional neighbours like the Nepalese number was regulated. It is also because of the fear of stability being lost.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 29.

⁴¹ Hāṇḍā, Omacanda. *Buddhist Western Himalaya: A Politico-Religious History*. Indus Publishing, 2001. 132.

⁴² Norbu, Dawa. "The 1959 Tibetan Rebellion: An Interpretation." *The China Quarterly*, no. 77 (1979): 74-9.

Secondly, the heightened religious zeal of the Portuguese was a mismatch in a place that already had been founded on bedrock of religious zeal and revivalism. According to both popular memory and history, the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet followed two major movements known as the first and second diffusion. During the period of the first diffusion beginning in the seventh century A.D, the early Indian influences as also influences from Inner Asia brought about Buddhism to the Tibetan court and headed to coexist with the traditional Bon religion. In this situation there was the Bonpo-Buddhist rivalry which led to the killing of the last Buddhist Emperor of Tibet, Ralphachen by his own brother Lang Dharma who was a follower of the Bon. This incident in 842 A.D. led to the collapse of the Tibetan Empire once and for all and Tibet was never destined to become a military state again⁴³. In a state absence of central authority and confusion, Buddhists revival started from the western Tibetan kingdom of Guge and this is known as a second diffusion of Buddhism⁴⁴. Therefore, there was some idea about the destruction of Buddhism by outsiders and hence the lack of any warm invitation to outsiders in Tibet. It is rather a unique phenomenon that the king of the Western Tibetan kingdom of Guge accorded such a good reception to Antonio.

One may summarise his travels by mentioning the uncharted territories that he covered and also for bringing the two important regions at the geographical extremity is of the Indian subcontinent-the source of the river Ganga and also the borderland of Ladakh into the

⁴³ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 71, 73-5.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 74.

scheme of historical enquiry⁴⁵. Though a religious emissary, he never achieved great success in this field and his writings on theology etc and action on this aspect also are minimal, but the achievements in the field of exploration for charting out new routes by a person who was not a professional traveller is a rare achievement. One can only say that he was the path breaker who cleared the path for the future travellers to the western Himalayas⁴⁶. In doing so he also accounted for the diversities of the region both in case of the physical and human geography.

6.1.3 Ippolito Desideri Travels to Tibet and Western Himalayas

Among the most important Jesuits was Ippolito Desideri, who was in competition with the Capuchins monks in Tibet⁴⁷. His travels in Ladakh are clearly known, though he spent more time in Tibet, he also spent considerable time learning about the religion of the Tibetans in Ladakh and discussing with some of the eminent Lamas. One of the main points of discussion is the hurdle that Desideri faced in convincing the Tibetans to accept Christianity and give up their belief in the ‘false god’ met with zero success which is also revealed in his learning about the Tibetan Buddhist religion and his outpourings about the same⁴⁸. In Ladakh, Desideri had studied with some of the great Lamas who had already been trained in Lhasa, the seat of the three great monasteries. The crux of the debate was to get the Tibetans to acknowledge their gods as false and the Christian deity as the

⁴⁶ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 4, 36-7, 96.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 120.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 84-5, 220-2.

Supreme Being⁴⁹. The clinching point for the Tibetans was that they do not acknowledge any god or supernatural beings. Desideri writes in contempt that it not only do not acknowledge God but they also do not acknowledge the creator and believe that the universe is self-made. In this heated debates on religion, the idea of denying any causation to a divine agency was appalling to Desideri and was a product of his times and also a firm believer in God⁵⁰.

It is this point that had brought about a renewed interest in the last couple of years and had created ripples in the academia for the simple reason that travel networks are now being imagined as agents of knowledge transmission spanning the distance of half the world. The recent stimulus for such an exercise comes from the work of Alison Gopnik, a psychologist by training and a new convert to history spurred by her interest in the travel connections of Desideri. After severe depression that almost ruined her, she started reading about Tibetan Buddhism and practising meditation for own self-healing and immediately came upon the translation connections between Tibet, Ladakh at the wider Western world⁵¹. Her methods were mainly to plot the exchange of ideas along networks and she argued that the Jesuits were not just engaged only in religion but also in a wide array of subjects including natural and human sciences. These works, she argues were found in the libraries of the Jesuits and most notably in the library of La Fleche in France, very near Paris. She argues that Desideri's works were already there in this library and could have been the source for the famous continental philosopher David Hume's classic work titled, "A treatise on human nature" which was the first work in Western philosophy to ascribe to action to rational

⁴⁹ Ibid., 272.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ "How David Hume Helped Me Solve My Midlife Crisis - The Atlantic."

agency rather than in divine agency and explained that human actions were not the result of divine agency or predestination⁵². For Alison, the Scottish philosopher Hume who suffered a serious mental disorder with loss of confidence in ageing was able to recover from this ailment similar to hers after abode with the Buddhist philosophy which she too had. For Hume, it was the ideas of Desideri in the library of La Fleche that turned out to be the major ideational stimulant⁵³. Further works on Hume and Desideri by Alison had also elaborated on it. Not only was it Tibet but also Siam was under the King Narai⁵⁴. He was the only Siamese or Thai king to allow foreigners to come and settle for short periods and also find gainful employment. At this time in the 17th century capital of Siam, there were many debates between Buddhists monks and in one such debates between a Buddhist monk and the European and the nature of religion⁵⁵. The Buddhists flatly denied the existence of any superordinate being about humans or a divine being⁵⁶. It is these two influences that Alison suggests made up a staple of David Hume to credit his philosophy with one of the most important contributions of all time⁵⁷. They are many debates raging on this topic but one thing that can be said with certainty is that the travel writing and travel literature had begun to be taken seriously after this claim by Alison. It is in fact a new revelation that the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Love, Ronald S, Monarchs, Merchants and Missionaries in Early Modern Asia: The Missions Étrangères in Siam, 1662-1684. *The International History Review*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Mar., 1999), 1-3.

⁵⁶ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 272-77.

⁵⁷ How David Hume Helped Me Solve My Midlife Crisis - The Atlantic."

Jesuits were also interested in other forms of knowledge rather than religion only⁵⁸. We find this attitude among the Jesuits in China and Inner Asia where they are part of the cartographic exercises with father Matteo Ricci undertaking one of the most important cartographic survey for the Ching Empire⁵⁹. What is striking about Desideri's work is that it is one of those rare works that found an audience immediately in one of the important centres of knowledge production in Europe and was wrapped up in right earnest to transform the philosophical direction of Continental philosophy⁶⁰. The Jesuits are now being acknowledged to have worked on a wide range of subjects and they include landscape, literature and many other aspects. Desideri can be considered as a cultural broker who cross-fertilised the eastern and western ideas by his travels that are to be unfortunately cut short because of rivalry with the Capuchin Friars⁶¹.

From the travels of Desideri we can understand four or five important points that help us to locate the role of the western Himalayan borderlands particularly Ladakh on the grand narrative of world history. Firstly, while Desideri's travels are located in Tibet, as they were the most productive part of the period, the preparation and understanding of Tibetan Buddhism started and matured in Ladakh⁶². It is here that the regional variations of

⁵⁸ Pomplun, Trent. "Introduction: Christian Missions and the History of Religions on. History of Religions", Vol. 50, No. 4, Jesuits Missionaries in China and Tibet. 327.

⁵⁹ Rubiés, Joan-Pau. "Missionary Encounters in China and Tibet: From Matteo Ricci to Ippolito Desideri." Edited by Ronnie Po-chia Hsia and Trent Pomplun. History of Religions 52, no. 3 (2013): 270–3.

⁶⁰ Steward, T. Gordon. "1774: The Scottish Enlightenment Meets the Tibetan Enlightenment." *Journal of World History*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2011. 455-6.

⁶¹ Pomplun, Trent. "Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Ippolito Desideri." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* Vol. 29, 2009. 97-9.

⁶² Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 87.

Buddhism were noticeable but not taken into account by Desideri for whom on one side was an abstracted version of Tibetan Buddhism and on the other side was the contradiction with idol worship⁶³. This becomes clearer to him when he tries to explain the denial of God which the Tibetans hold so dear to and this was dealt to him not only in Tibet but also in the great monasteries of Ladakh where the lamas debated with him⁶⁴. Debating was one of the traditions in the Buddhist world and there are many stories from different parts of the Buddhist world about how the proselytising Christians were invited to debate with Buddhist masters and ultimately it always led into the question of the creator and since the Buddhists denied the role of a creator, they were all more rational ground and gave constant explanation that did not rest on metaphysics and the divine agency⁶⁵. The only difference between the Southern Buddhist and the Tibetan Buddhist was that the idea of debate was a well-established tradition in the monasteries about which Desideri writes of⁶⁶. In recent memory, the debates are fewer though the debates between people of different religions and Buddhists were very high during the early mediaeval period and the notable three debates in Sri Lanka were as follows: three public debates one at Uyanwita in 1866 CE, the second at Gampola in 1871 CE and the last at Panadura in 1873 CE⁶⁷. These are some of the landmarks in the modern history of Buddhism in contact with other religions. Therefore, Desideri's debates with the monks in the monasteries of Lhasa were much is

⁶³ Tucci, Giuseppe. "The Travels of Ippolito Desideri. Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, No. 2, 1993. 353.

⁶⁴ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 91.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 277.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Sugataratan, Kahapola, and Kahapola Sugataratana. "Philosophical Aspects of the PānadurāVādaya." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka*, 49 (2004): 53–66.

written about and for which he has earned a place for himself as one of the three greatest Westerners who explored and wrote about Tibet, second being Alexander Cosoma De Koros the Hungarian and third being Tucci the Italian⁶⁸. It is therefore one of the greatest critics of Desideri to have brought about the knowledge of Tibet to the Western world and it is more clearly written in the third book chapters 11 to 14 and chapter 18⁶⁹. These are the pages that are replete with references to the monastic customs of disputation⁷⁰. The idea of disputation or Vada was one of the most important philosophical and polemical devices deployed by people holding diverging religious views in ancient India. The victor would be felicitated with a garland and the loser would accept the fate of the victor⁷¹. Some of the important Buddhists were said to have defeated and converted many Brahmans and other people into the Buddhist fold by defeating them in debate. Nagarjuna, Dignaga etc are credited with this⁷². The great Hindu philosopher and proponent of Advaita or Monism, Adi Shankara is said to have defeated Mandan Mishra in a debate and converted the latter to its use. It is for this reason that he is also referred to as a Buddha in disguise⁷³.

For the other point on multiple centres of knowledge production in the West, the idea that the monastery of La Fleche which is a Christian monastery in France was engaged in multifaceted cutting-edge knowledge production and its linkages with other centres like Delhi, Ayuddhya in Siam, Pondicherry under French rule in India and all were part of one global

⁶⁸ Reidy, M. V. "Some Jesuit Pioneers." *Irish Monthly*, Vol. 61, No. 724, 1933. 610-13.

⁶⁹ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 221-7.

⁷¹ Ganeri, Jonardon. *Indian Logic: A Reader*. Psychology Press, 2001. 184.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 185.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 54, 58.

network⁷⁴. It is thus tempting at this point to bring this whole idea of ‘southernization’ postulated by Lynda Schaffer whose article of the same name in the *Journal of world history* argued that the prosperity of the West was mainly due to the material production from India and Southeast Asia and she places sugar cane and sugar from India and also cotton from India and rice of the Champa variety from a kingdom bearing the same name in modern-day Vietnam which ultimately tilted the agrarian balance of China by allowing for rice to be grown in semi-arid locations with less water⁷⁵. Along with this, a variety of spices from Southeast Asia also complimented the picture. The other two important inventions she accounts for is the printing press which are supposed to have been invented in Europe by Johannes Guttenberg was actually also brought from China⁷⁶. She convincingly argues that there was also a movable printing press in Korea during the 10 century A.D. and accounts for this printing press to have existed as a Buddhist necessity to print the texts of Buddhism⁷⁷. However, she talks about the block printing presses of Tibet and says that the European printing press originated from the knowledge transfer brought about by the Mongolian lama slaves⁷⁸. The point is very clear as Mongolia became a Buddhist nation and the Lama slaves therefore had clear Tibetan connections which she makes it more elaborate by pointing to the printing on the monasteries of Sichuan which is a borderland between Tibet and China⁷⁹. Finally, she comes to the third rate conversion of

⁷⁴ How David Hume Helped Me Solve My Midlife Crisis - The Atlantic.”

⁷⁵ Shaffer, Lynda. “Southernization”. *Journal of World History* 5, No. 4 (1994): 9.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007. 261-3.

the West, the gunpowder that came from China and says that it was in reality identified by Indian Buddhist monks who elaborated on the properties of certain soils and found fit to the inflammable and therefore the gunpowder was born⁸⁰. In all, the magnetic compass from China, the gunpowder from China and the printing press from China were the real game changer in Europe⁸¹. However Lynda Shaffer's understanding of the second and third as emanating from the borderlands disrupts this strong narrative⁸². Equally important is the aspect that she had never mentioned about Desideri and the propagation of what is called as rationality in Europe by the Scottish Enlightenment⁸³.

This also known as Buddhist enlightenment and the important philosophical questions on the nature of non-divine agency propounded by Hume that served as one of the main directions of the Enlightenment was not taken up by Lynda Shaffer. If we compliment her by adding this point, then the whole idea of the relation between the West and the East gets radically changed.

The idea of Buddhist atheism that was really needed among many other scholar was wrongly attributed to Desideri who never used this term and as the writer Trent Pomplun and the visit itself came as a relief. Pomplun writes that the idea of this term actually was an invention of later scholars but Desideri became one of the important reference points⁸⁴. Another interesting aspect is the identification of western Tibet and the borderlands of

⁸⁰ Shaffer, Lynda. "Southernization". *Journal of World History* 5, No. 4 (1994): 10.

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Steward, T. Gordon. "1774: The Scottish Enlightenment Meets the Tibetan Enlightenment." *Journal of World History*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 2011.

⁸⁴ Rubiés, Joan-Pau. "Missionary Encounters in China and Tibet: From Matteo Ricci to Ippolito Desideri." Edited by Ronnie Po-chia Hsia and Trent Pomplun. *History of Religions* 52, no. 3 (2013): 280.

Ladakh and Baltistan as second and first Tibet and the original Tibet and the third Tibet clearly shows his concept of the idea of region and regional difference and he had done this without reference to the cartographic understanding but is still right on dot⁸⁵. But there are some problems in identifying the places⁸⁶. It is presumed that interaction with the Royal family who received a mail but on account of intrigue was forced to leave Ladakh must have given him this insight. The King Nyima Namgyal ruled over Ladakh at the time of his visit⁸⁷. This visit itself came as a great relief after staying on the valley for long time and he moved from there on September after the rainy season was over and described in detail the province of Punjab and some aspects of global life and also the region of Kashmir⁸⁸. Though he translates with some orthographical errors he is very much right and many talks about Kashmir as the terrestrial paradise which was one of the eight gates of paradise dating from the period of the Mughals when the Mughals emperor Jahangir, called this in a couplet if there is a paradise, this is it, this is it, this is it⁸⁹. Clearly Desideri mentions what he calls Ladakh or second Tibet and gives a very important explanation that contrasts with modern day idea of seeing Kashmir as a rich place and Ladakh as the poorer region⁹⁰. On the contrary Desideri says that Ladakh or second Tibet is a great source of

⁸⁵ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 77-82.

⁸⁶ Tucci, Giuseppe. "The Travels of Ippolito Desideri." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 2, (April 1993). 353-4.

⁸⁷ Jina, Prem Singh. *Ladakh: The Land and the People*. Indus Publishing, 1996. 90.

⁸⁸ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 77-8.

⁸⁹ Shashi, Shyam Singh. *Encyclopaedia Indica: Jahangir and Nur Jahan*. Anmol Publications, 1999. 294.

⁹⁰ Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 85.

riches to Kashmir and he is very right as the merchants of Kashmir which he describes in great detail to second Tibet and carries back loads of wool protruded very miserable prices⁹¹. The enormity of this load is seen in his description when he says that they carry back infinite number of loads of wool. The wool is spun and stitched on Kashmir after being woven and provides employment to a very large number of people and also great source of revenue⁹².

Chapter 8 in book 1 is titled as: our departure from Kashmir and the journey to Lhata, capital of second Tibet. Desideri begins very dramatically with the following quote, on 17 May 1755 when the snow began to melt and the roads became practicable, we left the city of Kashmir and only reached the end of the hilly but pleasant and fertile and well populated district of Kashmir on the 29th⁹³. We then found ourselves at the foot of a very high, steep and formidable mountain called Kantel, on whose summit is the boundary between Kashmir and lesser Tibet, called on Persian call Tibet, in Hindustan Chhota Tibet and called by the inhabitants Baltistan. Desideri's ideas about this region is very clear in the sense that the regional particularity and uniqueness of the three regions of Tibet, Ladakh and Baltistan could be understood by him is remarkable for a man coming from region where such landscapes with large swaths of endless and treeless plain land and mountains could be easily generalised as one region⁹⁴. The question is how did he come to such a conclusion of finely demarcating the three different regions? One of the hint given is that comes out where the journey to China is possible through this route but takes a full nine months and

⁹¹ Ibid., 86-8.

⁹² Ibid., 80.

⁹³ Ibid., 78, 82.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 86, 88, 94-5.

in the words of Desideri during which all fertility and vegetation ceases, nought is to be seen save the arid, barren desolation and horror of the Caucasians mountains, called by geographers Dorsum Orbis⁹⁵. It seems that the combination of both physical and human geography combined to create a picture which did not rest on just the geographical deterministic but on a possibilistic view. This further confirmed many talks about the name of the region as mentioned earlier in the three different languages and later says that the language of this region, referring to Baltistan although different from that spoken in third Tibet, by which he means the real Tibet is evidently derived from the same root⁹⁶. This caps the point when he displays a fine distinction between the three regions not only in their geographical make up not so easily discernible but also the polity and the cultural make-up from both the insider and outsider perspective which he gets after interaction with the indigenous people. This is another significant points and forms part of the fourth point related to the travels of Desideri and is understood by the writers as cultural accommodation⁹⁷. This term is employed to understand his travels in Tibet and the way in which they could understand and consists of the philosophical terms in Tibetan language. The present translator of the 14th Dalai Lama opines that Desideri's work is a very high standard of Tibetan language and can easily be compared with one of the best in the world⁹⁸. Having attained such a mastery in a very short period not only speak of individual genius and perseverance but also of what the secondary writers called as cultural

⁹⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 99-100.

⁹⁷ Pomplun, Trent. "Buddhist-Christian Dialogue in Ippolito Desideri." *Buddhist-Christian Studies* Vol. 29 (2009). 97.

⁹⁸ Jr, Donald S. Lopez, and Thupten Jinpa. *Dispelling the Darkness: A Jesuits Quest for the Soul of Tibet*. Harvard University Press, 2017. 23, 72.

accommodation. This aspect is focused largely as an act taking place on Tibetan soil that was the theatre for Desideri's venture⁹⁹.

When we come to the region of Baltistan, we have very few secondary works even to this day as this region is mentioned as being under the shadow of Pakistan occupied Kashmir and therefore studied under the larger subsumation of the Pakistani nationalist narrative¹⁰⁰. On the other hand, its position within the State of Jammu and Kashmir and has also not been explored much in the postcolonial period on account of the illegal occupation of the territory by Pakistan¹⁰¹. In this aspect one gets a clear understanding from the description of Desideri regarding Baltistan or First Tibet. In the postcolonial period, many Indian scholars have confused all of Pakistan occupied Kashmir as a single unit whereas the Northern areas of Baltistan are distinct from the other regions of the Pakistan occupied Kashmir which is contiguous to Jammu and the valley of Kashmir. This region is actually populated by people speaking a type of Punjabi known as Pahari Punjabi meaning hill Punjabi and this is one of the important aspects of understanding a region through cultural accommodation has shown to led on the life of the common people as he remarks in his description of the houses of people in Kashmir¹⁰².

⁹⁹ Ibid., 54, 108.

¹⁰⁰ Puri, Luv. *Across the Line of Control: Inside Pakistan-Administered Jammu and Kashmir*. Hurst Publishers, 2012. 33-4.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 8-12.

¹⁰² Desideri, Ippolito. *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri 1712-1727*. Asian Educational Services, 1995. 79.

The landscape of Ladakh is 40 days journey from Kashmir and there are no routes to be travel by animals and everything must be done only on foot with all the provisions¹⁰³. The craggy hills and precipices and its reflection causing snow blindness is described again and again and describes of one accident and a large number of people in every caravan. He also describes about the passports issued by the rulers of Ladakh permitting them to go to Tibet or what he called Third Tibet¹⁰⁴. We get a clear idea from this about the regulation of borders by the issue of passports and other travel documents by the rulers of the early modern period. Therefore, the idea of certain travel documents and the idea of the foreigner are clear in the minds of the rulers as an established practice. If it was not an established practice, such a matter of documentation should not have risen and we get an example of later passports in the travels of Alexander Csoma De Koros from Hungary. While there are many things that Desideri mentioned of which religion is the most important element, and landscape too. In order to get to the entire breadth of the borderlands, one must find that in Desideri narrative they occupy only few chapters but these are some of the formatting chapters as they are given him an idea of Tibet before going to Tibet proper that he acknowledges also.

After the Italian traveller and Jesuit monk, Desideri who went to Ladakh, we have a group of travellers who were administrators in the employee of the various European Companies. After the age of exploration that began in the 15th century, many of the European mercantile Companies spread their wings in India and other parts of Asia which they called by different names as India and thus we have the Dutch East Indies meaning that its eastern

¹⁰³ Ibid., 85.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 101.

India and also the companies named after the geographical domain known as the VOC or the Dutch East India company¹⁰⁵. Similarly there is also the English East India Company that was founded on 31st December 1600 and Charter of the Queen of England¹⁰⁶. In this age of competition between these trading companies we have many adventures being thrown up who are actually sponsored by the companies to further their goals of mercantilism and political expansionism. It is in this teacher that we find the name of a Dutch man named Samuel Van Der Putte who was at first working in Java and is representative of the expansionist attitudes of the European merchant companies¹⁰⁷.

It was at this time that after the failure of his mission to Java a new project by its twist of fate brought the person to Ladakh and who was the layman and was languishing in Java in Indonesia and is on the verge of his death. He was ready to burn his dairies since he feared that they may be misused it¹⁰⁸. His travel to Tibet is dated in the year 1728 and further details are obscure¹⁰⁹. The next traveller is also a product of the rivalry between the different companies of the West and like the Dutch traveller who is in the employee of the Dutch East India company or VOC, their focus of attention was predominantly the Dutch Eastern Indonesia and their largest success was in a maritime world that also limited their approach even in mainland south-east Asia. The only presence of the Dutch East India

¹⁰⁵ Bowen, H. V., Margarette Lincoln, and Nigel Rigby. *The Worlds of the East India Company*. Boydell & Brewer, 2002. 50.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁷ Landon, Perceval. *The Opening of Tibet: An Account of Lhasa and the Country and People of Central Tibet and of the Progress of the Mission Sent There by the English Government in the Year 1903-4*. Asian Educational Services, 1996. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 9.

¹⁰⁹ Sandberg, Graham. *The Exploration of Tibet: Its History and Particulars from 1623 to 1904*. Thacker, Spink & Company, 1904. 59.

Company in the Indian subcontinent was in Sri Lanka where there was considerable and also in some parts of eastern India along the coastline¹¹⁰. On the contrary the Anglo-French wars sealed the fate of the French in India heralding the supremacy of the English East India company through complex political manoeuvring that included battles and wars followed by treaties and agreements between other Europeans and also with the traditional rulers and forms of governance which therefore do not have large number of references to the Dutch man but only fleeting references that must be further explored to get a more comprehensive picture of the European region.

With the establishment of the British East India Company, there was a rush to get to China trade as it is believed that China had much to offer and in reality it was true also. After the regulating act of 1773, the British East India Company set up the first courts of law at Calcutta and this led the British administration on a firm footing. As Kate Teltscher writes clearly in the much acclaimed book, “The high Road to China”, Warren Hastings and the Governor General of the East India Company was the brain behind this mission to China¹¹¹. Two important people were sent to China via Tibet and the mission ultimately lead only to Tibet. One was George Bogle who went via eastern Himalayas to Tibet. The other was Captain Samuel Turner who reached Tibet by Ladakh through Kashmir¹¹². While communication was being initiated between the Company and Tibet, it was an important period in the sense of understanding the connections between India and Tibet emerge. During this period, there was also a small flow of Tibetan pilgrims to the sacred sites of

¹¹⁰ Bowen, H. V., Margarete Lincoln, and Nigel Rigby. *The Worlds of the East India Company*. Boydell & Brewer, 2002. 60, 67, 98.

¹¹¹ Teltscher, Kate. *The High Road to China*. A&C Black, 2013.

¹¹² Ibid., 283.

India, particularly the region of Bihar, where they both had attained enlightenment via Bodhgaya¹¹³. At Calcutta was one of the most important transit points for these pilgrims and Tibetan traders and the mission of the East India company under Warren Hastings that floundered under George Bogle and the Tashi Lama had in re-assessment not floundered but initiated a series of correspondence and this was started by the brother of the deceased Lama¹¹⁴. As the two main actors in the mission sent by Warren Hastings were no more, it looked as if the chapter was closed, but the correspondence regarding the request for certain facilities for the Tibetan pilgrims help in their sojourn to India¹¹⁵. It was at this particular point that we have the entry of Samuel Turner was a young lieutenant in the British East India company and also closely related to the Governor General, Warren Hastings and it is supposed that it was this proximity which led to him being chosen to convey greetings to the new reincarnation of the Tashi Lama. Lt Samuel Davis and Dr Robert Saunders who were also the employee of the British East India Company were supposed to travel with him to provide both logistics and medical support respectively¹¹⁶. When examining the primary sources, we find that Samuel Turner had reached Tibet and not through the western Himalayas but through the eastern Himalayas and from there to Bhutan where he spent considerable time¹¹⁷.

¹¹³ Huber, Toni. *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India*. University of Chicago Press, 2008. 205.

¹¹⁴ Petech, Luciano. "The Missions of Bogle and Turner According to the Tibetan Texts." *T'oungPao* 39, no. 4/5 (1950): 330–46.

¹¹⁵ Turner, Samuel. *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama, in Tibet: Containing a Narrative of a Journey Through Bootan, and Part of Tibet*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. 268.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 380.

6.1.4 William Moorcroft travel to Ladakh

William Moorcroft is one of the most important travellers to Ladakh and his rivals Alexander though both of their domains were slightly different while William Moorcroft was one of those travellers who was labelled as an explorer. Alexander was a scholar and a philologist and both came with different purposes. The endpoint is that in the reconstruction of the history of Ladakh, considerable material is taken from the diaries of Moorcroft and they have been extensively circulated and cited on and on¹¹⁸. We see that Moorcroft was one of those important travellers who had stayed for a very long time in Ladakh to have intimate first-hand knowledge of the system and its long distance connection in the trans-Himalayan regions. One of the recent books on this topic which is a sequel to the first book titled “Ladakh Crossroads of High Asia” by Janet Rizvi and also in the second book titled “Trans-Himalayan Caravans of Ladakh”¹¹⁹. Most of the material for the second book is taken from the travels of Moorcroft and it is with this travel that we see the opening up of Central Asia and Tibet to the outside world in a large-scale in terms of the available information and trade networks¹²⁰. While the areas beyond India are also beyond the purview of this study the focus will primarily be on the region of Ladakh.

Moorcroft's training was in the veterinary sciences and as such he was a keen observer of flora and fauna having undergone training in the veterinary sciences¹²¹. But one point has

¹¹⁸ Hangloo, R.L. “Agricultural Technology in Kashmir (A.D. 1600 to 1900).” *The Medieval History Journal* 11, no. 1 (May 1, 2008): 78.

¹¹⁹ Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 58, 321.

¹²⁰ Cunningham, J.D. *Moorcroft's Travels in Ladakh and on Gerard's Account of Kunwar*, 1843. 182.

¹²¹ Moorcroft, William and George Trebeck. (ed) *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara by Horace Hayman Wilson*. Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1837. Xviii.

to be made clear is that unlike the plant hunters of the Himalayas who look for a rare plants to be transplanted to Europe which was a continuation of the Columbian exchange and which graced the Imperial Garden in London which is the largest repository of tropical plants anywhere in the world¹²². But Moorcroft did not endeavour to move in this direction. For Moorcroft the first objective was to collect the best and true samples of the celebrated cashmere wool from the nomads of western Tibet and Ladakh¹²³. Another associated aim connected with western Tibet was to survey the secret Lake of Manasarowar and the foot of Mount Kailash that geographically is situated between the sources of the Indus and the Brahmaputra Rivers via the village of Joshimath via the Himalayas of Garhwal¹²⁴. The big travel was itself shrouded since Moorcroft was dressed like a Hindu pilgrim to avoid detection and it is very surprising that he could reach the trading market town of Gartok in western Tibet¹²⁵. He does not mention Nepal very clearly but mentions that he was helped by two Rawats and this has not been successfully identified¹²⁶. One of the problems in identifying this group of people is that in the ethnic mosaic of the western Himalayas, there is a shift in the communal perception both from within and without over the years and some of the Indo-Tibetan border communities that were engaged in trade have now completely abandoned their activities on account of the larger forces of modernity and closure of

¹²² "Kew Gardens | Kew." <https://www.kew.org/kew-gardens>.

¹²³ Moorcroft, William and George Trebeck. (ed) *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara by Horace Hayman Wilson*. Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1837. Xvi.

¹²⁴ Marczell, P. J. *William Moorcroft's Commercial Pilgrimage to Manasa Sarowara in 1812*, Rue Lamartine, 1993. 166.

¹²⁵ Ibid.,161.

¹²⁶ Ibid.,163-4.

borders¹²⁷. We have in the higher reaches of the hills of Kumon and Garhwal some of the Indo Tibetan groups who, over the centuries have become successfully Hinduised and have become part of the Hindu social structure where as they were earlier oscillating between Buddhism and forms of Inner Asian shamanic tradition. Both Buddhism and Hinduism, allow for the survival of the local, folk and shamanic traditions as subsidiary and residual forms of worship within the fold and this is seen in the form of some of the communities to resemble many of the practices of the Tibetan and other border peoples of Nepal. The high ranges from Dharchula to Joshimath are one of the passes where the river Kali flows and even today serves as the border between India and Nepal¹²⁸. Further north is the tri-junction India, Nepal and Tibet, not only physically but also between the border worlds and is thus in reality a borderland. While the wool trade focused on Ladakh, other items of trade used to pass through this area including salt and many other items of everyday necessity and luxury items. Most of this trade was in the hands of the Rung people who have settled in this village and also used to have hereditary instruments¹²⁹. Over the years they have moved from becoming an Indo-Tibetan people to a Hinduized Kshatriya caste and are now locally known as Rajputs and use the title of a Raut in its various forms with the suffix la and are known as Rautela. After the fall of the trade between India and Tibet and the closure of borders in 1962 following the Indochinese war, these communities have now become sedentary and are recognised as part of the tribal people of India¹³⁰. Moorcroft

¹²⁷ Kak Manju, *Those Who Once Walked Mountains*, India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 27/28, Vol. 27, no. 4/Vol. 28, no. 1: *The Human Landscape* (Winter 2000/Spring 2001). 177-8.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

did not identify them but his confusion about people bearing the title obviously disappointed in this direction and needs further research.

Most of the work on Ladakh fits in clearly with a description of the regional divisions within Ladakh itself from the fertile valleys of Nubra where fields of barley fed by the River Indus and the large plantations of apricots lie in the borders of the river providing a breakage in the treeless and brown landscape¹³¹. The other region which it talks about is the region of Zaskar which is also clearly mentioned by him as one of those regions that is part of Ladakh but yet distinct from Ladakh in the sense that both culturally and physiographically¹³². It slightly marked the way in terms of culture and this region has more Buddhist and lesser Muslim influence than the other region of Leh, the capital of Ladakh¹³³. He also mentions the palace of the king and his capital and is a lengthy discussion of this region. In this region of Zaskar lies fertile agricultural settlements that are watered by the melt of the snow and most of the villagers overlook the mountains and the light from the snow in the summer fertilises the river through the streams and is harvested well¹³⁴. One of the important towns that he mentioned is still surviving and thriving and is known as the town Padum, which is in fact a village. Moorcroft mentions that there are more villages and only villages on Ladakh and no towns in a sense it is bit true and this is one of the regions where the cold is in its extreme¹³⁵. More in store when

¹³¹ Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 45.

¹³² Ibid., 120.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Moorcroft, William and George Trebeck. (ed) *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara by Horace Hayman Wilson*. Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1837. 201.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

one talks about cold for the next stop about which Moorcroft mentions that he did not spend much time as he describes is the town of Drass¹³⁶. This is not only a high altitude town but is also the second coldest town in the whole world with temperatures going to below -50°C and it is very clear that Moorcroft was not at home here because of the biting cold¹³⁷. One of the points therefore raised by Moorcroft legitimately regarding the survival of the people and the reproduction of society is a simple question of the basic necessities of clothing and shelter and here he talks about many aspects like the items of survival that include barley which is a staple food and eaten in varieties¹³⁸. The cosmopolitanism of the city of Leh is also mentioned. When he talks about different groups of Buddhists, Muslims belonging to different sects and also some Christians which is very significant¹³⁹. The main bazaar of the city was also stocked with a large number of products emanating from Punjab in the South and Multan also in the South West home to the famed traders who exist even today as the fourth or fifth generation of the traders that are represented in the works of Janet Rizvi¹⁴⁰. Furthermore the description of the city of Leh is also accurate and though there has been much urban growth it is only in the postcolonial period and the description of Moorcroft may well fit till the 1960s¹⁴¹. Another point that he makes apart from the connection of the traders from Multan and Punjab in the South and Kashmir, the regions

¹³⁶ Ibid., 323.

¹³⁷ "Welcome To Dras: World's Second Coldest Inhabited Place | Skymet Weather Services."

¹³⁸ Shaykya, Tsering, *Whither the Tsampa eaters*. Himal, 1996.

¹³⁹ Moorcroft, William and George Trebeck. (ed) *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara by Horace Hayman Wilson*. Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1837. 203-6.

¹⁴⁰ Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 230.

¹⁴¹ Rizvi, Janet. *Ladakh, Crossroads of High Asia*. Oxford, 1983. 27.

to the north including Tibet in the north-east, Turkistan and the various provinces of Central Asia and the transnational connections as far as Russia are clearly given¹⁴². They are also illustrated not only in the form of the trade routes but also in the form of the clear description of caravans, products and methods of trade including different forms of overcharging, good bargain and various other aspects¹⁴³. The number of commodities included a very large number of items from different parts that were well developed as materials of trade. They included wool, cotton, metal, tobacco and precious metals, Jade, Jasper, Agate, Opium and drugs for medicinal use, salt and various other processed items¹⁴⁴.

One may summarise the travels of Moorcroft by saying that his description of Ladakh is very comprehensive as also his description of the people and practices that therefore freely landscape. It also integrates Ladakh with the larger trade routes and networks of Central Asia. One of the aspects is that Moorcroft was also acquainted not only with the Buddhist culture of Tibetan Ladakh but also very much with the Muslim culture and it is said that he wore a Muslim cap and also spoke in fluent Persian so much so that the Tibetan Muslim traders from Lhasa were befooled¹⁴⁵. In this situation he was also able to understand the networks of traders as some of the tilted Muslims of Lhasa was originally worked on Kashmir and the families of some of the important traders were mentioned by Moorcroft.

¹⁴² Cunningham, J.D. *Moorcroft's Travels in Ladakh and on Gerard's Account of Kunwar*, 1843. 218-9.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 179-81

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 192, 218-9.

¹⁴⁵ Moorcroft, William and George Trebeck, (ed) *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara by Horace Hayman Wilson*. Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1837. 203-6.

It is noteworthy to understand that he also mentioned some of the diversities of the art population of Leh which cost more quality and included within the subcontinent and beyond and also cost more quality and in consumption and also in lifestyle stuff. Thus, Moorcroft's diaries give a range of data, though the secondary literature is focused more on Ladakh and Tibet, the borderlands are equally represented here and the point is that they were not the focus of secondary study.

6.1.5 Alexander Csoma De Koros travel to Western Himalayas

The name Alexander Csoma De koros stands pre-eminent among the traveller though he was not the first to travel and a brief study of his writing would open up the region. Alexander Csoma De Koros's did not travel with any preconceived intention of spreading religion or trade but only with the objective to find out the original home of the Hungarians and it is for this great effort that he learnt Tibetan and the fruits of this labour have resulted in on all the earliest Tibetan dictionaries and surprisingly all this was written in Spiti¹⁴⁶. To go back to Alexander story, one has to go to Europe and see the state of knowledge during the 17th and 18th centuries that resulted in Alexander Csoma De Koros's trip to the Western Himalayas. It is understood that all peoples of Europe belong to either the Romance, Germanic or Slavic speaking peoples and this also mirrored the regional and religious affiliations with the Romance people known as the Latins spread in France, Spain and Italy following the Roman Catholic Church and belong to southern Europe where as in contrast the Germanic people speaking a wide variety of Germanic languages were settled in

¹⁴⁶ PETECH, LUCIANO. "IPPOLITO DESIDERI, ALEXANDER CSOMA DE KÖRÖS, GIUSEPPE TUCCI." *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 43, no. 2/3 (1989): 156.

northern Europe and followed the Protestant faith by and large¹⁴⁷. The Slavic people were all settled in parts of central and all over Eastern Europe and followed the Orthodox tradition of Christianity. After the fall of Rome, the peopling of Europe took place on a large scale with a settlement of a large number of people who are clearly identified as non-Roman people and they were identified as the barbarians, a term that is now replaced by the Germanic people. Following the Germanic invasions carried out by the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Heruli, Sueivi, Alans, Vandals, Marcomanni, Alamanni, Burgundians, Teutons, Franks, Angles, Saxons and a host of others who are pushed by the Hun people¹⁴⁸. Attila, the leader of the Huns who led a savage attack on the areas of central Europe pushed the Germanic tribes further towards the Roman Empire and my south ward became auxiliaries after the invasion of Rome in 400 A.D. on the icy winter night of the 31st December by loose coalition of Visigoths and other tribes led by Alaric¹⁴⁹. Later on, many of these Germanic people became auxiliaries and is a part of the Roman Imperial Atlas. The final collapse of the Roman Empire in 476 A.D. with the dethronement of the last Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustulus and the crowning of the barbarian king Odoacer was the turning point and this was also the collapse of the Latin cosmopolis and the spread of the German language throughout northern Europe¹⁵⁰.

So, the Latins of later years including the Franks whose speech became Latinised claimed descent as part of the Romance people along with the Italians and Spaniards. The Germanic people included the English who traced the origin from the Angles and to this day narrate

¹⁴⁷ Laird, Thomas. *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 2007.

¹⁴⁸ Musset, Lucien. *The Germanic Invasions: The Making of Europe, AD 400-600*. Paul Elek, 1975. 207.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 116.

a tale wherein two young unkempt girls were asked about their identity by St Augustine and when they replied they were Angels, it is said that St Augustine retorted that they were in fact Angles and not Angels and the faith had not still reached their domain¹⁵¹. The Christianisation of Europe, though under the aegis of the Catholic Church in northern and southern and large parts of central Europe did not erase the regional particularity. These were fully articulated later after the declaration of the Erasmus, who is famous declaration of the literature of the vernacular along with the printing press of Guttenberg and the Protestant Reformation of Martin Luther changed the religious map of Europe and along with it a new sense of history and identity¹⁵². The Protestant Church and its followers including the Lutheran Church which is also prominent in the low countries of Netherlands and Denmark were all Germanic and asserted their ethnic identity. The pan Slavic movement under the patronage of the Czars of Russia clearly marked out the Russians and the others Louse from the Germanic people and this other ring was clearer in Central Europe with a spot of the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire¹⁵³. The two notable others, who clearly marked out in Europe were the Jews and the Turks who were seen as others on account of religion and combination of religion and ethnicity respectively. Another ethnic group of Europe though marked out but did not significantly matter in the discourse as they did not have a voice were the gypsies of Europe. While it was being postulated that the gypsies came from India which has been confirmed to this day¹⁵⁴. By recent genetic researches a cutting edge theories based on a combination of polity

¹⁵¹ Rodrick, Anne B. *The History of Great Britain*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004. 18.

¹⁵²“LUTHER AND THE BIBLE.” *The American Catholic Historical Researches* 8, no. 1 (1912): 93–4.

¹⁵³“Pan-Slavism | Britannica.Com.” <https://www.britannica.com/event/Pan-Slavism>.

¹⁵⁴“Reconstructing Roma History from Genome-Wide Data.”

linguistics, anthropology, philology etc¹⁵⁵. However, gypsies were voiceless to stake their claim for a historic understanding of their community and were also disenfranchised¹⁵⁶. One group also stood out and they were the Hungarians who felt that they did not belong to any of the three branches of the European Society. It is therefore estimated that they were the descendants of Attila the great Hun and his band of warriors. While Attila, and his brother Bleda, left behind no written accounts as they were nomadic people, their memories survived only in folklore and over period of time this became part of the process of amplification and distortion¹⁵⁷. Therefore the search for identity and the origin of the Hun people somewhere in Central Asia held the key to the origins of the Hungarians as the Hun people were supposed to be the progenitors of the Hungarians¹⁵⁸. It was this singular quest that drove Alexander Csoma De Koros to Tibet and his task was to find the origins of the Hungarians through language and some other artefacts have suited to the methodology of the day¹⁵⁹.

6.1.6 Summary

From the above discussions of the various travellers regarding the Western Himalayas remembering for certain points that can summarise the views of the travellers. What is striking is that a wide variety of views and viewpoints have gone on from these travellers

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶“Dom Research Center -KURI Journal - Vol 2 No 4.”

¹⁵⁷Musset, Lucien. *The Germanic Invasions: The Making of Europe, AD 400-600*. Paul Elek, 1975.

¹⁵⁸“Maternal Genetic Ancestry and Legacy of 10th Century AD Hungarians | Scientific Reports.”

¹⁵⁹ Csetri, Elek. “CENTRAL ASIA AS PORTRAYED IN EARLY 19TH CENTURY TRANSYLVANIAN LITERATURE”. *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* Vol. 43, No. 2/3 (1989). 145.

though they belong to regions and periods separated in time and space, their representations on many issues are strikingly similar. One of the first conclusion is that people may come to it that even though they come from various backgrounds like the ecclesiastical background of Antonio and Desideri or the commercial minded background of Moorcroft that also combined administrative acumen and is associated with that ruling East India Company or to a standalone traveller from Hungary-Alexander Csoma De Koros. All of them did not dwell on the highly religious nature of Ladakh and is very striking. In fact all Tibetan representations of Ladakh are predominantly imbued with religiosity or with religiosity by the secondary authors¹⁶⁰. One may bring about a point that the Europeans discovered China during the Enlightenment period and India during the Romantic period and therefore were predisposed to find science in China and religion in India¹⁶¹. But in these rural communities which are almost Tibetanized, all the authors have given the idea that in the case of both Buddhists and Hindus except for the pilgrims the average person did not patronise the temples or the religious structures frequently. This is one of the reasons that is true for the simple answer is that they were more engaged in the production oriented activities and it is these production oriented activities that are at the core of discussion by these authors in their various domains¹⁶². The production oriented activities are also discussed in the context of the larger products and trade. When one combines the

¹⁶⁰ Bue, Erberto. Lo and Bray, John. *Art and Architecture in Ladakh: Cross-Cultural Transmissions in the Himalayas and Karakoram*, in *The MgonKhang of DPeThub (Spituk): A Rare Example of 15th Century Tibetan Painting from Ladakh*, by Chiara Bellini. BRILL, 2014. 226

¹⁶¹ Flood, Gavin. *The Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*. (ed), Frits Staal, *The Indian Sciences- Introduction*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.

¹⁶² Koros, Sandor Csoma De, and Alexander Csoma de Kőrös. *Essay Towards a Dictionary, Tibetan and English: Prepared, with the Assistance of BandéSangs-RgyasPhun-Tshogs, a Learned Láma of Zangskár*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

larger trade networks, the balance and imbalances of trade and the consumption of the people and real wealth accruing to the final product and the role of the primary producer, we get an idea from all these people that Ladakh was relatively a storehouse of prosperity though not in cash much¹⁶³. It is surprising to see this statement in the context of the neighbour Kashmir which is seen as a prosperous entity by the later scholars. One of the important reasons is that all scholars are clear in not mentioning the presence of apple in Kashmir because the apple crop was introduced only during the 20th century and its imagination and identification with Kashmir has been stretched to a few centuries back in popular lore which is not honest but also ahistorical¹⁶⁴. Therefore most of the prosperity of Kashmir depended on handicrafts and not agriculture and in this weaving is one of the main segments including woollen and carpet weaving and the main source for this came from the region of Ladakh and Tibet¹⁶⁵. The nomadic regions of Ladakh are also well treated by these travellers which is known as Changthang¹⁶⁶.

Another related aspect is that not only is the regional particularity and the sub regions of Ladakh very clearly enumerates read but also the other regions of the hills of Kumaon and Garhwal and given to treatment and the nature of pilgrim routes and trade routes and the

¹⁶³ Csoma, SándorKőrösi. *Collected Works of Alexander Csoma De Koros: Essay Towards a Dictionary Tibetan-English*. Akadémiai Kiadó, 1984.xix, xiii, xxx.

¹⁶⁴ Sharma, Asha. *An American in Gandhi's India: The Biography of Satyanand Stokes*. Indiana University Press, 2008. 306.

¹⁶⁵ Moorcroft, William and George Trebeck. (ed) *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara by Horace Hayman Wilson*. Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1837. 322-24.

¹⁶⁶ Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 121.

polity of the Raja of Srinagar is also treated very well¹⁶⁷. What therefore one understands from these narratives are that the primary producers were connected to the larger markets within the subcontinent and also to other markets in Asia and Europe through an elaborate networks of trade and this network was based on a caravan trade¹⁶⁸. One of the main hypothesis is that by the 17th-century and the rise of long-distance shipping have brought an end to the caravan trade. The Dutch economic historian Niels Steensgaard has clearly shown that even in the face of the establishment of large-scale shipping networks till 17th-century and the rise of coastal towns the Inner Asian trade networks based on long-distance caravan trade continued¹⁶⁹. We may conclude this chapter by pausing that all the minute details regarding the regions that were recorded by the travellers were actually those aspects which they found to be interesting or different from the everyday life and representations characterising India from the experiences which they underwent. It is these representations that are filled with the minor details that are so useful and one might compare these minor details as synonymous to elite goods that filled the caravans. The need to record minor details along with larger details shows the importance of these details. For example the landscape and production pattern of Ladakh clearly are alluded to and also the landscape of the Kumaon and Garhwal in Himalayas and the major form of production

¹⁶⁷ Moorcroft, William and George Trebeck. (ed) *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab; in Ladakh and Kashmir; in Peshawar, Kabul, Kunduz and Bokhara by Horace Hayman Wilson*. Asiatic Society of Calcutta, 1837. 5-7.

¹⁶⁸ Rizvi, Janet. *Trans-Himalayan Caravans: Merchant Princes and Peasant Traders in Ladakh*. Oxford University Press, 2001. 35, 104.

¹⁶⁹ Steensgaard, Niels. *The Asian Trade Revolution: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*. University of Chicago Press, 1974.

being agriculture and craft production to an extent with horticulture¹⁷⁰. One of the minor details which is given is that there are also a small number of religious mendicants who keep travelling from one region to another and whose mention later slips away in the Colonial narratives of the gazetteer years but it is under the guide of these travellers that many of the European travellers could reach far-off places. Many of these minor details are connected to embellish the larger narratives which would otherwise seem dull and colourful and hence provide a connecting mechanism to the entire structure and gives agency to the Western Himalayas which all the above mentioned writers have done through their own perspective and training¹⁷¹.

¹⁷⁰ Cunningham, J.D. *Moorcroft's Travels in Ladakh and on Gerard's Account of Kunwar, 1843*, Koros, Sandor Csoma De, and Alexander Csoma de Kőrös. *Essay Towards a Dictionary, Tibetan and English: Prepared, with the Assistance of BandéSangs-RgyasPhun-Tshogs, a Learned Láma of Zangskár*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. 297.

¹⁷¹ Hāṇḍā, Omacanda. *Buddhist Western Himalaya: A Politico-Religious History*. Indus Publishing, 2001. 126, 130-36.

Chapter- 7

Conclusion

The present thesis titled, Travel Writings and the Representation of Himalayan Borderlands tries to understand the history of the borderlands as distinct regions in the background of recent researches on regions in the postcolonial period. The rise of new approaches and the entry of newer groups into history which EH Carr called as the expanding scope of history brought about different types of narratives of diverse communities that are now acknowledged as important sources for the understanding of regions. One of the problems with the type of sources is that, situated on the borderlands, they do not fit into many normative categories and therefore bring about new understandings of region and discourses on region. This thesis is therefore based on a survey of the European travellers and their accounts of the eastern and western Himalayas and the contemporary readings of the same and how there is a scope to understand these regions in a more meaningful way in the present is one of the aims of the thesis.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters that are divided on the basis of thematic consideration including a conclusion. There is also a bibliography and appendix of important data and maps. In the first chapter titled introduction, the plan of the thesis is introduced along with the rationale for undertaking research on the borderlands. The earlier rationale was to read the writings of the European travellers on the core regions of India and these narratives have been the subject of many researchers who have been significantly influenced by Orientalism and the linguistic turn of the 1990s. However, most of the researches only partially focused on the borderlands since the travellers also did not address

the borderlands as their primary destination. A significant body of writing by travellers has led to the creation of a distinct ideas and narratives about the borderlands of both the Eastern and Western Himalayas. With the Himalayas acting as a natural frontier, separating India from the larger regions of Persia, Tibet and China, a discursive reference about the borderlands became generalised as regions that were approached either through the prism of India or Persia, Tibet and China and the local genius was not given agency. Therefore, the primary aim of the thesis was to account not only for the differential character of the borderlands but also to unpack the concepts and categories that led to this differential understanding and finally to represent the borderlands through their own perspectives.

In this thesis, the literary sources-the accounts of the travellers form the main source of writings and they are also voluminous and give enough reference to certain regions like Ladakh, borderlands of Kashmir, Spiti in the western Himalayas and Sikkim, Darjeeling, the borderlands of Assam and Tawang in eastern Himalayas. At the same time certain regions are only cursory mentioned which creates a problem for the historian. This has not been supplemented by archival sources and other official reports along with secondary sources.

These sources are employed to substantiate the hypothesis that borderlands cannot be fully generalized although they have certainty characteristics but at the same time are largely influenced by the broader pattern of history and the emergence of borderlands are links to the larger historical forces. In this chapter, the rationale for undertaking research on borderlands also outlined by elaborating on the argument that there is scanty material for the borderlands on one hand and secondly these materials have been bred from the perspective of the neighboring state societies that has not done enough justice and therefore

a rereading of the primary sources has to be done keeping on account the regional particularities of the borderlands and the larger historical trends.

The second chapter is titled, Borderland and their histories: A Survey of Recent Trends is an exploratory chapter that forms the background for the thesis. By drawing on the recent and classical researchers on borderlands and contrasting those to drive home the urgency of the point that there is a shift in understanding of the borderlands and these have been the focus of studies in many parts of Asia. Therefore, such an exercise can be replicated in the case of the Himalayan borderlands. Further, the emergence of the region with a new lease of life is one of the important points that has preoccupied many of the secondary sources on the borderlands of Asia and this renewed vitality of dealing with the borderlands is discussed as a specific case example and their problems ranging from colonial policies, early modern cartography, travel writing and a host of other factors. Examples from the regions of Afghanistan, Central Asia, China, mainland Southeast Asia and parts of West Asia where there is a resurgence of ethnicity has been attempted. Some of the important theories and theoreticians who are engaged with this questions are also the focus of study in this sector. Owen Lattimore's Inner Asian frontiers is one of the most important works and the argument that borders have two perspectives one from outside and one from those within is followed and at the same time both these perspectives are the result of larger historical forces is taken and this frame is used to elaborate the case studies. Similarly, the revenge of geography by Robert Kaplan and his formulation about ethnic resurgence and the remaking of history with a focus on borders as owners of contention that has led to new narratives over the past is also employed by linking the new narratives to their current exigencies and imaging of the past.

The third chapter is titled, Contextualizing the Major Borderlands of Eastern Himalayas and a Discursive study of the Evolution of a Region and the focus here is to explain the emergence of the eastern Himalayan borderlands. This chapter begins with an account of the genesis of the borderlands in Asia and the interconnections with India and also a typology of the borderlands. In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand how this region is imagined and the earlier representations of the region as a frontier in the true sense of the term was taken for granted. The frontier was also understood to be a natural border and by extension the frontier communities were understood to be recipients of cultural and political and economic institutions and processes from the core regions on either side of the border. The publication of a series of texts like the Ahom Buranji, Cheitharon Kumpapa have brought about an understanding that the polities of these regions were viable and also able to rise beyond the level of chieftaincy into fully articulated kingdoms with literate production and imagining of larger processes like literature, art and statecraft, all of which served the needs of a state which was not a typical representative of a state on the core regions of the river valleys. In this chapter, a detailed discussion of Zomia was also attempted and it is concluded with limited validity for this concept in the face of evidence though it accounts for a differential political setup with a low resource base.

The next chapter is titled as the Borderlands of Western Himalayas and forms a chapter four. In this chapter an overview of the borderlands of the Western Himalayas is taken up with the intention of trying to understand the regional particularities of Himalayas in a high altitude landscape with the intersection of religion-Tibetan Buddhism as one of the important elements along with its institutional appendages of the Gompa and the monastery which formed the mediating element between society and the landscape. In this chapter the

question of Western Himalayas as an outpost of Indian civilization that was of repeated theme from the classical texts to the travel writers in contradistinction to the region as a watered down part of Tibet also known by names like Little Tibet have already given a label of generalization that have so strongly conditioned the traveler and anyone approaching the Western Himalayas to understand this region from the Indian and Tibetan perspectives.

A significant change occurs in the 17th century with the decline of the Malla dynasty in Nepal and the rise of the Gorkha dynasty which led to the importance of Tibetan wool and the rediscovery of new trade routes that impacted both the Eastern and Western Himalayas. As a result of this development and spread of wool in Kashmir as an industry and for Mughals as a trade and in Europe as the important commodity of consumption, both the Eastern and Western Himalayas were now approached by the travellers through a new frames of reference. Therefore, as elaborated in the earlier chapter and in this chapter the make-up of the region and its received understanding the case of both the Eastern and Western Himalayas is not static but dependent on contingent factors including large-scale trade, regional politics and religion. Unlike Eastern Himalayas, religion was also one of the most important impulses for the travellers to enter the Western Himalayas as they understood that Tibet was to be entered through the Western Himalayas and therefore the knowledge of Tibetan language could be easily gain in the Western Himalayas along with the cultural patterns was also another important factor.

Travellers account of Eastern Himalayas is a title of chapter five and begins with a description of some of the important travellers as Ralph Fitch and Tavernier. There is a

noticeable contrast between the writings of travellers that of Ralph Fitch and Tavernier with regard to their vision of Mughals regions and the eastern Himalayas. While the Mughals regions were large and contiguous and had a detailed informant whose knowledge of aspects like land tenure and other aspects of trade were codified and easily available, the diversities of the eastern Himalayas with small polities and terrain did not yield large-scale generalizations. Certain factors like the presence of elephants, trade networks and trade in goods like a beetle and grains and salt are clearly mentioned by these travellers. There are also certain misrepresentations like the wearing of earrings with elongated earlobes that formed part of certain cultural practices in Tripura. In eastern Himalayas one also understands the nature of not only the Highlands but also the low lands and water bodies as these were significant in number and also punctuated the terrain with regularity.

The next chapter is titled as the Travel Writings and the Borderlands of the Western Himalayas and in continuation of the fourth chapter that laid the understanding of the Western Himalayas. This chapter tries to understand how trade and religion were two of the important themes that were represented by the travellers from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Most of the trade activities involved not only the region of Western Himalayas but also in compost linkages to Tibet, China, Central Asia and extending as far as Russia and Turkey and it is this large-scale linkages that conditioned the nature of travel. The important travellers are Diogo D' Almeira, Antonio Andrade, Ippolito Desideri, William Moorcroft and Alexander Csoma De Koros etc. While these travellers had written in detail on these regions, the main focus was on trade and religion but many other cultural patterns, landscape, polity and other themes pertaining to society like the structure of family, gender relations etc are all given in detail. While the travellers have written about different aspects

of the Western Himalayas, the voluminous writings from the 17th to 20th centuries also show many shifts as in the case of the eastern Himalayas.

Some of the main findings of the thesis are that the borderlands have an agency of their own and this cannot be completely explained by the polities of the Mughals or the Ahoms or other state societies on either side of the border like Tibet or China. These borderlands societies like the kingdom of Ladakh, Lahul, Spiti, Kinnaur and the Kingdom of Sikkim and the kingdoms of the Koch of Assam and the polity of Tawang and also the kingdom Chakmas and Meitei's of Manipur along with the King of Tripura well-developed polities that included a fusion of concepts from both the normative traditions of India and the other regions along with indigenous concepts. The elaboration of the title of Raja or the King and the Dharma raja or the righteous king in both the Buddhist and Hindu polities was not a direct elaboration but also fusion of local ethos. In the case of Ladakh one notices a clear survival of the Pre-Buddhist bon religion in terms of religion and also practices that are religious and also offer everyday nature. These practices are seen in the decoration of village gates, worship of deities that were labelled by some of the travellers as debased Buddhism are in relatively. One also has to notice that there were some travellers like Alexander Csoma De Koros who spend a large number of years in Spiti was forced to compose the dictionary of Tibetan language and did not buy this view. On the contrary his knowledge of not only the Western Himalayas and the eastern Himalayas and later his life on account of his association with Sikkim plays the many unique position as the only Westerner with a deep knowledge of Tibetan in its classical and vernacular forms to appreciate the cultural ensemble. It is in his writings that one sees that there is no critique of the societies as debased in contrast to the writings of Ippolito Desideri who has

undertaken a severe critique of the religious practices of the Tibetan Buddhists. One also notices certain ethnocentric ideas in the writings of Bernier and Tavernier with regard to eastern Himalayas and also Linschoten. There is a clear understanding of the region that can be made possible by reading this travel writings with the aid of other sources from the different sides of the border.

One cannot isolate travel writing as purely travel writing in case of specific genre that was possible in the context of Mughals India or South India because most of the travellers were also part of caravans. This again goes against the grain of the argument of the Dutch economic historian Niels Steensgaard who says that the rise of steamship put an end to caravans. Long-distance caravan trade however continued as far as the regions of Central Asia and Russia and till the 18th-century. Most of this caravans included are Motley of travellers as illustrated in the book by Salman Wassaf Khan, titled Muslim, Trade, Nomad, Spy. This trend continued as far as late as the last century when one of the great caravans led by the Radu family from Kashmir to Ladakh and thence to Tibet ceased operation in 1959. Therefore the idea of a pure traveler and travel writing and contaminated by other co-travellers is not viable in the case of the Himalayas.

Another finding is that the travellers also were connected to long-distance networks like the case of Desideri was connected to the Jesuit seats of learning in France and Italy and was responsible for transmitting some of the important concepts of divinity like the idea of there being no necessity of a creator as a prime mover in the formation of the cosmic arrangement and it is therefore only nature and human agency. This powerful idea that laid the cornerstone of Buddhism was well debated by Desideri who had also written extensive tracts in Tibetan that have been found to be of very high quality by contemporary scholars

of Tibetan literature received a new lease of life in the monastery of la fleche in France. From here it was picked up by Hume, one of the first rational philosophers of Europe who elaborated on a philosophy of there being no place for the divine agency in a celebrated work the treatise on human nature. It is these large-scale networks that led to the popularization of these regions some of which are gone unnoticed like the present example.

On the other hand, certain aspects like wool which were 18th-century introduction on a large scale to the Eastern and Western Himalayas became the focus of attention and subsequent exhortations of the region in Europe. The same is also replicated in the towns of the Himalayan eastern India where Darjeeling and the nearby towns emerge as wool towns.

Significantly travel writing also helps to problematize the concept of Zomia as a non-state space and its valorization by posing certain important questions. The presence of fairs and festivals that were noticed by the travellers as also the trade. One notices that there is a shift in significant change in the nature of commodities traded after the 18th-century and is especially pointed out by Moorcroft in the case of the Western Himalayas and other travellers in eastern Himalayas where we see the extension of the Columbian exchange like tobacco and other goods being traded. There is also an element of exotica in the representation of trade in Europe with not only Kashmir but also other products of the Himalayas.

One of the important points that one notices with regard to the representations of societies by the European travellers is the great shift after the 18th-century and the contrast to the earlier period in terms of treatment of difference. While the ethnocentric ideas were always a part of the imaginary of all societies, the earlier period prior to the 18th-century did not

have a clear idea of race and therefore there is an element of fluidity in the narrative as difference was not debased. It is only in 18th-century that the ideas of race that predominated in Europe and became the benchmark for typecasting the other that really made a mark in the East. It is this idea of people who were physically different and on the basis of skin color as a result of the biological difference was something new in the world. The Spanish inquisition of 1492 that regarded Jews as biologically distinct people, the discovery of the New World and the consequent New World slavery reinforce these attitudes that is present in the later day travel writers who rankle people of the Himalayas as belonging to different racial groups. The period under our study did not reveal any of these characteristics and is therefore free of bias, though there are certain religious and other markers of difference.

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