

CHITTAGONG PORT
A STUDY OF ITS FORTUNES, 1892-1912

by

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ABSTRACTChittagong Port - A Study of its Fortunes 1892-1912Mrs. Shireen Hasan Osmany

This thesis on the study of the fortunes of the Port of Chittagong from 1892-1912, tries to analyse the forces which led to its growth and development during that period, as well as the factors that were responsible for preventing its further development.

The trade of the port towards the beginning of the period under study was greatly hampered by the want of effective communications between it and its hinterland. The river Karnaphuli, on whose bank Chittagong stood, did not form a part of the river network that dissected the larger hinterland of Eastern Bengal and Assam. As a result, it was not till the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway that any significant development took place in the trade of the port. Chittagong port influenced the growth of this Railway, but the construction of the Railway determined the fortunes of the port still more decisively. While the port owed much of its physical facilities to the interest, resources and efforts of the Railway, many of the drawbacks under which the port operated can also be attributed to the policies of the Assam Bengal Railway. The partition of Bengal in 1905, was perhaps the single most important political factor that determined the fortunes of the port. The potentialities of Chittagong port were adduced as both an economic and administrativement argument for the partition. Partition, on the other hand, breathed a new life into the port in terms of finance and political and administrative attention. Trade facilities were greatly developed during the period under study, and with the construction of four jetties for ocean-going steamers, the trade of the port took on a new dimension. The annulment of the partition in 1912, however, left the port still uncompleted and stagnant till the next partition in 1947.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Admin.Beng.	Report on the Administration of Bengal
Admin.E.B.A.	Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam
Admin.Rly.	Administration Report on the Railways in India
Admin.Rept.	Administration Report of the Commissioners for the Port of Chittagong
A.B.Rly.	Assam Bengal Railway
A.B. Rly. Papers	Papers Relating to the Assam Bengal Railways Government of India Public Works Department Railway Construction
B.D.G.	Bengal District Gazetteer
Beng.C.C.	Report of the Committee of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce
Beng.J.E.Cttee.1934	Report of the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee: Majority Report, Minority Report, 1934
Beng.J.E.Cttee.1939	Report of the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee, 1939
Beng.L.C.Acts	Acts of the Legislative Council of the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal 1887-1890
B.N.N.R.	Bengal Native Newspaper Reports
Beng.Proc.Fin.Dept. (Com.)	Proceedings of the Government of Bengal in the Financial Department (Commerce)
Beng.Proc.G.Dept. (Misc.)	Proceedings of the Government of Bengal in the General Department (Miscellaneous)

Beng.Proc. (Mne.)	Proceedings of the Government of Bengal in the Marine Department
E.B.A.Proc.P.W.D. (Mne.)	Proceedings of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the P.W.D. (Marine) Department
E.B.A.Proc.J.D. (Pol.)	Proceedings of the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam in the Judicial Department (Police)
E.B.A.Proc. (Legis.)	Proceedings of the Legislative Council of Eastern Bengal and Assam
E.B.D.G.	Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer
Govt. of India. Rly.Proc. (Acc.)	Government of India Proceedings of the Railway Department (Rly. Board) Accounts
Govt. of India Rly.Proc. (Const.)	Government of India Proceedings of the Railway Department (Rly.Board) Construction
Griffiths	<u>To Guard My People. The History of the India Police, Sir P. Griffiths</u>
Griffiths, Tea	<u>The History of the Indian Tea Industry, Sir P. Griffiths</u>
Hist. of Indian Rlys.	Railway Department Government of India Railway Board: History of Indian Railways constructed and in progress, corrected up to 31 March 1918
Hist. of Calcutta P.T.	<u>The Calcutta Port Trust. A Brief History of Fifty Years' Work 1870-1920</u>
I.G.I.P.S.	<u>Imperial Gazetteer of India, Provincial Series. Eastern Bengal and Assam</u>
I.T.A.	Detailed Report of the General Committee of the Indian Tea Association
I.T.E.	Imperial Institute: Indian Trade Enquiry Reports on Jute and Silk 1918
M.M.P.	Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress of India

- Maritime Trade Beng. Report on the Maritime Trade of Bengal
- Maritime Trade E.B.A. Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam
- P.L.I.G.L.B. Public Letters from India and General Letters from Bengal (Judicial and Public)
- River Borne-Traffic Report on the River-Borne Traffic of the Lower Province of Bengal and on the Inland Trade of Chittagong and on the Trade of Chittagong and the Orissa Ports
- Rly.Index.O.M. Assam Bengal Railway. Index to Official Meetings
- Sea-Borne Trade Beng. Annual Statement of the Sea-Borne Trade and Navigation of the Bengal Presidency with Foreign Countries and Indian Ports
- Sea-Borne Trade E.B.A. Annual Statement of the Sea-Borne Trade and Navigation of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam with Foreign Countries and Indian Ports
- Trade by R.R.E.B.A. Report on the Trade carried by Rail and River in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam

GLOSSARY

Anna	A coin worth one sixteenth of a rupee
Aratdar	An Indian commission agent
Bastiwalas	Slum dwellers
Bepari	An Indian wholesale trader or middleman
Bombast cloth	Cotton cloth
Chamar	A man of a low caste, whose business is working in hides and leather
Crore	Ten millions
Cutcha	Raw, temporary, makeshift. (Cutcha bales of jute were only roughly or lightly pressed.)
Darwan	A guard or watchman
Farriah	A petty Indian trader
Ghee	Clarified butter
Ghat	A landing-place, steps on the bank of a river, a wharf where customs are commonly levied
Godown	An outhouse, a warehouse, a place where household implements or goods are kept
Gola	A granary, a place in which grain or salt is kept for a season
Hat	A village market

Lakh	A hundred thousand
Manjies	Boatman
Maund	A weight, usually of eighty pounds
Mofussil	A subordinate or separate district, the country, the provinces or the stations in the country, as opposed to the sadar, or principal station or towns
Mukhtar	An attorney, as employed in legal affairs he is not allowed in general to plea
Nullah	A drainage channel or small stream
Palki	A palanquin or litter in which individuals were carried by bearers
Pie	A coin, the twelfth part of an anna
Pucca	Ripe; well or solidly made
Rupee	The main unit of currency in India. In the period of this study worth about 1 4d.
Ryot	An Indian cultivator or peasant
Sardar	A foreman
Syce	A groom or stable boy
Thana	A police station, one of several police jurisdictions into which a Zila was divided

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Politics, economics and geography govern the life of any port, and it is the purpose of this study to trace and weigh the significance of each factor in the history of Chittagong as a port town in the years 1892-1912. Within that twenty-year span there were very dramatic shifts in the significance of all three elements, and in the importance of the port. In so far as there has been much study of the port, it has tended to give overwhelming weight to the political determinants of its fortunes, to the creation and abolition of the British province of East Bengal and Assam between 1905-1912, and to the emergence of Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971. It is hoped that this study will give a more balanced picture by directing more attention to studying the economic and geographical aspects, the importance of which even a brief study of the history of the port will reveal.

Although Chittagong has by some been identified with the market town described in the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, as on the Ganges in "the very last land towards the East",¹ or as the Pentapolis of Ptolemy,² or as the Samandar of early Arab geographers,³ it is quite

- 1 W.H. Schoff, Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, 47-48.
- 2 J.W. McGrindle (ed.), Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy, 195.
- 3 Dr. A. Karim, Samandar of the Arab Geographers, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dec.1963, 13. See also S.C. Das, Antiquity of Chittagong, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, LXVII, 1898, 22.

clear that it was an important trading centre by the fifteenth century when Mahuan, accompanying a Chinese mission to India, refers to "Chitle-gan" as a port frequented by Chinese trading vessels.¹ When the Portuguese reached eastern India, they applied the title "the City of Bengal" to Chittagong in the reports and maps, considering it as Campos says, as the chief port in the whole of Bengal.² All the Portuguese commanders that came to Bengal first entered Chittagong.³ Its harbour was convenient for the comparatively small ships of the day,⁴ and its position off the mouth of the Meghna river gave it easy access by water to the Bengal capital, Gaur.⁵ Barros, first of the great Portuguese chroniclers of Asia, described it in 1552 as "the most famous and wealthy city of the kingdom of Bengal, by reason of its port at which meets the traffic of all that eastern region".⁶ Abul Fazl in his survey of the Mughal empire wrote in similar vein of "a large city.....which is a great emporium being the resort of Christian and other merchants".⁷ And at much the same time Caesar de Federici found more than eighteen ships anchored in Chittagong, and he wrote that from that part the traders carried to the Indies "great store of rice, very great quantities of bombast cloth of every sort, sugar, corn and money with other merchandise",⁸

1 G.Philip, "Mahuan's Account of the Kingdom of Bengal", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, XXVII, 1895, 525.
See also S.M. Naqvi and H.R. Karim, "Historical Background of the Port of Chittagong", Pakistan Geographical Review July 1967 86

2 J.J.A. Campos, History of the Portuguese in Bengal, 21.

3 Ibid.

4 C.R. Wilson, The Early Annals of the English in Bengal I, 132..

5 Eastern Bengal District Gazetteer Chittagong, 1908, 26

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Campos, 113.

According to Campos, "Chittagong was always a bone of contention between the Rajas of Bengal, Arakan, and Tippera, who strove for supremacy over the seaport until the Mughal conquest of Bengal".¹ He should have added, however, that both the Portuguese and the English fought over the town too. The Portuguese had had their eye on the port since 1517, finally securing it, and Satgaon from Mahmud Shah the ruler of Bengal, in return for helping him against Sher Shah. They established a custom house and settlement² there and in 1602 added to it the island of Sandwip.³ Under the Portuguese Chittagong prospered, and acquired the title of Porto Grande, the great port, as opposed to Satgaon, the Porto Pequeno, or little port.⁴ The loss of Sandwip in 1615, to the Arakanese,⁵ and the decline of Portuguese control from Goa of their outlying settlements ushered in a confused period when Chittagong was as much a pirate base as a trading port.⁶ In 1665-6, Shaista Khan, the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal advanced on the port and took it by storm.⁷

By that date the English East India Company had appeared in Bengal, opening their first factory at Hooghly. But they were not content for long with the position of mere traders, but aspired to secure a fortified

1 Campos, 21.

2 Campos, 26-39. See also Momtazur Rahman Talukdar, Husain Shahi Bengal, 146.

3 Campos, 67-68.

4 E.B.D.G. Chitt. 1908, 26.

5 Campos, 154-55.

6 Ibid., 157.

7 Stewart, History of Bengal, 187-89. See also Imperial Gazetteer of India Provincial Series Eastern Bengal and Assam 1909, 395; Campos, 164.

base of operations.¹ The question thereafter was where to site this base. "Industrialism", wrote Wilson, "would have been content to remain at Hooghly, militarism demanded the violent seizure of Chittagong.....now an important Mogul city".² The suggestion was repeatedly voiced by the Court of Directors, and in 1685 an expedition was fitted out in England under Admiral Nicholson with instructions to seize Chittagong and fortify it on behalf of the English.³ The expedition, however, never reached Chittagong. The fleet was scattered on the way, and Admiral Nicholson found himself instead at Hooghly.⁴ In the meantime, Job Charnock, the English agent at Kasimbazar, having fallen out with the Nawab of Bengal, had moved to Hooghly. There he came to know of the decision of the Court, and being joined by Admiral Nicholson, started to prepare for war on the Mughals.⁵ These preparations, as Wilson points out, "were enough to alarm the country".⁶ and the Nawab sent a force against the English. After the skirmish that followed, Job Charnock withdrew from Hooghly and moved to a place lower down the river, which later came to be known as Calcutta.⁷ The Court in London, however, increasingly were of the view, "that all would be well in the Bay if they could seize upon Chittagong".⁸ In January 1689, they sent

1 C.J. Hamilton, The Trade Relations between England and India (1600-1896), 36. See also Wilson, 88-89.

2 Wilson, 91.

3 W.W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, VI 114
See also I.G.I.E.B.A., 396; Wilson, 94; Susil Chaudhuri, Trade and Commercial Organization in Bengal 1650-1720, 39.

4 Ibid.

5 Wilson, 94.

6 Ibid., 96.

7 Ibid., 99. See also, Hamilton, 57.

8 Wilson, 114.

Captain Heath with a fleet to seize Chittagong. This second attempt, however, also proved unsuccessful. His reconnaissance made Heath realize, however, that "a city like Chittagong defended by some ten thousand men was not to be 'taken by the collar', nor could it have been kept if taken".¹ He therefore abandoned the attempt, and sailed from Chittagong after lying at anchor there for about a month.²

This departure proved to be a most decisive event. Chittagong continued for another hundred years in the hands of the land-loving, and primarily, land-based power, of the Mughal rulers of Bengal. In the meantime, the English having sought the pardon³ of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb for their past hostility, were granted a renewal of their trading privileges in 1690.

In 1698 the English secured from the Nawab, Azim-u-Shah, the Zamindari rights of the three villages of Sutanati, Calcutta and Govindpur.⁴ "Less than two centuries ago", writes Prajnananda Banerjee, "the present city of Calcutta was nothing but an ordinary rural district in the delta of Lower Bengal - a flat rice-swamp, interspersed with patches of jungle, with a few scattered villages on the river bank. None would have ventured to forecast that a 'city of palaces' would shortly arise here. But the nineteenth century ushered in a new era of development of trade and commerce which ultimately made this city an emporium of trade and the capital of an empire in the East".⁵

1 Wilson, 121-22.

2 Ibid.

3 Hamilton, 57.

4 Sukumar Bhattacharya, The East India Company and the Economy of Bengal, 8.

5 Prajnananda Bannerjee, Calcutta and its Hinterland, 1.

What is of interest is that for the best part of two centuries, Mughals, Portuguese and English had seen and coveted Chittagong as "the City of Bengal", the Porto Grande of the province, one of the major entrepôts in the maritime trade of the Indian Ocean. If the English finally settled at Calcutta, it was because they had failed: it was necessity not vision which led Job Charnock to camp there. Chittagong evidently enjoyed real natural advantages, though the accidental growth of Calcutta would overshadow them.

One locational advantage Chittagong possessed, and of course still possesses, was its good river communication with Dacca, a natural centre for East Bengal and for a century the capital of Mughal Bengal. It was a further blow to Chittagong, perhaps more important than the settlement of the English at Calcutta, that in 1704 the subahdar of Bengal, Murshid Quli Khan, now an independent ruler except in name, decided to move his capital from Dacca to Murshidabad,¹ towards the more threatened borders of the province. The move westward of the capital left Chittagong remote from the centre of trade and power, and at the same time improved the competitiveness of Calcutta. Moreover, the move left Chittagong and the eastern delta much less well defended against the raids from Arakan of the Maghs. In 1725, 1735, and again in 1740, as the English East India Company records reveal, Chittagong and its neighbourhood were plundered and raided by the Arakanese seriously

1. Sukumar Bhattacharya, ?
 See also, K.M. Mohsin, A Bengal District in Transition: Murshidabad 1765-1793, 1.

dislocating the economic life of the port and its hinterland.¹

In 1792, Chittagong suffered from a devastating earth quake which seems to have destroyed much of the old port and town. "The great earthquake of April 2nd 1792 which raised the coast of Chedua Island 22 feet above sea-level, is said to have caused a permanent submergence of 60 square miles near Chittagong".² Such earthquakes seem to have taken place quite often, as recorded by Raynal. "The fortifications which (the Mughals) had begun to erect having been thrown down by frequent earthquakes (the British) had taken a dislike to the place".³ Before the century was out, moreover, two cyclones swept the Chittagong coast.⁴

In 1760, after the deposition of Mir Jafar, the new Nāwab Mir Qasim ceded Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong to the East India Company,⁵ the grant being confirmed by the Emperor Shah Alam in 1765.⁶ But by this time, English commercial interests in Calcutta were well entrenched, and English political and military attention was focused on Murshidabad and on Delhi to the west. There was little need now for the Company to pay any particular attention to a port-city geographically, politically

1 Sukumar Bhattacharya, 169-170

2 East Pakistan District Gazetteer^{Chittagong}, 1961, 54.

3 E.B.D.G. Chitt. 1908, 26.

4 East Pakistan District Census Report Chittagong 1961, 8. Cyclones moving up the Bay of Bengal tend to swing north-east across the delta to strike the Arakan coast. Besides the cyclones of 1793 and 1975, there were others in 1872, 1876, 1897, 1904 and 1905; those of 1876 and 1897 being particularly and most widely destructive.

5 Ibid.

6 District Census Report. Report on the Census of the District of Chittagong 1891, 3.

and economically so much on the periphery as Chittagong had become. For more than a hundred years Chittagong port slumbered in neglect, while Calcutta and Rangoon developed on its flanks into major maritime centres of British power and commerce.

It was the development of jute in the second half of the nineteenth century into an economic crop, and the introduction of commercial tea cultivation in the province of Assam, which created the necessary economic and commercial preconditions for the revival of interest in the forgotten port of Chittagong. There was now a hinterland producing goods in which European firms were interested, and in the case of tea, one which it was necessary to move quickly and with a minimum of handling on the way. (There had always been some rice handled through Chittagong, but this was a matter for local traders using country boats.) The pressure of commercial interests, fortuitously supported at much the same time by the administrative and political need to partition the unwieldy Bengal presidency, thus led to the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway to handle the new commodities. Some development of Chittagong port, which hitherto had possessed only a single inadequate jetty - the Sadar ghat - and no proper moorings, no bouys, no dredged channels, and no shore facilities worth the name for storage and handling of goods, necessarily followed. Calcutta-based commercial interests panicked at the possible rivalry of the port of Chittagong for the foreign trade of the new province, and did their best to hinder its growth and development. But for seven years, 1905 to 1912, Chittagong port had a champion, the Government of the newly

created province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Within the twenty years 1892 to 1912, therefore, whatever significant development of the port took place under British rule occurred. The annulment of partition in 1912, however, halted all progress. The fate of the port was thus sealed till other partitions occurred - in 1947, when Chittagong became the principal port of the new province of East Pakistan, and in 1971 when she became the port of the new Peoples' Republic of Bangladesh.

Communication System Between the Port of Chittagong and its Hinterland Prior to the Advent of the Railway

In the nineteenth century there were only two effective gateways to the world available to Bengal and its vast hinterland: Calcutta and Chittagong. Neither was easy of access or naturally well endowed. Of the two, however, Calcutta had been early developed and its internal communications likewise, while Chittagong, situated at the extreme south-east corner of the delta region, had been neglected. There were no direct river routes to Chittagong from the main commercial hinterland, roads were so bad that no traffic of any significance could be carried on them and no effective line of railways ran to Chittagong before 1895. River transport had therefore to emerge from the East Bengal river system and negotiate the difficult coastal waters of the Bay of Bengal - particularly hazardous to the native sailing boats which carried the bulk of the commodities from the interior - to reach the ocean terminal at Chittagong. In this chapter an attempt has been made to study the conditions under which trade was carried between Chittagong port and its hinterland prior to the advent of the railway.

The commercial hinterland of the port of Chittagong - East Bengal and Assam - is formed by the Brahmaputra valley, the eastern half of the vast Gangetic delta, 25,000 square miles of alluvial fan and the rim of eastern hills. The whole tract is laced by great rivers, all but the Karnaphuli on which Chittagong itself stands, having their source in the eastern part of the Himalayan massif. "All the snow and water falling upon the Kumaon, Nepal, Bhutan and Assam sections, finds its way ultimately into the Ganges, Brahmaputra and the Meghna and through these mighty rivers it is washed down to the sea".¹ The Karnaphuli has its origin in the hills north-east of the

1. N. Ahmed - An Economic Geography of East Pakistan, 11.

Chittagong Hill Tracts¹ and flows to the sea, interrupted by mild rapids, through hill-country thickly clothed with bamboos. Its main significance is in providing a deep water anchorage a few miles inland from the sea. The Brahmaputra on the other hand after its emergence from the Himalayas flows westwards through an immense tract of fertile country - about five hundred² miles of the Assam Valley - to the plains of Eastern Bengal near Maihiali in Rangpur district. Whereupon, joined by the Tista from the Jalpaiguri tea district in the north, it turns south, being known then as the Jamuna until it is joined near Goalundo by the Ganges. The two enormous rivers, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, united at Goalundo from then on are known as the Padma. Offshoots from them, the lines of older beds and flood channels, thread the lower delta to its swampy forward edge known as the Sundarbans, a fan some 170 miles across. Further east two branches of the Barak river, the Surma and the Kusiara, unite to form a river which is known first as the Dhaleswari and then after its junction with the Old Brahmaputra river as the Meghna. From Bhairab Bazar the Meghna runs south towards the Bay of Bengal being joined at Chandpur by the Padma. The whole vast mass of water forms the Meghna estuary to the sea.³ It is the proximity of Chittagong to the Meghna estuary, and the access which that river gives to the whole web of rivers and their feeders just described, which made and make it so important as an ocean outlet for the commerce of Bengal.

The main crops of this hinterland of the port of Chittagong were jute, rice and tea. Jute from the jute growing areas of Dacca, Mymensingh and Tippera was brought to Narainganj by country boats.

1. Nur Ahmed, 'The Karnaphuli River', Pakistan Quarterly Review I Autumn 1959.
2. Report on the Administration of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1905-6, 2.
3. N. Ahmed, 11-19, also Basil Greenhill 'The Boats of East Pakistan, A Preliminary Study', The Mariner's Mirror The Journal of The Society for Nautical Research XLIII No. 2. May 1957, 106.

The cultivators generally sold their jute to a petty trader or Farriah who visited the villages and markets on boat. The Farriah in turn sold to a bepari or middleman who either dealt directly with jute merchants at Narainganj, or through an Aratdar or broker who had advanced him money. In addition to purchasing at Narainganj, merchants had buyers at all the important mofussil centres and "from July onwards" as B. C. Allan¹ wrote, "their tugs are to be seen puffing up and down the rivers towing after them six or seven huge native boats".² Similarly rice was brought to Chittagong by beparis, in boats and during the cold weather whole fleets of these might be seen making for the mouth of the Karanphuli from the northwest.³ The merchants did not buy in the mofussil but purchased from boatmen or beparis who collected the rice mainly from the different hats in Noakhali and Tippera. The supply of rice to the merchants at Chittagong therefore depended "entirely on boat traders" so that if boatmen did not choose to come, merchants were left empty-handed.⁴

Except for the twenty odd tea gardens in Chittagong all the tea gardens of Eastern Bengal and Assam were situated in the Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys.⁵ Before the advent of the railway almost all the tea from these gardens was exported from the port of Calcutta. The little tea that went to the port of Chittagong went there mainly from the tea gardens of the district.

1. Eastern Bengal District Gazeteers - Dacca 110.
2. Ibid. 110.
3. Annual General Rept. Chitt. Divi. 1872-73, Proc. of the Govt. of Beng. in the General Dept. (Misc), 1873, August 23-24.
4. Report - On the River-Borne Traffic of the Lower Provinces of Bengal, and on the Inland Trade of Calcutta, and on the Trade of Chitt. and The Orissa Ports 1889-90, 130.
5. Out of a total of 1,215 gardens in Assam and Bengal in 1896. 794 gardens were in Assam and 421 in Bengal. Of the 421 in Bengal 22 gardens were in Chittagong - Detailed Report of the General Committee of the Indian Tea Association 1896. 276.

Before the coming of the railways the main cargo carriers for the whole area of Eastern Bengal and Assam were the country sailing boats. (The Annual Statement of the Inland and sea-borne trade of Chittagong even as late as 1892-93 gives no figures for streamer-borne trade, presumably because there was none of any significance).¹ The boats used were of varying size and type, with a cargo capacity of anything from 40 to 5,000 mounds (roughly $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 180 tons) though the most common range was between 100 to 500 mounds (4 to 20 tons).² This shipping operated mainly within the rivers of Assam and the delta system of Bengal, including the Hooghly to which jute was carried in large quantities though some moved up the Ganges as far west as Patna or even to Mirzapur and Ajudhia.³ The sea-going brigs and sloops of Chittagong penetrated inland as far as Brahmanbaria on the Meghna and north-eastwards to Sylhet,⁴ but in general they were content with their mastery of the trade of the eastern littoral not sailing much further north than Goalundo and Calcutta, though they did work their way west across the Bay to Orissa and east down the coast to Burma. (Burmese and Arakanese shipping was also found moving west to Chittagong and even as high up the Brahmaputra as Rangpur, from which district they shipped tobacco).⁵

In geographical terms the river systems used by this shipping were very advantageous. "They form probably one of the finest group of natural waterways in the world", wrote P. B. Bramley, "and their commercial and strategic value can be enhanced to an indefinite extent by scientific conservation and development". But, he added, "in spite of these natural advantages trade is carried on under great difficulties. The first of these difficulties, he explained,

1. River Borne Traffic - 1892-93, 56.
2. P. B. Bramley, Trade Conditions and Crime on Navigable Waterways in Bengal, Assam and the United Provinces 1904-1906, 33. See also Haroun-ur-Rashid, East Pakistan. A Systematic Regional Geography and its Development Planning Aspects, 292
3. Bramley, 55-56.
4. Annual General Rept. Chitt. Divi. 1892-93. Beng. Proc. G. Dept. (Misc) 1893, November, December, December 8.
5. Bramley, 35.

was that of crime. "Piracy has existed on the rivers from the earliest times, and...except for spasmodic efforts no real attempt has ever been made to cope with the difficulties of the situation or to deal adequately with the evil by the introduction of preventive measures of a permanent and uniform nature...in fact the difficulties of the situation have been evaded rather than boldly faced".¹ According to his report violent crime was most prevalent on the rivers in the Dacca, Mymensingh, Bakerganj, Khuina, Tippera and Pabna districts. These were the districts of Eastern Bengal which posed a general problem of poor communications and inadequate administration the solution of which would later be sought in the partitioning of Bengal by Lord Curzon.

In the neighbourhood of Khulna the losses were usually of rice boats, the reason being, as the insurance agents Messrs. Finlay, Muir and Company explained, that it was easy to dispose of stolen rice in that area.² Losses of jute, as another managing agency Ralli Brothers explained, was commonest to the east and north-east of Narainganj, one of the great up-country collecting points for raw jute. Here near the great jute handling ghats and bazars there were regular bands of thieves who operated in conjunction with the manjies, or boatmen of the sailing boats.³ At this period many of these manjies were up-country men, probably driven from the rivers of the U.P. and of Bihar by the competition of the new lines of railway up the Ganges Valley. The losses suffered by the failure of the local boat trade, together with the hardship incurred in procuring employment drove a large number of them to the commission of crime.⁴ A report of the Committee of the Bengal Chamber of

1. Bramley, 47.
2. Messrs. Finlay Muir and Company to Bengal Chamber of Commerce Bramley, 11.
3. Messrs. Ralli Brothers 17 May 1905, to Bengal Chamber of Commerce Bramley, 13.
4. Bramley, 35, see also Lovat Frazer, India Under Curzon and After, 375.

Commerce, submitted to Government in 1904 elaborated the point, recording, "In the course of enquiry it has... come to light that 2,500 criminals, residents of United Provinces, come habitually into those provinces in the guise of peaceful river traders, but really in order to commit crime, from petty theft to dacoity wherever the opportunity presents itself."¹ One favourite stratagem of these manjies was to set fire to cargoes in order to conceal their theft - "the consignor not shipping the quantity mentioned in his chalan and conniving with the manjies and crew to burn the cargo at an opportune time", as Messrs. Gladstone, Wylie and Company reported.² The incidence of crime rose from July to March and fell off again in April, May and June each year, corresponding exactly with the fluctuation in the record of alleged losses of insured cargoes, and the annual rise and fall in the circulation of the country trade shipping.

In addition to these difficulties the problem of navigating the river Meghna and the Bay of Bengal often drove the trade of the hinterland from the port of Chittagong. Neither the river Meghna nor the Bay is easy to navigate particularly during the south-west Monsoon when the violent winds, floods and the rough water made life and cargo insecure. In 1886-87 the export of rice from the port of Chittagong showed a decrease which amounted to 58.73 per cent on the returns of 1885-86 and to 36.87 per cent on those of 1884-85. This decrease was mainly due to floods in the river Meghna which led to the diversion of rice from Noakhali to Brahmanbaria instead of to Chittagong.³ Similarly as soon as the south-west monsoon set in the ryots chose the safer and longer route to Calcutta via the Sunderbans rather than the shorter and dangerous route to Chittagong.

1. Annual Report of the Committee of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce II, 1904, See also P. Griffiths - To Guard my People, The History of the Indian Police, 393.
2. Report of Messrs. Gladstone, Wylie and Company, Bramley, 38.
3. River Borne Traffic 1886-87, 117.

The Commissioner of the Division of Chittagong made the point in 1889-90, "The decrease in the export of rice and paddy is very marked, . . . this decrease is entirely due to want of communications. There was a large surplus crop in the districts which supply the trade of this port, but there was also a demand for rice westwards and traders would not risk their boats and cargoes coming to Chittagong when they could get remunerative prices in Dacca, Calcutta and Murshidabad. The rice therefore did not come, though merchants were anxious to buy and willing to give good prices".¹

Baled jute from Narayanganj was forwarded to Chittagong by sailing brigs. At Chittagong it was transhipped from the brigs which lay alongside the oceangoing ships.² The objections to this system were its delay and its danger. The delay was at times very great. Fifteen days was the time generally allowed for the passage from Narayanganj to Chittagong but in the south-west monsoon, vessels often took much longer so that the freighters at Chittagong were delayed and demurrage incurred.³ The danger by the then existing route was also considerable, no less than thirty six brigs in the jute trade being lost within the ten years 1878 to 1887.⁴ As a consequence importing firms had to incur considerable expenditure in the upkeep of steam tugs to tow the brigs and still more in insurance.⁵ One effect of that as J.M. McNeille - Secretary to the Government of Bengal wrote was to induce the exporters of Narayanganj to send the bulk of jute by inland routes to Calcutta instead of sending it by sea to Chittagong.⁶

1. River Borne Traffic, 1889-90, 130.
2. D.R. Lyall and A.F. Dowling, Notes on the Port of Chittagong, its Trade and the Financial Prospects of a Railway to Chandpur and Silchar, 20
3. Ibid, 21.
4. Ibid, 21.
5. River Borne Traffic, 1886-87, 116.
6. Report of the Committee of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce 1892, II, 429.

Constant change in the course of the various rivers of Eastern Bengal and Assam in general and of the rivers Karnaphuli and Meghna in particular, was another factor which impeded trade between Chittagong port and its hinterland. The shifting bars of the river Karnaphuli made the port of Chittagong unsuitable for vessels other than those having light draught and as a result the port was not open to all types of vessels. In 1899-1900 the tea planters of Assam, Sylhet and Cachar presented a memorial to the Government of Bengal representing the difficulties in the navigation of the Karnaphuli river. But the sum required to improve the river was considered beyond the resources of either the Port Trust or the Government of Bengal and so the matter was dropped.¹

The survey of the river Meghna conducted in 1902-03 revealed that "considerable alteration had taken place in the river since the last sketch survey in 1884, . . . No deep channel was found to exist and the river was reported as dangerous for any but craft of very light draught, on account of strong tides, heavy bores, and constant changes in the river bed".² The trading community of Chittagong had from time to time urged the Government of Bengal to improve the condition of the river Meghna but to no purpose. In 1904 the Government of Bengal wrote to the Government of India, "Chittagong has complained that it has been neglected by the Government of Bengal. This is alleged to be at least equally true of the Dacca division, and the neglect in regard to both has led to this important result that little attempt has been made to improve the communication between that port and the commercial centres of the Dacca divisions. No attempt has been made to use the Meghna

1. See Chapter V.

2. Administrative Report of the Marine Survey of India 1902-03, 1.

river, which is the main line of communication, as a navigable channel for large ships".¹ During the 1880's the boat trade of Chittagong with Cox's Bazaar, Arakan and Rangoon was affected by the silting of the Mohesh Khal. As a result of the closure of the Khal (canal) boats had thereafter to accept the greater risk of coming around the sea face of the district, and so in rough weather stopped coming altogether.²

The silting and shifting of the rivers however posed a greater problem to the steamer companies than to the native boats. The 'Diana' had ushered in the age of steamers in the Indian sub-continent on the 19th July 1823.³ But till the formation of the Indian General Steam Navigation Company in 1844 commercial steamers were not plying on regular routes in Bengal. Post-Mutiny days saw a growth of steamer companies, the most notable being the River Steam Navigation Company. In 1889 the two rivals the Indian General Steam Navigation Company and the River Steam Navigation Company merged to form "The Joint Steamer Companies".⁴

By this time steamer services covered Assam and Eastern Bengal, the growth of tea gardens in Assam having vastly increased the demand for their services. But all steamer services tended to converge on Calcutta port and only a fraction if any served Chittagong port. This was probably due to three major factors. When the steamer companies started operating in Bengal the heyday of Chittagong was long past. Chittagong had no port facilities and its trade did not amount to much. On the other hand Calcutta was the

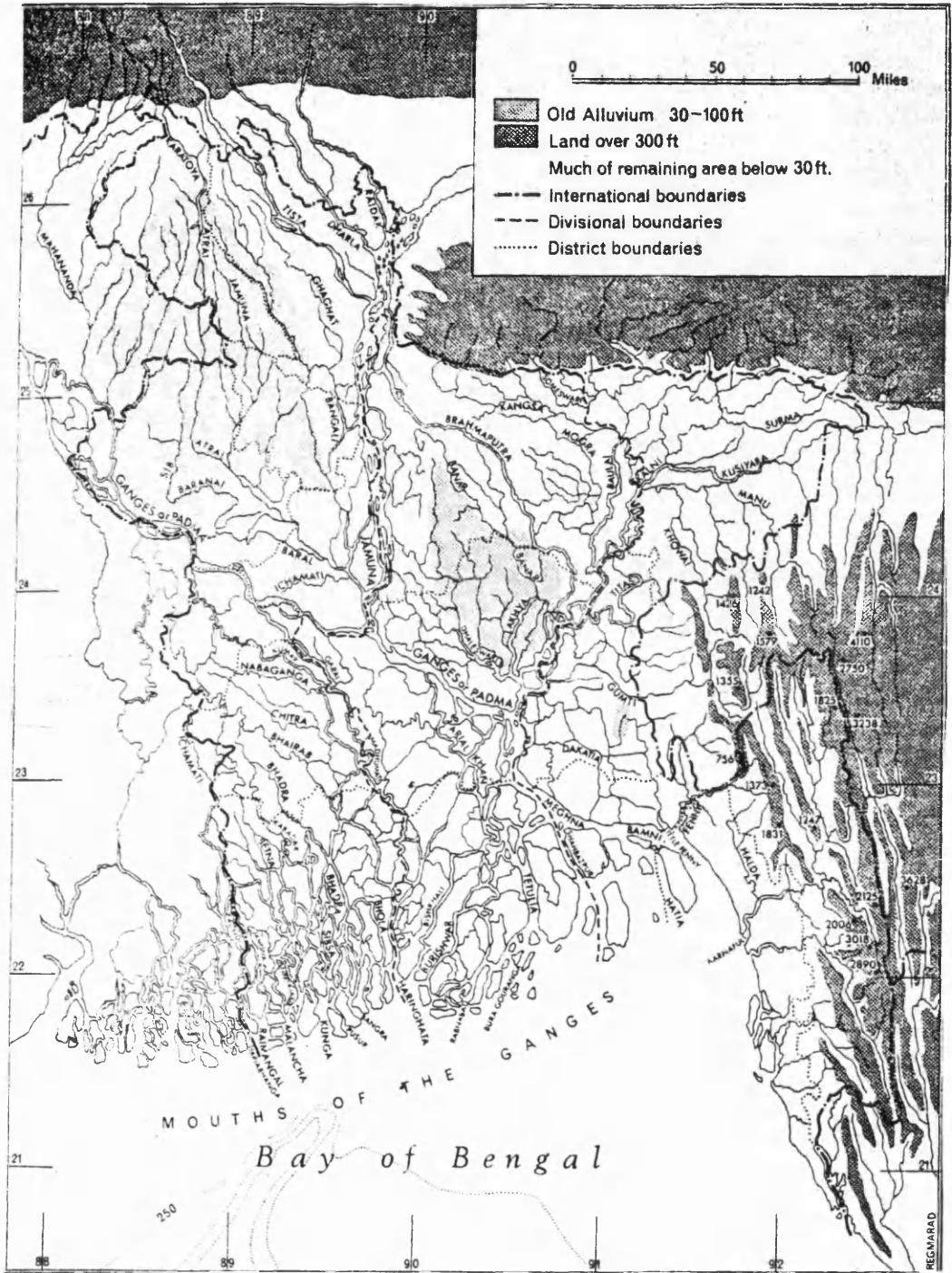
1. Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India 6 April 1904, P.P.1906, LXXXI, 692.
2. River Borne Traffic, 1884-85, 98. SEE MAP P 137
3. Walter K. Furminger, 'The Early Days of Steam Navigation in Indian Waters', THE Calcutta Review, CXXXI, I, July-Oct 1905, 422. See also, Bengal Past and Present, Jan-June 1941, 7.
4. Basil Greenhill, 'Boats & Boatmen of Pakistan', 126-135. See also Sir P. Griffiths - A History of Incheape Group 22-23.

premier port of India and could provide cargoes for the passage up-country to Assam as well as a market for the cargoes carried down. Secondly since the Joint Steamer Companies had an absolute monopoly as a commercial carrier in the inland waters of Eastern Bengal and Assam, they had no or little incentive to explore a newer and perhaps an uncertain pasture like the trade route to the fledgeling port of Chittagong. Finally the state of the river Meghna must also have discouraged the steamer companies from trading with the port of Chittagong. The Joint Steamer Companies - which from the very beginning had at their own expense carried out the task of surveying, marking and lighting the rivers,¹ - had made repeated attempts to induce the Government to class Waterways with Roads and itself carry out the work of conserving and improving the waterways.² The Government of India however, was rather reluctant to take up the work and the reply given by Lord Curzon in 1904 was typical of their attitude. "Nothing could be done without elaborate preliminary survey and great subsequent expense", he stated, "while the science of river training is one that contains so many speculative and surprising elements that Government are a little shy about spending large sums upon results so extremely problematical in character. I can assure you from my own experience that it is easy to pour a good many lakhs into a riverbed, and at the end the river, without even thanking you for your trouble, makes you look rather ridiculous by going off in some entirely independent direction".³

1. C.A. White - Waterways in Eastern Bengal and Assam - Preliminary Report on the Improvement for Navigation of the Most Important Waterways of Eastern Bengal and Assam, August 1909, 5. See also Basil Greenhill, "Progress in East Pakistan", Geographical Magazine 1954-55, XXVII, 463
2. White, 5.
3. Further Papers relating to the Reconstruction of the Province of Bengal and Assam, P.P. 1906, LXXXI, 847.

In the absence of any government initiative the inland waterways which might have served Chittagong remained unimproved, used mainly by the country sailing craft. Nor was the opportunity subsequently created by the building of the Assam Bengal Railway to integrate the steamer services higher up the river system to the railway link with Chittagong port, taken advantage of. Had the inland river traffic been diverted "to Narainganj, Dacca and Chandpur, and even to Comilla, and many of the other stations on the Bengal-Assam Railway as far as Badarpur and Silchar, from whence there is direct Railway communication with Chittagong"¹ a very great enlargement of the trade of Chittagong must have followed. In fact however the vested interests of Calcutta and the Joint Steamer Companies made the latter formidable rivals to the railway and to the port which it served.

1. Bramley, 35.



1. The river system of East Bengal

Roads

In the Gangetic delta of Bengal the first significant step in long distance road building was apparently taken by Sher Shah Suri. This Pathan ruler of Delhi sought to establish his control firmly over the difficult Subah of Bengal. A road system was essential for quick and safe movement of imperial troops - any advantage to commerce was only incidental. The Grand Trunk Road of Sher Shah ran down the Ganges Valley and by way of Dacca, to Chittagong.¹ This was the first major road link between these two cities of which there is clear written record. Efforts at connecting Chittagong by road with central Bengal however, predate Sher Shah by about four centuries. There is evidence of Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah building a military road connecting Chittagong with Chandpur after his conquest of Chittagong.² After Sher Shah, Shaista Khan and Shah Shuja also took significant steps in this direction. In 1666 after capturing Chittagong from the Arakanese Shaista Khan improved road communications, bridging all the 99 nullahs between Feni and Chittagong,³ while the Arakan road leading from Chittagong to Burma was said to have been built by Shah Shuja while fleeing from the pursuit of Mir Jumla. The Muslim conquerors of Bengal, being primarily dependent on cavalry and infantry for their military power probably saw it as both logical and necessary to develop a network of roads.

- 1 Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers - Chittagong, 1908, 129.
2. Bangladesh District Gazetteers Chittagong, 1975, 107.
3. Abul Khair Muhammad Farooque - Roads and Communications in Mughal India, 49.

However, when the British acquired the Chittagong district in 1760, they inherited a very rudimentary road system - basically the old trunk road from Chittagong across the Feni ghat, where there was a customs post and small garrison, to Dacca and a few local seasonal tracks. With the rise of Calcutta as the capital and chief port, however, Chittagong still further declined. Ghulam Hassain Salim noted in 1786-8, "at present, since Calcutta is a large port, all other ports of Bengal have fallen into decay".¹ In Eastern Bengal, less and less important as a supplier of cotton goods for the export trade, the only roads required were those linking district headquarter towns with the capital. The important lines of communication were now those radiating from Calcutta, and especially those running westwards up the Ganges Valley to the strategic frontiers of Oudh, the North-Western Provinces, and later Delhi and the Punjab.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Burmese claims upon Chittagong, the war of 1823-26, and the annexation at its successful conclusion of the coastal strip south-east from Chittagong, gave a new importance to the old line of road from Dacca - the Robertganj or Chittagong road - by way of Comilla to Chittagong, thence across the Sangur river at Chandpur Ghat and so towards Ramu and Burma. This was given a further lease of life at the time of the second Burma war in 1854-56, but the difficulties created by the series of river crossings on the route meant that it was rapidly allowed to relapse into a mere fair weather road once regular coastal steamer services had been established.

1 Gulam Husain Salim, The Riyazu-s-Salatin - A History of Bengal -(translated by Maulavi Abdus Salam). 41.

After the second Burmese War the Arakan road ceased to be a Government road and became no more than a District road,¹ maintained like the other roads in the district by the District Board from local funds for local purposes only.² East Bengal was indeed scarcely suitable with its meandering rivers, many of such size as to be scarcely bridgeable, for the planning of a large system of roads, and the alluvial delta was almost without durable material for road construction. Moreover the flood level in most of the plains districts was higher than the land surface, so that any permanent road had to be made on raised embankments. W.W. Oldham, the Chittagong Divisional Commissioner in 1892 described the pattern well: "By road in this Division is generally meant a high narrow bank best suited for foot-passengers, with occasional bridges rising high into the air to admit of boats passing beneath without upsetting their masts".³ To build a major road thus involved enormous outlay on massive embankments and on bridges, both of which had to be capable of standing the battering monsoon downpour and the stress of flood waters, and had to be so aligned as to minimise the constant dangerous shifts in the course of the rivers. Equally the small-scale peasant society did not much need a major road system - or at least did not do so before the coming of the bus and lorry. What was needed were fair weather feeder roads for bullock cart transport linking villages to local markets which themselves were usually served by the network of rivers and seasonal canals. Long distance transport for the bulk commodities which East Bengal produced was most readily provided by shipping - and when this was supplemented it would be by railways rather than roads.

1. W.W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, 186.
2. Govt. of Beng. Rept. on the Administration of Bengal 1911-12, 128. See also J. King, Govt. of Beng Comprehensive Rept. on Road Development Projects in Bengal, 1934, V, 6-7.
3. Annual General Administrative Report, Chitt. Division 1891-92. Beng. Proc. G. Dept. (Misc.); 1892 November-December, November 26.

Tea planters probably felt the need of roads more strongly than most. They had a network of roads inside their gardens, but they also needed good roads to carry tea to the nearest steamer ghats and also to bring in machinery, materials and food stuffs, necessary for the maintenance and running of the garden. They not only brought pressure to bear upon Government to secure improved communications, but in some instances at least they took the lead themselves in improving the roads of the districts. Thus in 1873, H. Hankey, officiating as Commissioner of the Chittagong Division wrote, "this (Arakan) road is again bridged between Mr. Windram's garden at Panee Serra and Ramoo in the Cox's Bazar sub-division... A feeder line from Mutaserra to a tidal stream running direct into the Moiseal channel, and known at its mouth as the Joaria Nulla was constructed during the year by Mr. Windram at his own expense... This... being a line likely to attract local traffic, has been declared a public road at Mr. Windram's request... Mr. Windram has rendered very valuable assistance in the matter of roads and it is mainly owing to his presence at Ramoo that the Arracan road has been bridged and kept passable for some six miles in that quarter". A similar report was also made by Hankey about another planter - a Mr. Macalpine. He wrote "The Fennua or Khedda road which here branches off to Mr. Macalpine's tea garden ($4\frac{1}{2}$ miles) has been bridged and repaired at the expense of Government and Mr. Macalpine".¹

The end product of these many factors was a very inadequate and static road system in this period. In 1898-99 of the total length

1. Annual General Report Chitt. Division, 1872-73. Beng. Proc. G. Dept. (Misc) 1873, August 23-24.

in the Chittagong district of 577 miles of road just one mile was metalled - the Moheskhali Strand road along the port waterfront. Even in the Dacca district matters were scarcely more advanced; for of the 548 miles of road in the District, only some $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles were metalled - the Ramna road leading to the race-course and the Narainganj road linking Dacca with its river port.¹ This small mileage had to provide for 1,353,250² inhabitants of the Dacca district and 2,649,523³ inhabitants of the Chittagong district.

The very considerable sum of Rs 300,000 which had been spent annually on extending and improving roads and highways had evidently been spent even in Dacca upon unmetalled roads in the main.⁴

Curiously enough, the first real incentive for a more active road building programme was provided by the building of the Assam Bengal Railway from Chittagong to Assam. F.H. Skrine the officiating Commissioner explained in 1896: "At present there is hardly a single station which is provided with a feeder road. The result is heavy loss to the Company and to the districts served alike. I have impressed on District Boards the necessity of adopting a definite policy in regard to roads, giving the preference in the matter of construction and repairs to those

1. Government of Bengal P.W.D. Reviews of Public Works executed by District and Local Bodies, Municipalities and other Local Bodies in Bengal. 1899
2. Census of India, 1901, VI-A, Bengal II, 16.
3. Census of India, 1901, VI-A, Bengal II, 14.
4. "Memorandum on Results of Indian Administration during the Past Thirty Years of British rule". India Office to G.G. of India, February 1888, P.P. 1889, LVIII, 23.

which run from east to west - at right angles to and feeding the railway line".¹ Several feeder roads were constructed during the following years. In 1897-98 in the Chittagong district for instance, four such roads were constructed: the approach roads to the Mirsarai, to Barak Kund, Sita Kund, and Henguli Railway Stations. But there was no incentive for long distance roads. Roads were still very local, only the focal point had changed. Instead of converging on the local market or the district headquarters local roads henceforth converged on the nearest railway station.

If this period witnessed more road development, though essentially of local nature, it was because roads were built and maintained by the local authorities to serve the railway system and to make the railway economically more viable.

1. Admin. Rept. 1895-96, Bengal General and Statistical Proceedings 1896, November-December, November 23-24.

CHAPTER III

The Assam Bengal Railway and the Port of Chittagong

During the period under study the communication system between Chittagong port and its hinterland underwent an epoch making change owing to the creation of a railway network linking Assam, and that part of Eastern Bengal lying on the left bank of the river Meghna, with Chittagong. The need for such a railway to provide Eastern Bengal and the Brahmaputra valley with an ocean port had been agitating the minds of transport planners since the end of the nineteenth century. Their plans came to fruition in 1904 with the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway between the port of Chittagong and Tinsukia in Upper Assam.

As far back as 1873 the Collector of Customs at Chittagong had written, "The one thing needful, however, to ensure the prosperity of Chittagong as a first class rice port and a place of general commerce, as I have often said before, is the means of inland transit by land or water. Until this universally desired advantage is secured, there will always be more or less uncertainty in regard to full supplies for trading purposes".¹ Nothing however was done in this respect and in the meantime with the growth and development of the jute trade in Eastern Bengal from the middle of the nineteenth century, the merchants of Narainganj began to entertain the idea of having Narainganj declared a port.

In 1875 therefore they sent a memorial to the Government of Bengal stating, "your Honor's memorialists, in common with other

¹ Lyall and Dowling, 10.

merchants and traders of Eastern Bengal, labour under the greatest disadvantage in not having a suitable port for the transit of the products of this part of the province.....

Though some of the districts are obliged to have recourse to steamer, rail, or boat to empty their traffic into Calcutta, yet the process is so tedious and costly and is fraught with such risk, that much of the traffic, and with it many of the trade resources of these districts, are compelled to lie dormant and rot for want of transport, while the rest are very unhealthily developed.

That your Honor's memorialists venture therefore to state that if Narainganj be declared a port, and steamers from London, Liverpool, Manchester and other ports of Great Britain be permitted to touch direct, the trade of East Bengal would receive a very great impetus, and its vast interportal and seabearing traffic would increase with the greatest rapidity.

That under the circumstances represented, your Honor's memorialists most humbly request that measures may be adopted to facilitate navigation in the Megna, and that orders be passed by Government to survey the river and declare its navigation safe, so as to enable sea-borne vessels from Indian and foreign ports to reach direct this central mart of eastern traffic".¹ As a consequence of that memorial the Government of Bengal this year ordered the survey of the river Meghna.² The survey revealed

1 Memorial of J. G. N. Pogose and other inhabitants of Dacca and Narainganj to Govt. of Beng. July 1875. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1875, November 193-1.

2 Govt. of Beng. to the Master Attendant 29 November 1875, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1875, November 193-6.

that for 70 miles, no vessels could be navigated drawing over 15 feet¹ and that the difficulties of the navigation of the river were such as would probably deter ships from British ports from ever attempting to visit Narainganj.² Under those circumstances the Government of Bengal pointed out to the Commissioner of Dacca "It would seem that the facts ascertained by Mr. Laycock (the surveyor) indicate Chittagong as the most convenient port for the shipment of the produce of the eastern districts, the produce being sent down the Meghna to Chittagong in flats towed by light draught river steamers".³

The proposal to use the port of Chittagong for the shipment of goods from Eastern Bengal seems to have been well received by the merchants as is apparent from the fact that in 1876 Messrs. David and Company asked the Government of Bengal to lend a steamer for the transport of goods between Narainganj and Chittagong. They wrote, "Owing to the difficulty in procuring a suitable steamer to run between Narainganj and Chittagong, the want of communication is very much felt, both for the conveyance of goods as well as passengers. At present the country sloops that carry the traffic for regular service cannot be depended upon, as their passages are chiefly made by dropping with the tide. ... The Government of Bengal has however... several steamers available, ... that would be suited for this service, and I am sure, if the Government would undertake to launch one of these into service here, to open the communication between Narainganj and

- 1 F. Laycock River Surveyor to Master-Attendant 31 March 1876
Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1876 May 36-20
- 2 Master Attendant to Govt. of Beng. 26 April 1876, Beng Proc. Mne Dept. 1876 May 36-21.
- 3 Govt. of Beng. to Comm. of Dacca, 29 May 1876, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1876 May 36-22.

Chittagong the undertaking would, I have no doubt, in course of time, when a regular business is opened out, be attended with profitable results both to the trade and the public as well.

The trade is a new one, and perhaps the Government will be disposed to do what is possible within reasonable limits for the encouragement of shipment of the produce of the eastern districts via Chittagong, instead of Calcutta, and I hope it may be considered politic to meet those trading in the produce of East Bengal as far as possible. My object being to reduce the cost of conveyance of produce from Narayanganj districts to a sea port...."¹

The interest ignited in the port of Chittagong by these discussions led to the revival of the question of inland communication raised by the Collector of Customs in 1873 between Chittagong and its hinterland.² The question was discussed and in 1881 a railway from Chittagong to Daudkandy in the Tippera district was considered.³ When the opinion of the Narayanganj merchants were sought regarding this proposal they expressed the view that if vessels drawing 20 feet could safely navigate the Meghna to Narayanganj a railway from Chittagong to Daudkandy would not pay though otherwise it would. As no vessels drawing over 15 feet could go up the Meghna the question of the construction of a railway-line from Chittagong to Daudkandy was seriously taken up.⁴

Early in 1882 the Commissioners of both Dacca and Chittagong

- 1 M. David to Comm. of Dacca Division 31 July 1876, Beng. Proc Mne Dept. 1886 August 150-1.
- 2 Lyall and Dowling, 10.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.

submitted reports strongly favouring the construction of such a railway dwelling particularly on the dangerous nature of the Bay navigation to river shipping making for Chittagong. That same year Sir Rivers Thompson, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, expressed the opinion that a railway connecting Chittagong with its hinterland, if constructed, would be "second to none in Bengal in importance".¹ Seven years later, the Commissioner of Chittagong was able to demonstrate the validity of those assumptions: "The value of the total sea-borne trade of the port (is) . . . Rs. 3, 16, 96, 588," he reported in 1890, ". . . so recently as 1876-77 the whole value of the trade of the port was only Rs 54, 39, 320 or little more. . . In these 13 years the value of the trade of the port has sextupled itself, and this with no increased facilities. When the Assam Railway is working the growth should be even faster and it is difficult to understand why, in the face of such an increase of trade, there should be any hesitation in making the railway".²

In the face of this demand, Government brought the construction of an Eastern Bengal Railway under their consideration. In April 1882 the Public Works Department of the Government of Bengal submitted to its financial Department a rough estimate for a capital expenditure of Rs. 92,00,000 for a line to Daudkandy from Chittagong, with the enquiry whether the "probable receipts from traffic are such as to warrant the Government in undertaking the works, and (2) if classed as a productive public work, whether you would advise the Lieutenant-Governor to accept the financial responsibility of the

- 1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 23 June 1882. Bengal Proc. Public Works Department (Railway) 1882, June-Aug, July 24.
- 2 River Borne Traffic 1889-90.

project".¹ In reply the Financial Department stated: "This estimate takes no account of the great increase in trade which must follow upon the opening of the Dacca-Maimensingh Railway, a large part of which must, if this line is constructed, follow it to Chittagong. It also leaves out of consideration the future opening up of Sylhet, Cachar, and the hill districts, by a line of railway...It may be assumed that the construction of the railway would have an important effect in developing the tea industry, and that the slopes of the hills from Sylhet to Chittagong, which would be skirted by the line, would ultimately be covered with gardens. This would bring a large traffic".

"This estimate, however, deals only with the existing produce so far as it is known. It was sufficient to show that, from the outset, the undertaking would be financially a success. The railway would run from a great trade centre to a cheap and accessible port, through an exceptionally fertile tract, now for the most part deprived of means of communication, and bounded on the one side by a difficult coast, and on the other by a line of low hills well suited to tea cultivation. It would appear probable that, if this line is constructed, Chittagong will become the port for the whole of Eastern Bengal... The ability of this Government to assume the financial responsibility for the line does not admit of discussion".²

The note went on to show that the Bengal Government could safely assume responsibility for a capital expenditure of up to four crores. On receipt of the decision in June 1882 the Bengal Government sent

1 Govt. of Beng. Financial Dept. to Govt. of Beng. PWD 31 May 1882. Beng. Proc. PWD (Rly) 1882 Jun-Aug, July 23 see also Lyall & Dowling, 11-12.

2 Govt. of Beng. Financial Dept. to Govt. of Beng. PWD, 31 May 1882, Beng. Proc. PWD (Rly) 1882 June-Aug, July 23.

up the scheme for the construction of a line from Chittagong to Daudkandy for the approval of the Government of India, and in September of that year received sanction for the maturing of the project as well as the investigation of the extension of a line to Cachar.¹ Later on Chandpur was substituted for Daudkandy as it was considered "to be a better port" and also as it was within four hours by steamer from Narainganj.²

At almost the same period as the need for a railway from the port of Chittagong to Eastern Bengal was beginning to be felt, the importance of opening out the Brahmaputra Valley by the building of a railway system was also being discussed by the Government of India.³ Three options were considered. The first was the construction of a line of railway connecting the Brahmaputra Valley with the Northern Bengal Railway. But the formidable streams draining into the Brahmaputra which would have had to be bridged and trained in order to do so prevented the adoption of this plan. Next the proposal to construct a railway from a point opposite Goalundo through Dacca to Mymensingh led the authorities to assess the feasibility of extending such a Dacca-Mymensingh line across the Garo Hills into the Brahmaputra Valley.⁴ The third possibility was introduced by the discussion of an Eastern Bengal-Chittagong railway already noted. It was J. W. Buyers, at that time Engineer-in-Chief of the

- 1 Lyall & Dowling, 12.
- 2 Gazette of India, 1887,^(Supplement) Sept. 10, 1208. See also Beng. CC 1892-93, 40.
- 3 Rept. of the Director General of Rly in India to Govt. of India P.P. 1883, LII, 14.
- 4 Final Report by J. W. Buyers Engineer-in-Chief on the Survey Operation, Encl. 7. Papers relating to the Bengal Assam Railway No. 868 R.C. Govt. of India Public Works Dept. Railway Construction 1887. See also E. Davidson, Railways in India With an Account of their Rise, Progress and Construction, 214-215.

railway survey operations in the Brahmaputra Valley who in 1882 suggested the extension of the line from the port of Chittagong through Eastern Bengal across the north Cachar Hills into the Brahmaputra Valley. Emphasizing the importance of having direct communication between the Brahmaputra Valley and Chittagong he stated, "The claims of Chittagong may not in my opinion be so lightly set aside... As a port it has already made rapid progress notwithstanding that it has to contend against very faulty internal communications". As a port, he pointed out, it had certain definite advantages over the port of Calcutta. He anticipated that "trade will gravitate towards Chittagong" and for that purpose considered "the connection with that seaport an important point in favour of the scheme".¹ It is interesting to note that while the Eastern Bengal newspapers² strongly advocated the Chittagong railway scheme, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Trades' Association and the British Indian Association had supported the scheme for a railway line, "from Narainganj and running through Dacca and Mymensingh to Gauhati, [CONNECTING] with the Eastern Bengal Railway at Goalundo by means of a steamer ferry". It, they pointed out, "offers the quickest means of communication between Calcutta and Assam, besides promising to open up Sylhet and Cachar."³ From 1882 the construction of a railway from Chittagong to Assam received the serious attention of the Government of India. Enquiries were made in 1885, 1886 and 1887.⁴ In the course of these investigations the advantages of connecting the Brahmaputra Valley with the Port of Chittagong

- 1 Final Report by J. W. Buyers - Engineer-in-Chief of the Survey Operation - Encl. No. 7. A. B. Rly Papers, 1887.
- 2 The Dacca Prokash - 23 October, Bengal Native Newspaper Report 1887, 1049. Sansadhini, 23 December, B.N.N.R. 1888, 13.
- 3 Deputation of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, the Trades' Association and the British Indian Association to Govt. of Beng. 1881 - Beng. Proc. PWD(Rly) 1881, Oct-Dec, Oct. 2.
- 4 Lyall & Dowling, 14. See also P. P. 1886, XLIX, 319.

were found to be so obvious that in May 1891 the Government of India gave sanction for the construction of a line from Upper Assam to the port of Chittagong.¹ The needs both of Eastern Bengal and of Assam² therefore led to the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway.

J. W. Buyers, in his Final Report to the Government of India in 1887 had neatly summarised these needs. The scheme, he wrote, "is intended to open out the fertile and populous districts of Bengal and Assam, lying east of the river Meghna, and to render more accessible the distant Brahmaputra Valley, at present sparsely populated, but with rich waste land awaiting the cultivators, rich also in its undeveloped mineral resources and in the possession of an industry (tea)... but for which it would probably have slumbered on for many years without the thought even of a railway being spent upon it".³ It therefore follows that the railway line was constructed in response to three major considerations - to facilitate the trade of Eastern Bengal by giving it communication with the port nearest to it, to develop the valley of the Brahmaputra by making it more accessible by land; and to facilitate further development of the tea industry of the Brahmaputra Valley and of Sylhet and Cachar, by diminishing its total dependence on the lengthy water route to Calcutta.

The area lying east of the river Meghna consisted in administrative terms of the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali, Tippera, Sylhet,

- 1 Administrative Report on the Railways in India 1904, 180.
- 2 Rept. of the Director General of Rlys in India to Govt. of India P.P. 1888 LXXVI, 289.
- 3 Final Report by J. W. Buyers Engineer-in-Chief on the Survey operation Encl. 7, A. B. Rly Papers, 1887.

Cachar, Hill Tippera and the Hill Tracts of Chittagong. These districts in 1891 had a population of 5, 554, 147 and a total area of 24, 090¹ square miles with regions rich in jute, rice and tea. But in spite of the fact that the area was populous and fertile it did not have a single mile of railway. For many years the only railway in the division of Chittagong was the tramway worked by hand which for a mile and a half traversed the portage beside the rapids or falls in the Karnaphuli near Barkal². As a result, although Chittagong was the natural outlet for the produce of Eastern Bengal and Assam, there was a large amount of produce seeking a better outlet than the existing conditions allowed.

Jute was one of the main articles of export from the port of Chittagong. The exportation of jute from Chittagong began in the year 1877-78 when 130, 775 cwt. of jute, valued at Rs 7, 12, 000, were exported.³ Over the next ten years exportation of jute increased tremendously,⁴ rising tenfold to 1, 416, 481 cwt. However, the exporters of jute realised that if a railway line was constructed joining the port of Chittagong with its hinterland the export of jute from the port would increase still more dramatically. In 1889-90 the Commissioner of Chittagong Division voiced the opinion of many when he said, "the large figures would speedily be doubled if a railway were constructed".

"I do not use the word 'double' unadvisedly but deliberately and with the full conviction that I am not guilty of exaggeration".⁵

- 1 Census of India 1891 Bengal III, 35, also Census of India 1891, Assam, II, 2.
- 2 Annual General Report of the Chitt. Division 1891-92, Admin. Beng. 1891-92, 226.
- 3 Lyall & Dowling, 10.
- 4 River Borne Traffic 1889-90, 129.
- 5 River Borne Traffic 1889-90, 130.

The reason behind such conviction was that the port of Chittagong had certain definite advantages over the port of Calcutta, which given proper communication with its hinterland would naturally attract trade to it. These were the nearness of the port of Chittagong to the area of production and consumption as far as Eastern Bengal and Assam was concerned and the consequent savings in money and time which shipment through Chittagong would effect, and the low handling costs and port dues at Chittagong as compared with Calcutta.

Chittagong was much nearer than Calcutta to the jute growing areas of Eastern Bengal. From Narainganj, one of the important collecting points for jute for the whole region, it was only half the distance to Chittagong, the combined distances to be carried by steamer and rail being 142 miles to Chittagong, but 262 to Calcutta.¹ To use Chittagong would also eliminate a great deal of handling, once a through railway had been constructed. Jute for Calcutta had either to be moved in slow flats by river, or from Narainganj, to Goalundo by water and thence, after transshipment, by rail. In Calcutta the jute was discharged into godowns, and moved thence by rail to the dock side, or by lighter to ship moored in mid-stream, both slow processes in a congested port - before the long and tricky descent of the Hooghly to the open sea.² Sent by way of Chittagong the jute would spend only a day between Narainganj and Chandpur the river terminal for the Assam Bengal Railway³ and could then be moved by rail direct to loading sheds alongside the ships on the Karnaphuli. Once aboard

1 Lyall & Dowling, 19.

2 Report on the Development of the Port of Chittagong by Sir George Buchanan, 1918, 13.

3 Ibid.

there was only nine miles of reasonably easy navigation down river¹ as compared with the eighty two miles to be negotiated in the Hoo ghly.² And not only would time and labour spent on handling the jute be sharply reduced, there would also be far less risk of loss than was faced in the passage from Calcutta to the Sandheads. The .Narainganj - Chandpur crossing was perfectly safe,³ and thereafter the jute would travel by rail to what was in effect an ocean rather than an inland terminal.

Similarly it was pointed out that if a railway line was constructed it would be able to tap some of the rice exported to Western Bengal from the districts of Sylhet, Noakhali and Tippera during the south-west monsoon when the route by river and bay was closed by stress of weather. The leading Indian rice-exporting firm Messrs. Kristo Das Kundo estimated that 'if Sylhet and Tippera and the east Mymensingh were thrown open to this port, the imports would soon reach a value of a crore and a half of rupees, about 75 lakhs of maunds'.⁴ Likewise it was felt that the trade in the two chief imports through Chittagong - salt and kerosene oil would be benefited by a railway.

Not only would freight be moved more quickly if sent by way of Chittagong rather than Calcutta, there would also be a clear saving in freight charges. The rate at which it paid a railway to carry jute was fixed on state railways, at $\frac{1}{4}$ of a pie per maund per mile. The rate for 112 miles between Chandpur and Chittagong would

1 Lyall & Dowling, 21.

2 The Calcutta Port Trust - A Brief History of Fifty Years Work, 1870-1920. 4

3 River Borne Traffic 1886-87, 116.

4 Lyall & Dowling, 25. In 1887-88 Chittagong exported 15, 95, 494 mds of rice. Ibid.

therefore have been 28 pies or 2 annas 4 pies per maund. To that had to be added steamer freight from Narainganj to Chandpur which was estimated as being one third lower than the railway rates. "The freight for 30 miles would therefore" as Lyall and Dowling held "be 5 pies and the freight for the whole distance (i. e. from Narainganj to Chittagong) would be 2 annas 9 pies".¹ The rate between Narainganj and Calcutta varied. The rates of 1887 published by the Eastern Bengal Railway on 28 June 1887 were 5 annas 3 pies per maund for baled jute, 7 annas for jute in drums, and in the same notification the manager undertook not to raise the rate for drums above 8 annas 3 pies per maund for the season.²

The two great river steamer companies advertised in the "Englishman" of 22 June 1888, that the rate for drummed jute up to 29 February 1889 would be 8 annas 3 pies from Narainganj to Calcutta, which was equivalent to about 6 annas 3 pies for baled jute. Taking only the lowest rate of 5 annas 3 pies, it was pointed out that the difference in favour of the freight to Chittagong was 2 annas 6 pies, or very nearly fifty per cent.³ The new rate, if the railway were constructed, would also have been considerably less than the existing steamer rate between Narainganj and Chittagong which varied from 3 annas to 3 annas 9 pies per maund.⁴ It seemed logical to suppose, given these sharp cost advantages, that if a railway line were constructed it would encourage exporters to ship via the cheaper route.

1 Lyall & Dowling, 22. The actual rate charged for the whole distance in 1900 was 12 annas per bale of 400lbs, or 2 annas 5 pies per maund. Of that the Steamer Companies took 4 annas for the 30 miles by water and the Railway 8 annas for the 112 miles by rail, the latter being subjected to the rebates given by the railway - Jute Traffic Agents Letters to the Board 1900, AL/292.

2 Lyall & Dowling, 23.

3 Ibid. 22.

4 Ibid. 22.

The port charges at Chittagong were also much less than those at the port of Calcutta. Till 1904 steamers visiting the port of Chittagong had to pay no river dues while the river due charged at Calcutta was 4 annas.¹ Moreover the towage and mooring charges were also much less. These factors combined to convince the Government that the trade of Eastern Bengal would be benefitted if a railway were constructed connecting the port with its hinterland, and that the returns to the railway would be considerable.

Beyond the jute and rice plains of Eastern Bengal lay the Khasi and Jaintia Hills between which and the Lushai Hills on the south spread the wide valley of the Surma and its tributaries, and north of these again the five hundred miles of the Assam Valley of the Brahmaputra. In both valleys rice was cultivated, but on the hill terraces were the tea gardens, about eight hundred of them, the dominant commercial export crop of the north-east. For both valleys Chittagong was the nearest major port, yet the Surma valley mainly and the Brahmaputra valley almost exclusively used Calcutta. In part this was due to the concentration in Calcutta of the offices of the tea companies and managing agencies, the brokerage and insurance firms,² as also of the jute mills on Hooghly side. But probably more significantly, it was due to the absence of a rail link between Chittagong and its hinterland in the two valleys, and to the problem for small river craft of the exposed and dangerous crossing from the Meghna estuary to the Karnaphuli about a hundred miles down the coast.

The trade of the Surma Valley, the district of Sylhet and the plains of Cachar, was largely waterborne. But the main river of the area -

1 See Chapter VII

2 Dr. Prajnananda Banerjee, Calcutta and its Hinterland - A Study in the Economic History of India, 1833-1900, 2-3.

the Surma and the Kushirya were both shallow so that steamers could only go as high as Phenchuganj, or at the height of the rainy season to Silchar. Both these steamer stations were at a long distance even so from the tea gardens on the hills, and were linked to them by poor roads, ill maintained and in the rains so deep in mud as to be very difficult to travel on.¹ (The Surma Valley is rightly described by Spate as the most amphibious part of eastern India).² The transport of tea from the whole Surma Valley area was thus a very real problem.

The Meghna-Surma river route had also to be used to move rice and other food stuffs up into the tea districts, and all the other articles that the large body of planters needed both for the production and processing of tea and for their own use. In an address to the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, in 1901 the Chairman of the Surma Valley Branch of the Indian Tea Association pointed out the problem of communication in the Surma Valley and the need for feeder lines to the Assam Bengal Railway in the following words: "We desire to draw your Excellency's attention to the fact that the state of matters as regards road communication in these Districts is worse than in Assam proper. The almost apparent hopelessness of ever being able to construct permanent and durable roads on account of the absence of road metal and the prohibitive cost of importing it weighs heavily upon us. For a portion of the year our roads are practically impassable and such repairs as the Local Boards are able to execute from inadequate grants made to them for the upkeep of roads are of the most transient nature. With this fact in view, we look to the construction

1 Lyall & Dowling, 34.

2 O.H.K Spate, *India and Pakistan. A General and Regional Geography* 532-3.

of light feeder lines (of which there are none in either of the districts) to connect our gardens both with the main line of the Assam Bengal Railway and the river".¹ A further point was that labourers to work on the tea gardens were usually brought from the other more populous districts of Bengal. To reach the tea gardens the coolies had to travel under the most unfavourable conditions which led to disease and death on the way.

In 1887 the Indian Tea Association addressed a letter to the Government of India, pointing out how greatly the Chittagong-Chandpur line if extended to Silchar would benefit the tea planters of the Surma Valley. As the proposed railway line was expected to pass through tea gardens for many miles, the planters stressed that the line would both increase the labour supply and decrease mortality on the way and at the same time make the task of shipment of tea a much easier one, with Chittagong as the port to be used.²

In contrast to the tea planters of the Surma Valley those of the Brahmaputra Valley were not at first conscious of any great advantage which would ensue if Upper Assam were connected with Chittagong. They had wanted a line along the Brahmaputra Valley which would enable them to bring in labour from their traditional recruiting points in Behar more cheaply and they were in any case rather better served by existing steamer services, in the lower valley in particular, than were planters in Sylhet and Cachar. Nevertheless, the survey engineer J.W. Buyers was able to

1 Address of the Surma Valley Branch of the India Tea Association to the Viceroy Lord Curzon. I.T.A. Rept., 1901, 346.

2 Lyall and Dowling, 34. See also Annual Reports on Labour Immigration into Assam 1896, 9.

report, "I have met planters... who have begun by saying that a railway along the valley was what was wanted, chiefly to bring cheap labour into the country, but I have not met a single one among these who, after the scheme had been explained and comprehended, did not end by giving his assent to my views".¹ What an Assam-Chittagong line could do was to vastly shorten their lines of communication. The existing means of communication between the Brahmaputra Valley and Calcutta was either by steamer, or partly by steamer and partly by rail. Thus goods went first by steamers along the Brahmaputra river and then by train from either Goalundo, Jatrapur or Sara, or direct by a much lengthier river route via Faridpur, Khulna,^{and} the Sundarbans to Calcutta. In either case the journey was a slow and lengthy one, and if made rather speedier by the use of a rail link this had the drawback of involving much more handling of the tea.

The Brahmaputra Valley, comprising the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and an area of twenty thousand square miles,² was extremely rich and fertile. But its agricultural potential was much under-exploited for lack of labour - the crying need of the region was labour. It had been estimated by the Lt. Governor of Bengal of the time that not less than nine million acres of rich and cultivable land fit for the production of rice and other cereals lay untilled in Assam because of the want of cultivators.³ The tea industry also faced the same problem. It would have benefited from an improved supply of foodstuffs, but it also needed^a plentiful supply of cheap

- 1 Final Report by J. W. Buyers, Engineer-in-Chief on the Survey Operation Encl. 7, A. B. Rly Papers, 1887. The Indian Tea Association from its headquarters in Calcutta however, still favoured a link at Dhubri with the Eastern Bengal State Railway. I. T. A. 1901, 323.
- 2 Census of India 1891, Assam I, 51.
- 3 President Beng. C. C. to Govt. of India 22 February, 1895, Beng. Proc. PWD (Rly) 1895, March 36.

labour for work on the gardens - "Labour", as the President the Bengal Chamber of Commerce stated, "to harvest the leaf as well as to till the soil, without which labour the full excellence of the Indian tea crop either in quantity or in quality can never be obtained".¹

It was however, not only more labour that was needed by the planters of Upper Assam, they were also interested in the cheap and expeditious export of their tea and also in the cheap import of rice and other commodities to feed and cloth their coolies, and of tools and machinery to work their gardens. The question of labour, Buyers argued, could best be solved by joining Assam - and also the Surma Valley - with an area which was densely populated. Since the immigrants by the late nineteenth century were being drawn to the districts of Nowgang, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur from southern and eastern Bengal, a railway through Eastern Bengal would obviously serve those areas particularly well, providing a fast and safe line of recruitment.² The exporters of tea and importers of rice in Assam were similarly interested in cheap and fast means of communication with a port. For the moment the port used was Calcutta, but were a railway to be built Chittagong would be a much more natural outlet for the Upper and Central parts of the Assam Valley. Assuming a shipment of tea from Assam to Laksham then the further stages of its movement would be as follows:

- 1 President, Beng. C. C. To Govt. of India 22 February 1895. Beng. Proc. PWD (Rly) 1895, March 36.
- 2 Final Report by J. W. Buyers Engineer-in-Chief on the Survey Operation Encl. 7. A. B. Rly Papers, 1887.

(a) to Calcutta	miles
Laksham to Chandpur by rail.....	32
Chandpur to Goalundo by Steamer	90
Goalundo to Calcutta by rail	152

The total distance, with two breaks of bulk 274 miles

(b) Chittagong

Laksham to Chittagong by rail	79 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¹
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Chittagong port was thus not only far nearer than the port of Calcutta but goods could reach it without break of bulk, which was particularly desirable in the case of the shipment of tea. In addition to the saving in time and in handling charges, there was obviously a very considerable saving in rail freight charges for goods directed by way of Chittagong.² As a result of those advantages it was agreed by the Government that it would be in the "best interest of... Assam to place it in direct communication with the seaport nearest to it namely Chittagong".³

Thus various considerations led to the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway which, by joining the remote and rich districts with the port of Chittagong, opened out the heart of Assam and Eastern Bengal, and greatly enhanced the commercial importance of the port of Chittagong.

Government had initiated the survey of the financial and commercial implications of constructing an Assam to Chittagong railway, and

1 Lyall and Dowling, 36.

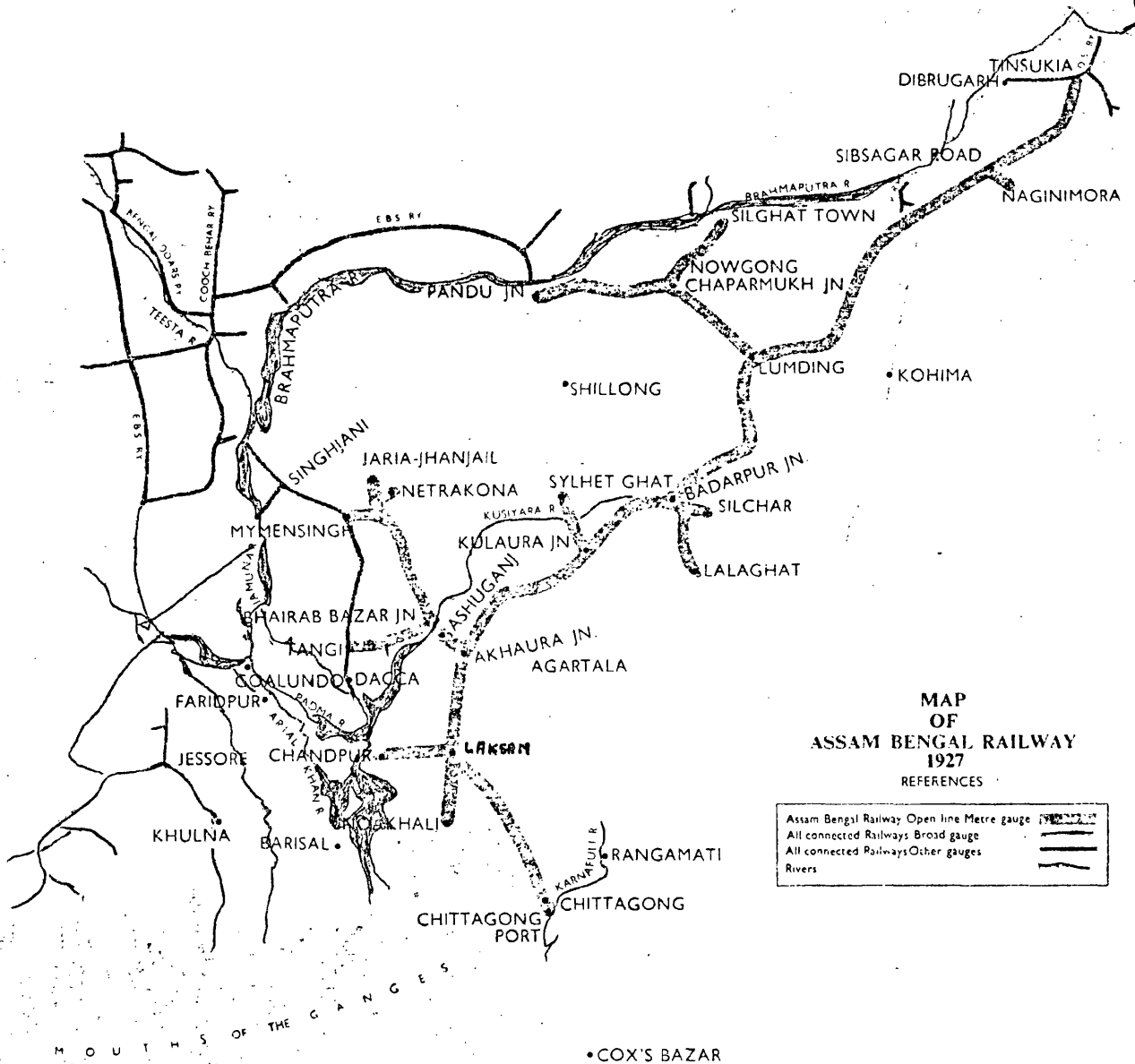
2 Indian Jute Mills Association to Chamber, 28 March 1905, Beng. C. C. 1905, I, 382.

3 General Remarks - R. C. B. Pemberton, Colonel R. E. Secretary, 25 August 1887. A. B. Rly Papers, 1887.

Government carried out the route survey. When a decision had been reached to build the Assam Bengal Railway it was Government again which began its construction as a State line in May 1891. However "the visitation of famines during this decade, the urgency of building protective railways recommended by the Famine Commission", led the Government, as Capital points out, to invite private companies to assist in railway development.¹ In April 1892 therefore a private company - the Assam Bengal Railway Company, was formed in London which took over construction and management from Government. The status of this new Company along with other Companies which were formed, differed from the earlier Railway Companies in India in the mid fifties in that, "while the earlier Companies operated their own property, the new Companies worked railways which were held to be State property".²

The railway was built on the eastern side of the river Brahmaputra serving the eastern districts of Bengal and eastern and north-eastern Assam. The total length of the main line from Chittagong Port to Tinsukia was some 574 miles.³ For the purpose of construction the line was divided into three sections, each in charge of a superintending engineer.⁴ The first section was from Chittagong to Badarpur. This was the main line, with branches going to the rice and jute growing areas of the region. To tap the rice grown in Noakhali therefore in 1903 a branch line running south-wards from Lakshamto Noakhali was opened. Similarly branches were extended to points on the left bank of the river Meghna

- 1 "Fifty Years of Rail Transport in India," 1888-1938 Jubilee Number, Capital, 3 November 1938.
- 2 "Fifty Years of Rail Transport in India", 1888-1938 Jubilee Number, Capital 3 November 1938.
- 3 Railway Department Government of India Railway Board History of Indian Railways constructed and in Progress corrected up to 31 March 1918, 153.
- 4 Administrative Report on the Railways in India 1892-93, 24.



2. The Assam Bengal Railway, 1927.

nearest to the important jute centres of Narainganj and Bhairab Bazar on the other side of the river. Communication with Narainganj was established by means of the branch line running westward from Laksham in the Tippera district (81 miles from Chittagong) to Chandpur. Similarly communication with Bhairab Bazar was opened by the extension of a line from Akhaura - north of Laksham to Ashuganj situated on the left bank of the river Meghna and opposite Bhairab Bazar.¹ This line however, in the absence of a bridge, did not prove as effective as it was hoped it would.

The second section was from Badarpur to Luming on the edge of the Assam Valley itself and the third section was from Luming to Tinsukia. These two sections ran along areas rich in rice and tea and were constructed mainly to promote the easy transportation of those commodities.²

The Assam Bengal Railway Company immediately after its formation pointed out to the Government the need for adequate and permanent landing facilities at the port of Chittagong. With this demand from the Railway authorities were set in motion forces which eventually led to the acquisition of foreshore land, the construction of jetties and other allied facilities necessary for a port to accommodate ocean-going steamers.

The Port Trust of Chittagong was formed in 1888 and although section 19 of the Chittagong Port Commissioners Act of 1887

1 History of Indian Railways 1918. 153.

2 Ibid. see also Sir Edward Gait - A History of Assam, 346.

invested the Port Commissioners with powers to acquire land to build wharves and jetties it was not till the advent of the Assam Bengal Railway Company, after almost four years, that the Port Commissioners, as Buchanan remarked "awoke to the fact that they had no foreshoreland on which to build sea-going jetties".¹ In August 1892 therefore the Trust applied to the Government of Bengal to sanction the acquisition of a plot of land on the western bank of the river Karnaphuli measuring about 3,500 feet in length and 660 in breadth for the erection of jetties and warehouses.² The Commissioners pointed out however, "that the land asked for will only berth four vessels. It is now advisable to acquire without delay, an extensive river frontage for the future well being of the Port Trust". They went on "The Port Fund cannot meet the expenses of buying land and erecting jetties and warehouses, unless Government grant a large loan... If the Government are unwilling to do this they might grant a loan sufficient to acquire all the land with river frontage, which will yearly increase in value. The Port Trust will then be in a position, if trade develops... to ask Government for a loan for jetties and warehouses and will not be obliged to pay exorbitant sums for land like the Calcutta Port Trust had to do".³ In the meantime the Consulting Engineer for Railways had also sent a proposal to the Government for the issue of a notice to acquire a section of foreshore land about 8,000 feet in length and 1,500 feet in width.⁴ On the receipt of information of these proposals the Government of Bengal wrote to the Port Commissioners stating that it had come to their knowledge that the Port Commissioners

1 Buchanan, 4.

2 Vice-Chmn Port Comms. To Govt. of Beng. 12 August 1892. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, July-December, December 45.

3 Vice-Chmn Port Comms. To Govt. of Beng. 29 November 1892. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, July-Dec, December 47-48.

4 Buchanan, 4.

wanted to acquire the same piece of land as was also required by the Assam Bengal Railway for their goods terminus¹ and that their object in acquiring that particular plot of land was "(1) to be able to embark and disembark their goods, and those belonging to Government, in case the railway handling charges should be too high; (2) to secure to the Port Trust the mooring fees which will not be paid by vessels entering the port if they are able to load and unload direct from the railway jetties". The letter went on to state, "There is no fear of excessive terminal charges, as Government can always control them just as it does the charges on the goods traffic on its own lines; and competition with the railway in the hope of gaining some profit from the trade which the railway attracts to the port is undesirable".² Nevertheless the Government of Bengal agreed to the appointment of a committee in February 1893 to report on the most suitable arrangements to be made in Chittagong for landing and shipping goods.³ This Committee in May 1893 suggested that jetty room for at least six ships (500 feet for each) should be provided and that the land required for the joint needs of the Port and Railway should extend in length from the Double Mooring jetty to the mouth of the Guptakhali Khal (a distance of $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles), with a depth of about 2,000 feet.⁴

The Government of Bengal in reporting the Committee's findings to the Government of India expressed the opinion that the land required for the port and the Railway should be taken up at once.

- 1 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn Port Comms. 9 February 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, February 45.
- 2 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 7 February 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, February 44.
- 3 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn Port Comms. 9 February 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, February 45.
- 4 Meeting of the Committee on the 6 May 1893 presided by F.A. Slack - Collector of Custom Chittagong, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, July 53-54.

It also argued that the Port Trust should own the whole of the foreshore, wharves and jetties at Chittagong and should control the warehousing and landing and shipping of goods there, providing the Railway Company with suitable access and facilities. The Government of Bengal pointed out, however, that funds for this farsighted plan would have to be provided by the Government of India in the shape of a loan.¹ The Government of India while emphasizing that "it would be expedient that the whole foreshore within port limits should be owned by the Port Trust" considered that it would not be right "that the Trust should acquire more land than that which might reasonably be considered to be actually required in the proximate future".² The Government of India pointed out that if the Trust were to acquire all the foreshore it might not be able to pay interest on the purchase money without imposing such burdens in the way of dues as to drive trade from the port. In the event the Government of India suggested that only land likely to be required within the next ten years should be acquired.³

The Government of India, having agreed that foreshore lands should be acquired, though to a more limited time scale than the other two authorities had envisaged, and that the land acquired should be managed by the Port Commissioners, then proceeded to consider the question of a loan. Its decision that a special committee should be appointed to study the financial implications of the plan⁴ proved, however, to be fatal to the plan itself, for

- 1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 28 June 1893 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, July 58.
- 2 Govt. of India to Govt. of Beng. 6 October 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, February 3.
- 3 Govt. of India to Govt. of Beng, 6 October 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, February 3.
- 4 Ibid.

the two experts appointed were J.E.O.'Connor, Assistant Secretary in the Finance Department and J.H. Apjohn, the Vice Chairman and Chief Engineer of the Calcutta Port Trust. The one applied the most rigidly orthodox financial rules to the issue, while Apjohn did what he could to limit if not prevent the growth of a port rival to his own Calcutta. The two 'experts' thus reported their opinion that wharf accommodation for two vessels would be ample for the requirements of trade for at least twenty years from the opening of the railway line throughout its whole length.¹ (The Port Commissioners it will be recalled had asked for four berths and the Bengal Government's committee for six). They also gave their opinion against any anticipation either of a future increase in trade or future need for land: "It does not seem to us that...any appreciable portion of the trade will in the future be diverted from Calcutta to Chittagong, which will remain a port suitable only for the trade of a certain relatively small part of Eastern Bengal and Assam".² They therefore, went on to write "It is not expedient at present that the Port Trust should make itself responsible for the expenditure which would be involved in the acquisition of a large area of foreshore land in view to future trade requirements, or to the construction of a wharf or wharves".³ And finally they urged that there should be divided control of such foreshore land as was acquired, for having negatived the plans for land purchase and development by the Port Trust they went on: "Meanwhile, as it is necessary that the railway should have access to the foreshore and have facilities for the landing and storage of material, the Company should be

1 Messrs. J.E.O'Connor and J.H. Apjohn to Govt. of Beng.
2 December 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, February 28-29.

2 Ibid

3 Ibid.

allowed to acquire a piece of land extending over a length of about 1,500 or 1,600 feet for the construction of a pier for the landing of railway material. . .this land should be acquired, as directed by the Government of India, with the concurrence of the Port Trust and subject to the condition that if at any time after the opening of the line the Trust considered it expedient to take over the land and the pier constructed on it, they should be able to do so on payment to the Railway Company of the cost of acquisition of the land and the value of the pier and adjuncts".¹ However, though they argued that "there is no necessity for acquiring land for the port" by the Port Trust they nevertheless felt that for the purpose of protecting the foreshore from erosion it was "expedient to acquire a section of the foreshore".² For the combined expenditure of the revetment work and the construction of a pier they felt that a sum of Rs 5,53,000 would be required. Of this, Rs 3,03,000 would be required for the purpose of revetment alone - a task which they considered should be undertaken either by the Government or the Port Trust. The Port Trust, they felt, with an expenditure which exceeded its income³ would not be able to meet the charge. The sum involved would be a heavy burden on the trade of the port, which that trade could not afford, and they therefore suggested, "We cannot see how (the charge) is to be met unless the local Government should assume the burden".⁴

On the issue of railway foreshore acquisition the Government of Bengal agreed to the proposals of the O'Connor-Apjohn Committee,

1 Messrs. J. E. O'Connor & J. H. Apjohn to Govt. of Beng. 2 December 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, February 28-29.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. The income of the Port Trust in 1892-93 was Rs 70,000 - the expenditure on recurring charges was more than Rs 74,000.

4 Ibid.

subject to certain conditions: that the land acquired should be 1,600 feet in length along the river and 500 feet deep; that the railway should construct any jetties or piers which were required for their traffic on the foreshore; that any works which might be required for the protection of the foreshore from erosion should be carried out by the railway at their own expense; and not by the Government of Bengal and that should the Port Commissioners at any future time so require, the Railway Company should cede any land not occupied by their terminal buildings or absolutely required for the working of their traffic to the Port Commissioners on payment of actual expenses incurred, such compensation to include the cost of any jetties, piers or buildings erected, and also a fair proportion of the cost of revetments or other works constructed for the protection of the river bank.¹ The Government of India also accepted the Committee's recommendations and agreed to the Railway company acquiring land but adhered to their opinion that the Port Trust should discharge all the work of landing and shipping at the port and that the piers or jetties that might be required for general railway traffic should be provided by the Port Trust and paid for out of the Port Fund. The railway would construct only such temporary jetties as might be absolutely necessary for the landing of railway material and of any works required for the protection of the railway land and that power should be reserved to the Port Trust to acquire the land taken up by the Railway Company with the pier built on it on payment.²

The report of O'Connor and Apjohn was thus decisive in determining the action of the Government of India over the acquisition of foreshore

1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 13 January 1894. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, April 31.

2 Govt. of India to Govt. of Beng. 18 April 1894, Beng. Proc. Mne. Dept. 1894, April 48.

land for Chittagong port. There had been vigorous protest at the choice of Apjohn as a member of the Committee, since he was Vice-Chairman of the rival Port Trust of Calcutta. The Agent to the Bengal Assam Railway, for example, complained, "It must be considered as unfortunate that, at a time when an independent report of the prospects of Chittagong, which was then regarded as a potential and is now an actual competitor with Calcutta, was obtained, that officers entirely unconnected with Calcutta were not appointed this fatal report has, in spite of the protests of the Company, determined the policy of Government for no less than five years of the life of the railway".¹ Later critics, more fully aware of the ill-consequences of the appointment, fully agreed with the Agents' complaint. Sir Francis Spring who was the Chairman and Chief Engineer of the Madras Port stigmatised the report as unfavourable and short-sighted if not prejudiced;² and Sir George Buchanan the Chairman and Chief Engineer of the Rangoon Port Trust spoke in similar or still harsher terms: "In the light of events I am disposed to concur with Sir Francis Spring's remark. Messrs O'Connor and Apjohn appear to have been principally interested in proving that none of the trade going to Calcutta could possibly be diverted to Chittagong".³ It seems only too clear that on the foreshore issue the parsimony and short-sightedness of the Government of India, and the lack of resolution of the Government of Bengal had been compounded by the positive hostility of rival interest groups in Calcutta with crippling effect.

The Government of India, having decided that the Port Trust should undertake all the works of landing and shipping at the port, informed

1 Agent A. B. Rly - To Managing Director A. B. Rly Co, 7 January 1902, Agents' Letters to Board 1902-04.

2 Buchanan 4.

3 Ibid.

the Port Commissioners to that effect. The Port Commissioners however responded by adhering to their earlier view expressed in January 1893 when they had explained, "the Port Fund has at present no funds available to meet the expenses of erecting jetties and warehouses". It seemed essential therefore "that Government should in the interests of the port advance such sum as may be necessary".¹ The Government of India however did not agree to a loan and stated, "Imperial Funds should not be employed in providing trade facilities at a Port, that it was the work of the trade itself to provide such facilities, and that as trade expanded they would doubtless be forthcoming".² While the Port Commissioners and the Government of India both held opposite views on the subject of a loan the Railway Company maintained that they should be entrusted with the work of building jetties for as they explained, "until some permanent jetty is made at Chittagong, the Railway cannot expect to attract much trade to the Port, and the interests of the Railway, the Port, and the community generally of Eastern Bangal and Assam must suffer".³ This proposal of the Railway Company was quite acceptable to the Port Commissioners. In a note dated 21 August 1895 the Chairman of the Port Commissioners thus stated that the Commissioners

"(1) are anxious for the landing and shipping facilities for the Railway to be provided in the belief that their revenue will be increased thereby

(2) But the Commissioners have no guarantee for funds beyond their income and cannot speculate.

(3) They have no funds and cannot borrow at less than $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

The Railway can get money on far easier terms.

1 Chmn of the Port Comms. To Govt. of Beng. 16 January 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, February 43.

2 Agent and Chief Eng. A. B. Rly Co. to Managing Director A. B. Rly Co. 10 January 1896. Agent's Letter to Board, 1896,

3 Ibid.

(4) The Commissioners have no Engineers or establishments. It would be wasteful for them to create such establishments to work side by side with the Railway establishments.

(5) So the Commissioners would be willing to carry out the work by using the Railway's funds and Engineers and establishments on terms to be negotiated".¹

The Government of India did not agree to this proposal. As a result, all progress towards the construction of the jetties at Chittagong came to a standstill.

In a letter addressed to the Railway Board their Agent and Chief Engineer J. W. Buyers wrote in frustration, "The Government of India's decision of course simply means that the construction of the jetties, the protection of the foreshore and generally the works required to make a Port of Chittagong, are to be postponed sine die, and that whatever happens, the railway, the party most interested in the prosperity of the port, is to have nothing whatever to say in the matter".² The deadlock was broken in 1896 by a telegram from the Secretary of State to the Government of India, "Bengal Assam Railway Company urge inadequacy temporary accommodation for landing sanctioned by you, and press for necessary permanent works to be entrusted to Company under clause 8 of their contract. If sanction be not accorded to this request or early construction of requisite works, Company demand arbitration to commence operations. Adequate and permanent landing facilities are in my

1 Note on Resolution 5 of the Port Commissioners' meeting of 21 August 1895 - by W. B. Oldham, Chairman - 27 August 1895 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1895, ^{Oct,} p. 238.

2 Agent and Chief Engineer to Rly Board. Agent's Letters to Board 1894,

opinion imperatively necessary and must be provided at once".¹ Upon the receipt of this telegram, the Government of India enquired of the Government of Bengal whether "the Government of Bengal are prepared to formulate proposals for the grant of a loan to the Port Commissioners to enable them to undertake the work".² The Government of Bengal however was against giving any loan to the Port Commissioners and gave the following reason for their decision. "The prospects of the Port of Chittagong are at present very uncertain. The trade may develop enormously with the opening of the Railway but this cannot be counted upon, and it may take 20 years or more to reach any large amount. Whoever therefore, makes the jetties, must take the risk of spending Rs 5, 76, 000 and getting very little for it.

It is certain that the Port Commissioners cannot afford to pay Rs 41, 000 a year for sinking funds and interest at 4 per cent, and in the Lieutenant Governor's opinion, the state of Provincial finances and the prospect before it does not warrant this Government making any grant to the Chittagong Port or undertaking any liability even to the extent of the interest charged of Rs 23, 000 on account of it. It is, moreover, quite uncertain whether the Port would be able to repay the loan within the next generation or so, and meanwhile Chittagong might be transferred to Assam and the interest of this Government in it cease!" The Bengal Government however strongly recommended that the Railway Company should "make the jetties subject to the right of the Port Commissioners to resume them on payment of their value at some

1 Secretary of State for India to Govt. of Beng. Telegram 17 October 1896. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1897 - December 38-39.

2 Govt. of India to Govt. of Beng. 11 November 1896. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1897, December 38-39.

future date"¹. The Government of India however decided, in view of the fact that "the Port Trust can neither find the money themselves nor are they in a position to borrow the necessary money"² to ask the Railway Company to carry out the work on behalf of, and at the cost of, the Government.³ The Railway on completion of the Jetties would work them as lessee under an agreement with the Port Trust.⁴ Accordingly the Railway Company was approached which approving of the scheme came to an agreement with the Port Trust in June 1901. Under this agreement the Railway Company agreed to work the jetty as the agent of the Trust. All receipts were to be paid to the Port Trust and all expenses met by the same body.⁵ Explaining the overall situation the Government of Bengal wrote to the Port Commissioners, "the jetty has been constructed from Imperial Funds and remains the property of Government so as to ensure its being worked in the interest of the general trade of the Port. The control of the jetty has been made over to the Port Commissioners, and they are practically in the position of agents of the Government. The working arrangements are, however, in the hands of the Assam Bengal Railway."⁶

While the working arrangements of the jetties were being discussed by the Port Commissioners with the Railway Company the first jetty was constructed at the Double Mooring and was opened in 1899.⁷

- 1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 26 November 1896, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept, 1897, December 40.
- 2 Govt. of India to Govt. of Beng. 27 January 1897, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1897, December 41-42.
- 3 Admin Beng. 1896-97, 14. See also Note by V. Woodhead, Vice-Chmn. Port Comms. 27 January 1910. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1912, April 24.
- 4 Admin Beng. 1897-98, Summary 16.
- 5 Agreement as Executed between the A. B. Rly and the Comms. of the Port of Chitt. for the working of the jetties at the Double Moorings Chitt. Beng. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1901, July 8.
- 6 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn. Port Comms. 19 June 1901, Beng. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1901, June 70.
- 7 Admin. Beng. 1900-1901, 74, One vessel used the jetty in 1899-1900 while five used it in 1900-1901.

With the first shipment of jute in November 1900, via the new Narainganj - Chandpur route to Chittagong,¹ the authorities of the railway company realised that they would be able to draw a much larger trade through that route provided the port facilities of Chittagong were able to handle it. In a letter to the Consulting Engineer to the Government of India for Railways in Assam the Agent and Chief Engineer of the Assam Bengal Railway wrote accordingly "The shipments of jute made by rail and steamer from Chittagong during the past season, prove conclusively that if reasonable facilities are afforded, the whole of the six lakhs (120,000 tons) pressed bales now exported out of India from the Narayanganj presses will go by way of Chandpur and Chittagong and my advices now are that a very great expansion of the trade will actually occur during the coming season.

What, however, is likely to deter shippers is the fear that owing to the very limited accommodation at... Chittagong, there may be a serious (traffic) block... I am preparing plans and estimates for the duplication of the existing jetty accommodation... I trust that the Government of India will give this matter an early consideration".² Messrs. David and Company of Narainganj in a letter to the Traffic Manager of the Assam Bengal Railway confirmed this expectation, writing, "as you know, we are ready to ship by the cheapest route at once, ... If you get a shed capable of holding a ship's cargo with jetties to enable a steamer to load without boating, I may safely say we shall ship by railway".³ When the proposal was placed before the Government of Bengal however, that Government with its usual parsimony and characteristic indifference stalled in

- 1 Traffic Manager A. B. Rly. To Agent and Chief Engineer A. B. Rly. 20 November 1900. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1901, April 39.
- 2 Agent A. B. Rly - To Consulting Engineer A. B. Rly 30 January 1901, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. April 41.
- 3 Traffic Manager A. B. Rly. to Agent A. B. Rly, 2 January 1902, Agent's Letters to Board 1902.

the matter and maintained that there should not be much difficulty in arranging the arrival of steamers in such a way that each might get the use of the existing jetty in turn and expressed doubt as to the necessity for any extensions.¹ In that decision the Government of India concurred.² In 1902 pressure for the construction of a second jetty was applied to the Government of Bengal by the Railway authorities, by the Port Commissioners and by various firms.³ Messrs. David and Company wrote "If Government will not move in the matter until the Chittagong trade is developed, then Chittagong will never develop".⁴ The Government of Bengal finally approved of the erection of a second jetty in May 1902.⁵ The jetty came into full use in 1904-05.⁶

While the question of the construction of this jetty was being discussed, the authorities of the Assam Bengal Railway had simultaneously been trying to convince the Government of India that the ownership and control of the port jetty should be transferred to the Railway. In a letter addressed to their Agent and Chief Engineer, B.I. Milne Acting Secretary to the Board of Directors of the Assam Bengal Railway wrote, "The Board... consider that the jetty is the riverside terminus of the Assam Bengal Railway and that it ought to be treated as being to all intents and purposes, part and parcel of the railway undertaking and this the Board insist on... as they hold it to be of essential importance to the import

1 Agent A. B. Rly to Managing Director A. B. Rly, London 7 January 1902, Agent's Letters to Board, 1902-04.

2 Ibid.

3 Firms Messrs. M. David & Co. Narainganj 2 January 1902, Messrs, Ralli Brothers 20 December 1901, Ewing & Co. Agents Nahapiet Jute Co. Ltd., 23 December 1901. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1902, March 92-96.

4 Traffic Manager A. B. Rly to Agent A. B. Rly 2 January 1902. Agent's Letters to Board 1902.

5 Govt. of Beng. to Consulting Engineer for Railways Assam, 14 May 1902. Beng. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1902, May 58.

6 Chitt. Port. Admin. Report for 1906-07, E. B. A. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1906, November 6.

and export trade of Chittagong and of the districts of Eastern Bengal and Assam which the railway is intended to serve that the management of the jetty and the control of the traffic to and from the railway passing over it should be exclusively in the hands of the railway company, subject only to the general control of all its transactions which is exercised by the Government of India".¹ The Government of India however, maintained "in the interest of the general trade of the port the jetty at Chittagong should be the property of Government, and that the Government of India are therefore unable to agree to the reopening of the question of its ownership".² It was only when it was found in 1903 that the Port Commissioners were not in a position to pay the interest on the capital expenditure on the jetty that the Government of India agreed to transfer the jetty to the Railway Company. On 27th March 1903 the Government therefore handed over the jetties to the railway, retaining the right to resume them. The conditions and circumstances under which they would be able to resume the jetties were laid down in the Government of India, Public Works Department, Letter No. OIR. C. dated 27 March, 1903, as quoted below:-

"3. In making this transfer of the jetties, however, the Government of India reserve to themselves the right of resuming possession should they consider such a step to be at any time called for in the interests of trade, or should an improvement in the financial position of the Port Trust give sufficient and permanent promise of its ability to meet fully the interest on the capital cost of the works.

1 Sec. to the Board of Directors A. B. Rly to Agent & Chief Engineers A. B. Rly. 9 February 1900. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1900, March 65- 69.

2 Govt. of India PWD to Consulting Engineer to the Govt. of India Rly. Assam. 26 May 1900 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1900, June 17.

4. The effect of these orders is that the control of the jetties passes entirely from the Port Trust to the Railway, and this being so, I am to state...that the power¹ to fix and revise rates for the future use of the jetties and their accessories can no longer be exercised by the Port Trust but devolves on the Railway, subject to the control of the consulting Engineer. This complete severance of the jetties from the control of the Port Trust appears to the Government of India to be essential to their efficient working, which any dual control would certainly tend to hamper.

5. As regards the question of surplus profits...it is observed that the income derived from the jetties is at present small and it seems improbable that it will improve to such an extent in the near future as to cover interest charges. Should it however do so, the Government of India will be prepared to consider any recommendation which may then be put forward for the payment to the Port Trust, either in whole or part, of such profits as may remain from the net earnings after deducting a cumulative charge for interest at 4 per cent to run from the date of the opening of the jetties for traffic, diminished by the amount of net earnings credited in the accounts of the Railway".¹

Almost simultaneously with their efforts to construct and take possession of the jetties at the port, the Assam Bengal Railway Company was trying to attract more cargo for themselves which would incidentally, in turn improve the volume of the trade of the port of Chittagong. This they did by making the railway freight charge

1 . P. C. Das Gupta, Report on accounting including costing system and general office procedure at present in force with recommendation as to improvements therein, 6.

more attractive to importers of jute. After the construction of the line connecting Chittagong with Chandpur in 1895 the Agent made a bid to attract the cargoes of baled jute exported from Narainganj and on the recommendation of the Traffic Manager, Assam Bengal Railway, sanctioned a reduction of the rate for pressed jute between Chandpur and Chittagong, to be provided in the form of a rebate varying with the quantity booked by each consignor, amounting, at the maximum, for quantities of not less than 50,000 bales consigned in a single calendar year, to 2 annas per bale, or 25 per cent on the existing special rate of 8 annas per bale.¹ This he did, as he believed that "unless a rebate was given, only small quantities of jute would pass over this portion of the line, and I feel certain the Board will approve of the action taken to bring as large a quantity as possible to Chittagong".² The Board approved of the action³ and the measure had the desired effect. Towards the end of 1900, 40,000 bales of jute were sent by railway for shipment at the Chittagong jetty.⁴ With this first shipment via the new route a satisfactory start was given to the trade of the port with, as the Agent wrote, "every reason to expect (it) to greatly increase in future years".⁵

- 1 Baled Jute - Board's Letters to Agent 1900, A331. The following are the rebates that were given:

	bales	mds	Rebates
For quantities not less than	20,000	= 1,00,000	6 pies per bale
" " " " "	30,000	= 1,50,000	1 anna " "
" " " " "	40,000	= 2,00,000	1 anna 6 pies per bale
" " " " "	50,000 & over	=	2 annas per bale

- 2 Baled Jute - Agent's Letter to the Board, 1900, AL/281
 3 Baled Jute - Board's Letters to Agent 1900, A331.
 4 Board to Agent and Chief Engineer A. B. Rly 11 January 1901, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1901, April 40.
 5 Jute Traffic - Agent's Letters to the Board, 1900, AL/292

In order to encourage tea exporters to use the port of Chittagong a similar step was taken and in June 1900 on the recommendation of the Railway Board, "a rebate of 25 per cent on the Railway freight of all tea booked to Chittagong (was given) provided consignors despatched not less than 500 maunds per month".¹ Recommending the measure the Traffic Manager Assam Bengal Railway commented, "it is hoped it will prove a great inducement for the tea traffic to flow towards Chittagong a result which the interests of this Company so strongly desire".² In addition to the rebate, as the construction of the railway progressed into the tea gardens of the Surma and Brahmaputra Valleys, the railway company offered to undertake, free of charge, all the agency work in connection with forwarding stores from Chittagong.³

However, to make the trade a really profitable one for the railway one of the essential conditions was to have good regular steamer connections between Narainganj and Chandpur on either side of the river Meghna. From 1899 to 1904 therefore the Assam Bengal Railway Company made repeated attempts to come to an understanding with the Steamer Companies to promote the trade between Narainganj and Chandpur. In 1899 a proposal was submitted by the Railway Board for the establishment of a wagon ferry between the two towns.⁴ It was proposed that the task of providing and working the necessary flotilla should be undertaken by the Assam

1 Shipment of Tea Direct by the Clan Line of Steamers. Agent's Letter - Agent's Letters to Board 1900, AL/270.

2 Ibid.

3 Agent A. B. Rly to Chairman of the Port Commissioners Chitt. 29 July 1907. E. B. A. Proc. PWD (Mne), 1908, May 26.

4 Board to Agent 24 February 1899, Board's Letters to Agent A, 254.

Bengal Railway Company in conjunction with the different flotilla companies.¹ The Steamer Companies however were hostile to the idea of the Assam Bengal Railway developing any trade between Chittagong and the regions lying west of the river Meghna and so rejected the proposal.² In the years that followed, the Railway Agent made several more attempts but with no success, so that the frustrated agent is found writing in 1904 to the Board, "The Steamer Companies' interests being to develop the traffic between Narayanganj and Calcutta, they cannot be expected to provide an efficient service between Chandpur and Narayanganj on terms that it will be undertaken by those whose interest are bound up with the latter route. . . ."

In practice, I doubt whether it would ever be possible to arrange matters with the Steamer Companies, even by a guarantee, since it is evident that the profits ensured by a guarantee however liberal on the capital cost of the small block required for an efficient service between Narayanganj and Chandpur would never pay them for the loss of a large traffic on the long haul all the way to Calcutta.

That it is the blocking of the traffic of the Assam Bengal Railway and not the expense of the service, which is the real impediment to a satisfactory connection being arranged through the existing steamer services, may be seen from the fact that they maintain (vide their letter of August 1899) an expensive non-paying service

1 Note by R. S. Strachey Agent A. B. Rly on the establishment of an adequate flotilla service between Chandpur and Narayanganj 12 March 1904, Agent's Letters to Board, 1902, AL/543.

2 Ibid.

on the Khulna route from Chandpur to serve the Bengal Central Railway the route being of very little use to this railway but having the recommendation that it did no harm to the Steamer Companies' own traffic"¹. The Railway Board's proposal to develop their own flotilla for service between Chandpur and Narainganj, put to the Government of India in 1904, was turned down.

While the Railway Company could come to no satisfactory arrangements with the Steamer Companies they were, with the help of the tea planters, more successful in establishing Chittagong's direct communication by steamer with the United Kingdom. This was the direct consequence of the Company's vigorous salesmanship. On the completion of the first jetty, which was brought into use during 1900, very few steamers were found to use it, there being no organised trade in jute and little or no export of tea or other commodities to Europe to induce steamer companies either to send vessels or to apply for berthing facilities.² It therefore became at once evident to all concerned with the development of the trade of the port of Chittagong, that to initiate trade some special arrangement must be made to guarantee export cargo and to convince the steamer companies that a sufficient trade could be developed to warrant sending vessels to the port of Chittagong. With that object Hart, one of the Directors of the Railway Company, formed a "Combine" with a large number of influential tea garden owners to guarantee the shipment of their tea via Chittagong to Europe. They then approached the Clan Line with a view to inducing them to send their steamers regularly to Chittagong during the tea season.³ The Clan Line replied that if an arrangement was to be

1 Note by Agent A. B. Rly, 12 March 1904, Agents' Letters to Board, 1902,

2 Agent A. B. Rly, to Chmn. Port Comms. 2 November 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, May 32.

3 Ibid.

made, they would require, "the tea shippers taking advantage of it to agree for a given term of years to supply not less than 500 tons of tea for shipment fortnightly and to pay 5 s a ton more for freight than is paid for shipment of tea at Calcutta".¹ The tea shippers agreed to the rates provided the Clan Line on their part would undertake a regular service of steamers at fixed intervals from Chittagong. This the Clan Line would only agree to do provided they were given a fixed berth for the accommodation of their steamers at the regular dates specified.² The Agent, Assam Bengal Railway approached the Port Commissioners who at that time owned the jetty with the proposal, and on 6 July 1901 the Port Commissioners resolved "the present jetty shall be kept free for the Clan Line steamers on the regular dates of their arrival".³ Accordingly an arrangement was made with the Clan Line for a regular fortnightly service from the Port of Chittagong during the tea season.⁴ The Line moreover was permitted to load at other ports, provided London was reached in a certain number of days.⁵

Thus in a few years a tremendous development took place at the port of Chittagong as a result of the initiative taken by the Assam Bengal Railway Company. The advent of the railway, however, was a mixed blessing. For with the transfer of the jetties in 1903 to the Railway, the history of the port of Chittagong entered a new phase. For if the

- 1 A. B. Rly. Co. Ltd. to Agent and Chief Engineer, A. B. Rly - 1 January 1900, Board's Letters to Agent 1900.
- 2 The Agent A. B. Rly to Chmn Port Comms. 2 November 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, May 32.
- 3 The Chmn Port Comm. to Agent & Chief Engineer A. B. Rly, 6 July 1901, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne , 1908, May 32. (enclosure). See also E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, May 2.
- 4 The Agent & Chief Engineer, A. B. Rly. to Chmn. Port Comms. 14 June 1901 - E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1908, May 32. (enclosure)
- 5 The Agent A. B. Rly to Chmn. Port Comms. 2 November 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, May 32.

transfer assisted the working of the railway, it was to prove very deleterious to the development of the port. The port of Chittagong from then on became more or less the commercial monopoly of the Railway Company, with the Port Commissioners having little or no say over its day to day operation. The Assam Bengal Railway Company was a private company. Its interest in the development of the port of Chittagong was therefore naturally as a means to achieving its own commercial ends. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, while it found in the improvement of the port of Chittagong the prospect of a very good trade, it was quite indifferent, so long as its own interests were served, whether Chittagong developed as an ocean terminal or as a port merely serving the coastal trade.

CHAPTER IV

The Partition of Bengal and the Port of Chittagong

At the beginning of the twentieth century one of the most explosive issues in Bengal was that of the partition of the province which was finally brought about in 1905 with the creation of a new province known as Eastern Bengal and Assam with Chittagong as its main port. Though the partition was carried out during the viceroyalty of Lord Curzon the concept of a territorial redistribution of the provinces of Bengal and Assam had taken shape long before he took office. The necessity for some territorial rearrangement in Bengal for administrative purposes had been felt as far back as in 1854.¹ Since then the question of territorial rearrangement of the provinces of Assam and Bengal had come up from time to time in various political, economic and administrative forms. During these long debates the transfer of Chittagong from Bengal to Assam had featured regularly and prominently. In fact the idea put forward in 1892 of the transfer of Chittagong and the south Lushai Hills to Assam formed the nucleus around which the whole question of the partition of Bengal gradually crystallised over the next two decades.

The proposal to transfer the Chittagong Division to Assam was considered in terms both of administrative convenience and of commercial development. It was felt that administratively it would give relief to the Government of Bengal while helping the "erection of Assam into a vigorous and self contained administration".²

1. S. Ahmed, Muslim Community in Bengal, 1884-1912. 229. P. Mokenjee "All about Partition", Tract Indian Politics 73; Z.H. Zaidi, 'The Political Motive in the Partition of Bengal 1905', Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society. XII, II, April 1964, 114.
2. Govt. of India to Govt. of Bengal 3 Dec. 1903 P.P1905 LVIII, 10.

From the commercial point of view it was considered that the port of Chittagong deserved better attention than it had hitherto received under the Bengal Government and as the condition of trade at the port affected not Assam only but the general development of trade on the eastern frontier it was felt that if "Assam would do more for Chittagong than (had) Bengal"¹ the transfer should take place. Moreover the future of the port of Chittagong was closely linked up with the Assam Bengal Railway. It was therefore thought that the best results were to be expected only if the railway and the port were brought under one administration.² It was for this reason that the transfer of other territories to Assam in addition to Chittagong came to be considered thus contributing to the pattern of partition which finally evolved in 1905.

The proposal to transfer the Chittagong Division to Assam was first put forward in a conference which met in Calcutta on the 29th January 1892. The conference had been called to consider "the administration, civil and military, of the tribes lying between Bengal, Burma and Assam"³ a problem under discussion since the middle of 1891.⁴ These tribes were then controlled by three different local administrations: the northern Lushais were under the Chief Commissioner of Assam, the southern Lushais were under the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal and the Chins were under the Chief Commissioner of Burma. In 1892 the viceroy, Lansdowne, in a letter to Cross, the Secretary of State for India, expressed the opinion that the Government of India, "ought to

1. Note by H.H. Risley, 31 Mar. 1903, Curzon Collection, A.29.
2. Govt. of India to Govt. of Bengal 3 Dec. 1903. P.P.1905, LVII 11.
3. Lansdowne to Cross, 6 Jan 1892, Cross Collection, XXXII, 2.
4. Sec of State India to Govt of India 17 Sept 1891, India Foreign Proc. (External) 1892. 5EP9
Conference - presided by Sir Henry Cotton, 10 Jan 1905 - "All About Partition" Tract Indian Policies, 73. C.E. Buckland, Bengal under the Lt. Governors 1854 - 1898, II, 906-8.

bring the greater part of these tribes under one management and that they should be either under Assam, or directly under the Government of India. Bengal is already too big".¹ At about the same time Cross wrote to the Viceroy drawing his attention to the possibility of altering the administration of the Lushai country, so as to get rid of the tripartite system.²

It was finally suggested that the south Lushai Hills should be transferred from Bengal to Assam as early as possible, and that if the South Lushai Hills with their avenues of access through the Chittagong district and Hill Tracts were transferred to Assam, as had been strongly recommended, it would be convenient that the whole Chittagong Division should be also transferred. It was pointed out that "an additional argument in favour of this suggestion is that the projected Assam - Chittagong Railway will then be entirely in the Assam jurisdiction"³ and as Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Chief Commissioner of Burma pointed out, "Chittagong... will, with the proposed railway, be the natural port of Assam".⁴

The recommendations of the conference were considered by the Governor-General in Council and it was finally decided by Resolution of the Foreign Department of 25 July 1892 that the South Lushai country should be transferred as soon as possible to Assam and the Chittagong districts also, as soon as settlement operation there had been completed. The expediency of the transfer to Assam of the whole of the Chittagong Division including

1. Lansdowne to Cross, 6 Jan 1892, Cross Collection, XXXII, 2.
2. Lansdowne to Cross, 19 Jan 1892, Cross Collection, XXXII, 13.
3. Military Department Letter, 21 Jan 1892. India Foreign Proc. (Extl) Sep-Dec, 1892, Sept 33 See also Bengal Legislative Council Debates, January-December 1896, 4.
4. Minute by the Chief Commissioners of Burma, 27 January 1892, India Foreign Proc. (Extl). September-December 1892, September 34.

the political charge of Hill Tippera was reserved for further consideration.¹

The whole question of the transfer of the Chittagong Division was again raised in January 1896. The opinions of the Governments of Bengal and Assam were sought² regarding the transfer of the Chittagong district from Bengal to Assam or alternatively of the whole of the Chittagong Division, including the political charge of Hill Tippera. Sir John Woodburn³ explained, "The Government of India consider it desirable, if possible, to relieve the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal of some portion of a charge which owing to the development of the country and the growth of the population, threatens to become too large to be administered by one Government. Assam, on the other hand is the smallest province in British India for which there is a separate administration, and the addition to it of the Chittagong Division would not have the effect of throwing too great a burden on the Chief Commissioner. The interests of that province will be materially benefitted by its being brought into direct communication with the sea, while those of the port of Chittagong are likely to receive more attention when it is annexed to Assam than can be given to it as one of several ports connecting the province of Bengal, with the sea. It is desirable that the whole of the territory through which the Assam Bengal Railway will run be brought under one administration".⁴

It is clear from this that in 1896 the transfer of the Chittagong Division to Assam was no longer a matter of tidying up an anomalous

1. Proc. Govt. of India Foreign Dept. 25, July 1892, India Foreign Proc. (Extl) Sep-Dec 1892.
2. Note by J. P. Hewett, 28 August 1902, Curzon Collection, A, 15.
3. Sir John Woodburn became member of the Council of the Governor-General on the 23 Dec 1895. He was the Lt. Governor of Bengal from 8 April 1898 to 1902.
4. Proc. Governor-General's Council 27 February 1896, Assam Proc. (Home) Jan-June 1897, January 43.

position in the Lushai Hills, but had become part of the more pressing problem of how to relieve overburdened Bengal.

When it became public knowledge that the transfer of Chittagong Division was under consideration a large number of memorials protesting against the proposed change were submitted.

Collectively their objections may be stated to be first, that the Division would cease to enjoy the privilege of electing a member of the Bengal Council. Secondly that it would be removed from the jurisdiction of the Board of Revenue. Thirdly that the Chittagong Division would come under a new set of laws and a new system of administration less advanced than those of Bengal.¹

Oldham, the Commissioner of Chittagong, held that opposition to the transfer of his division was confined almost entirely to Government Officers, pleaders, mukhtears and school teachers, while the Muslims were apathetic, and employers and merchants, especially those in the jute trade showed no concern, "whatever happens, Calcutta will be the capital for them". His own opinion, however, was for a much bolder, more substantial measure, involving the hiving off of all Bengal east of the Brahmaputra "with Dacca or perhaps even Chittagong as its capital".²

Sir Alexander Mackenzie, now Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, put his Government's view which was notably cool, "a readjustment

1. From-a) Khan Bahadur Serajul Islam, President, Tippera Hitasadhini, Saba 419. b) N. C. Der Varma-President of the Public Meeting held at the Comilla Town Hall 5th Jan 1896. 424. c) Babu Nittyundo Roy President of the Public Meeting Chittagong 12 Jan 1896, 424. d) Babu Surendra Nath Benerjee Honorary Sec. to the Indian Association 431, Public Letters from India and General Letters from Bengal. 1897, 419-31.
2. Oldham to Govt. of Bengal 7 Feb. 1896, P. L. I. G. L. B. 1897, 403.

of territory has become a necessity, such readjustment being needed, however, not in the interests of Bengal, but in those of Assam alone".¹ The advantages to Assam he defined to be a reasonable territorial expansion, the gain to that province of having a sea-port of its own, the convenience of placing the Assam-Bengal Railway under one administration, and the strengthening of the Assam Commission so as to make it self-contained and independent of Bengal recruitment of officials. He however stated that the transfer would admit of no reduction in either the Board of Revenue or Secretariat establishments in Bengal.

D.R. Lyall, of the Board of Revenue was as clearly approving as Sir Alexander Mackenzie was partly damning. He not only demonstrated the advantage of nearly doubling the population under the Assam Commissioner and reducing that of swollen Bengal even if only rather marginally, but pointed out the advantages of having a unified frontier administration from the sea to the Himalayan borders of Assam. He also strongly urged the advantage of giving Assam its own port. "Assam is at present what I may call a 'one horse administration. It lies out of the way and its capital is Calcutta. It has no outlet with which the administration is directly concerned. Its connection with foreign trade is entirely through Calcutta, and it will always necessarily be intimately connected with Calcutta as the natural port of one of its greatest water systems, but Assam is about to be connected with Chittagong by rail, and it will thus gain a new outlet by land.

I am one of those who believe most thoroughly in trade facilities creating trade...

1. Govt. of Bengal to Govt. of India 13 Aug 1896, P. L. I. G. L. B. 1897, 400. See also Note by J.P. Hewett, 28 Aug 1902, 15. Curzon Collection, A. See also Kalpana Bishui, The Origin and Evolution of the Scheme for the First Partition of Bengal (1905) Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, IV-VI, 1964-67, 78.

The Bengal Government is...not specially interested in pushing the port of Chittagong.

The Assam Government will, on the contrary, be greatly interested in improving the trade of the port and by doing so will increase the wealth of all the districts tapped by the railway".¹

Sir William Ward, the Chief Commissioner of Assam, was against the transfer of Chittagong district alone but welcomed the proposal to transfer the whole division. This would make the creation of provincial service in Assam more of a possibility and he argued strongly that on completion of the Assam-Bengal Railway it would be to the interest of the districts traversed by the railway and of the development of the port of Chittagong that all those districts should be under one Government. He also suggested that "if additional territory is to be made over to this administration, it would be preferable, from the point of view of the enlarged province, that the Dacca and Mymensingh districts, as well as the Chittagong Division, should be included in the transfer". He pointed out certain difficulties which might result from the transfer of Chittagong Division alone. He stated the transfer of the division would throw on the Chief Commissioner and the Secretariat staff not only the work which at that time fell on the Bengal Government but also that which fell on the Board of Revenue as well. As a result it would be impossible for the Chief Commissioner to continue to supervise

1. Memorandum of D.R. Lyall, 20 Feb 1896, P. L. I. G. L. B. 1897, 413.

the details of district work in the districts of the province in the same way as before. On the other hand, the transfer of Chittagong Division alone would not be a thoroughly satisfactory means of affording relief to the Chief Commissioner, as it was doubtful whether in the province, as ^{they} thus enlarged, there would be sufficient materials for forming two new Commissionership. The transfer of Chittagong Division alone might not also make it possible for Assam to have separate services. To meet these difficulties he suggested that Dacca and Mymensingh districts, as well as the Chittagong Division should be transferred to, or amalgamated with the province of Assam. ¹

The transfer of Dacca and Mymensingh however appears not to have been seriously considered by the Government of India at that time. ²

H. J. S. Cotton who succeeded Sir William Ward as the Chief Commissioner of Assam voiced a very different view from that of his predecessor on the question of the transfer of the Chittagong Division to Assam. In a note drawn up by him dated 26th January 1897, he wrote, "I am convinced that the Division of Chittagong would not gain in any respect by being transferred to Assam. It is impossible to conceive that any civilized portion of Bengal would gain by being detached from the advanced province to which it belongs and attached to a comparatively backward province. With regard to the question of separate services for

1. Chief Commissioner of Assam to Govt. of India, 25 November 1896. Assam Proc. (Home), 1897 Jan 50 Also see P. L. I. G. L. B. 1897. 449-468.
2. Assam Proc. (Home), 1897, Jan 43, Sir John Woodburn, stated in answer to a question 'The Government of India have made no proposal that Dacca and Mymensingh should be transferred to Assam nor is such a proposal at present under their consideration'.

Assam he wrote that it would not be possible nor even desirable to have separate services for Assam as proposed by Sir William Ward. He added that Assam would be too small to have a self-contained service even if the districts of Dacca and Mymensingh along with the Division of Chittagong were transferred to Assam. As to the question of the transfer of Dacca and Mymensingh districts to Assam H.J.S. Cotton wrote, "The proposal, if it were made public, would excite a storm of protest, and I imagine that the Government of Bengal would be as strongly opposed to this suggestion as I am myself".¹ He however recommended the idea of transferring the South Lushai Hills to Assam.

As a result of the strong opposition by the Chief Commissioner of Assam and also due to the fact that the Government of Bengal felt that Bengal's burdens would not be significantly lightened by the transfer, the Government of India determined, by the Council order of 29th April 1897, that the Chittagong Division should not be transferred though the South Lushai Hills were transferred to Assam, and that the Chief Commissioner should be consulted as to the proposal to transfer the Chittagong Hill Tracts.² The question of the transfer of the Chittagong Hill Tracts was further considered but the Foreign Department's letter of 17th August 1897 left the matter indefinitely in abeyance.³

When the decision of the Government of India became known there were some who expressed the opinion that, when Chittagong became the part of Assam, the question would have to be reconsidered.

1. Note by the Chief Commissioner of Assam 26 January 1897 Assam Proc. (Home) 1897, Jan 54, See also P. L. I. G. L. B. 1897, 449-468.
2. Note by J. P. Hewett, 28 August 1902, Curzon Collection, A. 95. See also Broomfield, "The Partition of Bengal: A Problem in British Administration, 1830-1912." Indian History Congress Proceedings of the Twenty-third session Aligarh, 1960. III, 13-24.
3. Note by J. P. Hewett, 28 August 1902, Curzon Collection, A. 95.

Thus Sir Edwin Collen¹ while agreeing that the transfer should not be made immediately, argued that when the Assam Railway was opened throughout its entire length, Chittagong would become the port of Assam and expressed his belief that before many years the question would be again revived and the Chittagong Division separated from Bengal.²

The question of the redistribution of territories featured prominently again in 1901 in connection with the substitution of Uriya for Hindi as the court language of the district of Sambalpur. This change of language suggested the transfer of Orissa to the Central Provinces and that in turn led to the examination of various new proposals for the redistribution of existing provincial jurisdictions. While these discussions were in progress the Government of India acquired permanent administrative control over Berar. That led the Government to consider further the whole question of territorial redistribution in India, on even more comprehensive lines. In 1902 Curzon noted "I suggested in council that we should take up the question of readjustment of boundaries all round. It concerns (1) Assam - is Assam to have a maritime exit - i.e. shall we transfer Chittagong? (2) Bengal - is Bengal overswollen i.e. shall we cut off Chittagong and Orissa?"³

The question of redistribution once opened again became the subject of much discussion and consideration. H.H. Risley in

1. Member Governor-General's Council.
2. Not by J.P. Hewett, 28 Aug 1902, Curzon Collection, A. 96.
3. Notes Public A 1903, Curzon Note of 24 May 1902, Curzon Collection, A. 90.

a note in 1903 while giving his support to the transfer of Chittagong to Assam wrote, "The real justification of the transfer is to be found in commercial and to some extent, financial considerations, touched upon but lightly in these papers which affect not Assam only but the general development of trade on the eastern frontier and the direct interest of the Government of India, in the working of the Assam Bengal Railway".¹ He pointed out that if the Assam Bengal Railway line was ever to prosper it could only do so through its connection with the port of Chittagong since an improved port would bring more business to the railway. He argued that owing to the conformation of Assam the province required two lines of communications: for places on and near the Brahmaputra that waterway with its lines of steamers running to Calcutta would always be the natural outlet, but the rest of Assam, out of reach of the river, would best be served by the railway. But in order to perform this service effectually the railway itself needed an outlet which would bring it into direct communication with Europe. He was therefore in favour of the transfer of the Chittagong Division from Bengal to Assam, believing that "Bengal is not greatly interested in enabling Chittagong to compete with Calcutta, and Assam is".²

A few months earlier the Chief Commissioner of Assam, Bamfylde Fuller, writing to the Government of India, had expressed similar views. It was to the interest of the tea industry, he wrote, that the control of the port of Chittagong should be in the hands of that Government which was directly interested in the promotion of its welfare. "The facts that Assam is largely dependent upon its tea industry, and that the prosperity of the

1. Note by H.H. Risley, 31 Mar 1903, Curzon Collection, A.28.

2. Ibid. 28. See also L. Frazer, 370.

the tea industry hangs upon the facilities afforded for export seem to constitute a special reason of much force for giving the province an opening to the sea coast".¹ He pointed out, however, that it was "doubtful whether the extension of the provincial border to the littoral of the Bay of Bengal would ever have been advocated by the Assam administration"² had it not been for the construction of the Assam-Bengal Railway. That railway, he stated, now was a factor of immense importance in the economic situation of Assam as it offered the tea-growers in both the Brahmaputra and the Surma Valleys a means of placing their produce direct upon the London market. He believed that, if possible, each province should have a sea port of its own, and that Chittagong was likely "to fare better as the sea-port of the province of Assam than as a competitor with Calcutta for the attention of the Bengal Government".³

Sir A.H.L. Fraser, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, writing in March 1903 also gave his strong support to the transfer of the Chittagong Division: "I need hardly say that I thoroughly agree with the proposal to transfer the Chittagong Division from Bengal to Assam. This seems to me to be expedient in the interests of Chittagong, to be practically necessary in the interests of sound administration in Bengal and to be also practically necessary with the view to making Assam large enough for efficient administration".⁴

1. Chief Commissioner of Assam to Govt. of India, 30 Jan 1903, Curzon Collection A. 134.
2. Ibid. 134.
3. Ibid. 135.
4. Notes Public - A. 1903. Territorial Changes in India - Note by A.H.L. Fraser, 28 March 1903, - Curzon Collection A. 26.

While in 1896 the transfer of Chittagong Division to Assam had been agreed on administrative grounds, by 1903 the commercial significance of the change was beginning to be felt with greater magnitude. The economic potential of Chittagong port was becoming one of the significant factors in the arguments which eventually culminated in the partition of Bengal in 1905.

On 3 December 1903, the Government of India wrote to the local Governments concerned suggesting a further territorial redistribution¹ "In the opinion of the Government of India", their letter stated, "the time has come when the relief of the Bengal Government must be regarded as an administrative necessity of the first order and that relief can be afforded, not as has been suggested on several previous occasions by organic changes in the form of Government but only by actual transference of territory".²

In the interest of both Assam and the Chittagong Division the Government of India was of the opinion that the transfer of the Chittagong Division to Assam was most desirable. It was felt that Assam required an impetus in various directions particularly a maritime outlet in order to develop its industries in tea, oil and coal.

Chittagong port on the other hand needed to be taken out of the shadow of the port of Calcutta as it was not "easy for a Local Government dominated by the interests of a great port like

1. Govt. of India to Govt. of Bengal, 3 Dec 1903, P.P. 1905, LVIII, 3.
2. Govt. of India to Govt. of Bengal, 3 Dec 1903, P.P. 1905, LVIII, 3.

Calcutta, to do much towards promoting the advancement of a humbler rival".¹ If Chittagong were added to Assam, it was argued, that drawback would disappear since there would be "every inducement to the Local Government to develop the port, since the entire interests of the province, financial, industrial and commercial, would be involved in its welfare". Even if Chittagong did not become the cold weather headquarters of the Chief Commissioner, it would necessarily receive a great deal of his attention and time.

The Assam Bengal Railway ran from Assam to the port of Chittagong. When the section between Badarpur and Lumding was finished the oil wells of Digboi and Makum, the coal-mines of Margharita and the tea plantations of the Upper Brahmaputra, would all be placed in unbroken connection by rail with Chittagong port. As the Government of India pointed out, if the heavy expenditure incurred on the line was to be justified, if its mountain sections were to be really utilized in the exploitation of the country, it could only be by a fusion of interest between the upper and lower portions of the line and to that a single administration would powerfully contribute, since it was only then that the railway would be used with a full regard to the interests of the province.

The Government of India in its letter of 3 December 1903 made clear their strong expectation that transfer would lead to growth: "Chittagong if transferred to Assam will find a great future awaiting it, and the port will gain equally with the internal industries of which it is the maritime outlet".²

1. Govt. of India to Govt. of Bengal, 3 December 1903, P.P. 1905, LVIII, 10.
2. Ibid. 11.

The Governor-General in council, however, was of opinion that the transfer of Chittagong alone would not be sufficient to give relief to the Government of Bengal or to provide Assam with a self-contained and independent provincial services. The Government of India therefore suggested the incorporation with Assam of the further districts of Dacca and Mymensingh.¹ To this both the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and the Chief Commissioner of Assam gave their approval.

When the decision of the Government became public it brought forth a storm of opposition.² The opposition was more or less in the lines of that voiced in 1896, but a remarkable feature in 1904 was that the opposition took an economic turn.³ It was found that the business community in Bengal, particularly in Calcutta, took serious exception to and presented a strong front against the partition.

Previous to the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway Calcutta met most of the overseas trading needs of Assam and Eastern Bengal the import and export trade of Chittagong being meagre. This was a time-consuming process but it provided useful profits for the merchants and brokers of Calcutta. At the opening of the twentieth century more promising attempts were made to trade directly with the port of Chittagong. Messrs David Bros for example began importing Hamburg salt direct to Chittagong with the intention of ousting Calcutta from the trade⁴ and London firms owning tea gardens in Sylhet and Cachar similarly were

1. Ibid. 12.

2. L. J. L. Duns Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon II, 323. Protest of the National Congress held at Madras - Report of the Proceedings of the Nineteenth Indian National Congress, 128-133 The Moslem Chronicle, 9 Jan 1904, 25. The Friends of India and Statesman - 28 Jan 1904, 17; Bengalee, 15 Dec 1903, 3.

3. L. J. O'Donnell 'The Indian Budget' - The Westminster Gazette, 14 July 1906, 4.

4. Note by H. H. Risley, 31. 3. 03 - Curzon Collection, A. 28.

beginning to export direct from Chittagong¹. These tea firms found that it was cheaper to pay higher freights from Chittagong to London than to send their tea for sale to Calcutta, where the landing and shipping charges were heavy and brokerage was high.

This development of a direct trade in tea had already alarmed the River Steamer Companies and the Calcutta tea brokers who foresaw that when the Assam-Bengal Railway was completed tea from Upper Assam which was intended for sale in London would go to Chittagong where the railway undertook agency free of cost and the tea was railed direct to the jetties and thus underwent less handling than it met with in Calcutta. To meet this challenge an attempt was made in Calcutta, to cut out shipments from Chittagong by reducing both landing charges and the amount of handling at Calcutta by building tea warehouses at Kidderpore.²

The direct export and import of tea and salt respectively were however not the only items that were causing concern in Calcutta. At much the same time Messrs. Bullock Bros, who were agents for a Burma Oil firm, had begun to construct tank storage at Chittagong with the hope of undercutting the Russian and American oil then being imported from Calcutta, and of dividing the Assam market with the Margharita company near Dibrugarh.³ In addition to this, attempts were also made in Chittagong to complete the cycle by the supply of piece-goods and rice to Upper Assam.

1. Note by H.H. Risley, 31 March 1903, Curzon Collection, A, 28.
2. Ibid. 28.
3. Ibid. 28. See also Chapter V

Till 1904 however the merchants of Calcutta did not fear any serious competition. They were however greatly disturbed when it became known that the Government of India was contemplating the transfer of Chittagong and other districts from Bengal to Assam. They felt that if Chittagong was placed under a different Government the drawbacks from which it was suffering would be looked into and with its development would come much more serious inroads upon the trade of the port of Calcutta. Thus the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce wrote "Chittagong has some undoubted natural advantages over Calcutta but if over and above these natural advantages Government creates advantages and facilities for and forces them upon the former, it will do so at the expense of the latter, for to the extent Chittagong prospers and develops Calcutta will suffer; in fact the prosperity of the port of Chittagong can only be fostered at the sacrifice of that of Calcutta".¹ The Calcutta based newspapers also expressed similar apprehensions. Thus the Naya Jug wrote "Calcutta has been the metropolis of India because it has been a great centre of trade and commerce. With the raising of Chittagong to the position of a large port, it is not idle to suppose that Calcutta may lose its importance as a commercial centre".²

Most of the jute from the jute growing areas of Mymensingh, Dacca, Narainganj, Tippera, Chandpur and Madaripur used to find its way from Eastern Bengal to Calcutta. The same was the case with rice, which was sent to Calcutta from Bakarganj. With the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway the quantity of tea

1. Bengal National Chamber of Commerce to Govt. of Bengal, 3 Feb 1904, P.P. 1906, LXXXI, 716.
2. Naya Jug, 9 January 1904, B.N.N.R. 1904, 68.

that was being sent out to the port of Calcutta from the Brahmaputra and Surma Valley decreased considerably. The merchant community feared that "with tea gone or about to go, with jute and rice of the eastern districts threatened deportation to Chittagong, with collieries of Ranigunge, Burrakar and Chota Nagpur awaiting competition from the yet not fully developed coal field of Assam proper there will not be much of export trade left to sustain the prosperity of this port".¹

Their fear was not confined to the export trade of the port of Calcutta alone. They pointed out that, "export and import are inseparably connected together, wherever there is a large export, import follows as a matter of course".² This apprehension was led by the fact that the ships chartered by Messrs. Ralli Brothers and M. David and Co. for shipping jute from Chittagong for want of sufficient imports for Chittagong used to carry ballast from Calcutta. The merchant community apprehended that, "once the export trade in Chittagong is fully developed, once the large European firms are firmly established there, the import of salt, piece-goods, kerosine oil, corrugated iron sheets and a number of other articles necessary for the proposed new province, that is for Assam and Eastern Bengal, will follow there as a matter of course. In fact, the whole supply of Eastern Bengal and Assam, so far as the above imported articles of commerce are concerned, will a few years hence, be met through the Chittagong Port and not through this port. Theoretically it sounds well that Chittagong being the natural outlet for the export and import trade of Assam

1. Bengal National Chamber of Commerce to Govt. of Bengal, 37 Feb 1904, P. P1906, LXXX1, 716.
2. Ibid.

and East Bengal, in the interest of these parts the port of Chittagong should be fully developed, but the committee apprehend that the equipment and development of that port and the enforced annexation of the jute-growing districts to it will be the ringing of the death-knell of the Calcutta port".¹

There was another cause for apprehension. The business class feared that with the development of the export and import trade of the port of Chittagong it would not be many years before "mills and presses will be set up on the banks of the Karnafuli River". This they felt would be "dealing a death-blow particularly to the numerous mills and presses, and the carrying companies"² of Calcutta.

With the exception of two or three European firms the shippers and mill-owners of Calcutta did not as a rule buy jute in the interior, but had to depend on the middlemen, European or native, who supplied the Calcutta market from the principal marts in East Bengal and so far as the native middlemen were concerned, they were also residents of that part of the country. The whole of the very extensive jute trade carried on at the inland trading centres of Hatkhola, Ultadingi, and Chitpur as well as the rice trade of Baliaghatta and Kumartally were almost exclusively in the hands of East Bengal merchants and traders. Taking Hatkhola as an instance it was pointed how large a loss of business the merchants there would suffer if the trade in raw jute and rice ceased to flow westwards but turned south east instead to Chittagong port made accessible to large cargo ships by the

1. Bengal National Chamber of Commerce to Govt. of Beng. 3 February, 1904, P.P. 1906, LXXXI, 717.

2. Ibid.

dredging of the bars. The middlemen would be faced either by a loss of business or by the need to transfer their main agencies to Chittagong.¹ The merchants and traders therefore pointed out that since they had from generation to generation been carrying on business in Calcutta and were firmly established there as a result of having invested capital in property and business and being dependent on and assisted by the European merchants there, it was to their interest that their connection with Calcutta should continue.

The Government of Bengal in their effort to find out whether the proposed transfer of certain districts from Bengal to Assam would divert the trade of Bengal from the port of Calcutta to the port of Chittagong sought the opinions of several commercial associations. In their reply the commercial associations led the Government of Bengal to understand that the transfer of certain districts from Bengal to Assam would not divert the trade from the port of Calcutta to the port of Chittagong provided other factors remained constant. An imaginary line dividing the districts into separate provinces would not lead to the diversion of trade. But if that division led to the improvement of facilities for the trade of the port of Chittagong as for example the bridging of the River Meghna and the connection of the Dacca-Mymensingh section of the Eastern Bengal State Railway with Chittagong trade would flow to it.²

1. Note by H.H. Risley - Reconstruction of the Province of Bengal and constitution of a new Province to be called the North Eastern Province, 7 Feb 1904, Curzon Collection, B.2.
2. Bengal Chamber of Commerce to Govt. of Bengal, 19 Mar 1904, 704. Calcutta Baled Jute Association to Bengal Chamber of Commerce, 27 Jan 1904, 705. Indian Jute Mills Association to Bengal Chamber of Commerce, 29 Jan 1904, 705. P.P. 1906 LXXX1, 704-706.

How the Calcutta merchantile class reacted to these possibilities is rather nicely illustrated by a quotation taken from A.H.L. Fraser's Among Indian Rajas and Ryots. He wrote, "I cannot but recall a conversation which I had with a highly esteemed Indian friend, who was one of my colleagues on the Bengal Council. He was an Indian merchant of considerable distinction...He made a public attack on the partition scheme...I...explained to him his mistake. He expressed himself fully satisfied...I suggested to him that perhaps he might withdraw his remarks. He replied that he could not do so, as he was in full sympathy with the opposition to the partition. I asked him what were his grounds for his opposition. He said that he was perfectly sure that one result of the partition would be very much to develop the port of Chittagong, and that this could not be done without injuring the port of Calcutta. I asked him whether he really believed that the drawing of an imaginary line between the two provinces and the declaration that the districts on the one side of that line were under the Government of one province and those on the other side under that of another would really divert the course of trade? 'No', he said, 'but Chittagong will be under the Government of the new province; efforts will be made to improve it, the natural communications between the transferred districts and Chittagong will be developed and trade will therefore take its course to Chittagong which is the natural port for that part of the country'. I pointed out that this surely meant that trade would be benefitted by the change; and I asked him whether he would not state that view in public. He said he would not, because he was a Calcutta man and he himself would be injured. I pointed out to him that Government must take a higher view than that, and must consider the general interests of the country. His reply was characteristically honest, but at the same time very discouraging. He said, 'I do not blame you for supporting a

measure which undoubtedly appears to be to the advantage of the districts concerned, but I am bound to fight for my own interest'.

... a measure may be sound, but it may be influentially opposed by those who believe that their own private interests are at stake".¹

Popular feeling in Chittagong as already noted, was opposed to the idea of the transfer of Chittagong to Assam. However, as the scheme of a separate province began to take shape with Chittagong as its chief port, and possibly as its capital, opinion began to change though there were still some interested parties who continued to oppose it. They were mainly the Zamindars, the subordinate Government officers (Indian) and people with business interest in Calcutta.²

That opinion on the question of partition was gradually becoming divided in Chittagong becomes apparent from the fact that on 15 December 1903 Maulvi Sirajul Islam Khan Bahadur³ stated that while the people of Chittagong were not in favour of the transfer of Chittagong alone to Assam they were not totally averse to the idea of being transferred to Assam along with Dacca and Mymensingh.⁴

1. A. H. L. Frazer - Among Indian Rajas and Ryots, 325.
2. Notes Public A. February 1905, Curzon Collection B, 1-6. See also Transfer of the Chittagong Division to the Province of Assam, General. Curzon Collection A, 107.
3. Maulvi Serajul Islam Khan Bahadur represented the Chittagong Division in the Bengal Legislative Council.
4. W. C. Macpherson officiating Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal. To Govt. of India 6 April 1904, P. P. 1906 LXXXI 689.

W. C. Macpherson commenting on this letter wrote, "In this note there is no doubt that the Honourable member expressed his own views... but at the same time the Lieutenant Governor found that a large number of persons held precisely the same views".¹ The 'Jyoti' which had previously opposed the transfer of Chittagong to Assam² wrote when it was rumoured that the Government was contemplating the creation of a new province, "If the Chittagong Division is amalgamated with Assam and placed under a Lieutenant Governor, the dismemberment, although painful at first, will in the end be conducive to health. Many people are sorry that the slight relationship which has been established between the inhabitants of Calcutta and Chittagong... will be put to an end... But this sorrow is only a sentiment. We are constrained to say that Calcutta people have very little sympathy with the people of East Bengal... Many people fear that the proposed dismemberment will if carried out, ruin many traditions. But there is, as a matter of fact, hardly any work of the Chittagong people which will be seriously affected by the change. If Chittagong is any day made the capital of a province, that day will be the most auspicious to its inhabitants. We pray to God that Chittagong may shake off the slavery of Bengal and become prosperous".³

1. W. C. Macpherson to Govt. of India, 6 April 1904, P.P. 1906, LXXXI, 722.
2. The 'Jyoti' was a Bengali weekly published from Chittagong. The 'Jyoti' of 29 January 1903 wrote 'the transfer of the Chittagong Division from Bengal to Assam... will cut off the millions of residents of the Division from the advanced society of Bengal... and send them back to the backward society of Assam'. - B.N.N.P.R. 1903, I, 117.
3. 'Jyoti', 10 December 1903, B.N.N.P.R. 1903, I, 1075.

In 1905 the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was formed with Dacca as its capital and Chittagong as its main port. Thus began the most significant period in the history of the port of Chittagong since it had come under British control. The last decade of the nineteenth century had found Chittagong port in a rather stunned condition as a consequence of a couple of centuries of indifference and stagnation coinciding with the advent of British power in India and the rise of the port of Calcutta to the position of principal port and centre of commerce and industry. The subordinate status of the port of Chittagong had largely determined the resources and attention that the Governments of Bengal and India were willing and able to spare it. There is evidence of a measure of indifference, may be even perhaps deliberate neglect on the part of the Government of Bengal towards the port of Chittagong.

Help, when it came, flowed from the decision to partition Bengal and from the need to win support for that move, or at least to disarm opposition. This need to sugar the pill of partition, bitter as it was to some, seems to have been the motive for Curzon's speech, delivered on 14 February 1904 during his visit to Chittagong. The Port Commissioners in their address to the Viceroy had dwelt upon the financial needs of the port and its past neglect. Curzon was half ready to admit that Chittagong had been neglected by the Government of Bengal and that the difficulties the Commissioners had experienced in developing the trade of the port sprang from their lack of funds. But, he claimed, 'the Government of India have on many occasions since I came to India, done their best to lend a helping hand to the port' - 'the principal outlet of the trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam' - and he promised more substantial support in the future. But - and here the motives for his tour were most clearly exposed - that support would be

tied up with acceptance of partition and the new role for Chittagong which that implied. "If the present people of Chittagong", he wondered out loud, "refuse the chance that is now offered to it of becoming the principal port of a new and powerful administration, possessing a considerable claim upon the time, attention and purse of the head of that administration, not overshadowed by any great and potent rival, but capable of developing its own individuality on its own lines, (may not) their successors come to some successor of mine in the future with... complaints of the shortsightedness of an earlier generation".¹

Curzon then proceeded clearly to define the size and nature of the carrot being offered to the people of Chittagong in the following terms, "The Government of India have, therefore, decided in the present favourable state of their finances, which admits of a generosity that is not always possible, to help you in the following ways. We will write off the unpaid balance of more than one lakh of the Gekko loan. We will undertake, subject to the advice of engineers, to help you in the matter of a dredger to clear your bars for larger vessels, and also to pay for the revetment of the right bank; and we will lend you money on reasonable terms to provide the requisite wharves and warehouses for the anticipated development of trade".² Financial fortune, for the first time smiled on the port of Chittagong with the partition of Bengal. The following table clearly shows the flow of capital funds for the development of the port of Chittagong coincided with the duration of the separate province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. This capital expenditure was apparently among the material costs of the partition of Bengal which the Government of India felt obliged to bear.

1. Lord Curzon's address at Chitt. 14 February 1904, P.P. 1906 LXXXI, 845-46. See also The Pioneer 20 February 1904, Englishman, 16 February 1904.
2. Ibid. 845.

Year	Purchase of dredger				Maintenance and repairs of dredger		Various purposes	Port Fund	Pilotage Fund	Total	Loans		purchase of S. T. "Gekko"
	S. T. "Gekko"	Revetment work	dredger	of dredger	Rs.	Rs.					Rs.	Rs.	
From 1898-99	87,282	..	..	..	37,000	..	..	..	..	1,24,282	..	..	2,33,000
To
1903-04	..	3,150	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3,150	..	..	..
1904-05	..	2,76,242	2,46,300	..	..	..	..	..	..	5,22,542	..	..	..
1905-06
1906-07	..	3,39,902	3,93,376	27,312	11,641	10,708	..	..	..	7,82,939	..	..	..
1907-08	..	2,83,000	..	67,624	..	(b)	18,586	..	..	3,69,210	2,93,000	..	..
1908-09	..	1,70,601	..	92,000	6,840	(c)	20,079	..	..	2,89,520	2,05,500	..	..
1909-10	..	1,75,000	..	92,000	..	..	..	..	..	2,67,000	1,75,000	..	..
1910-11	..	1,96,858	..	92,000	..	..	..	..	..	2,88,858	1,00,000	..	..
1911-12	..	1,69,142	..	92,000	2,257	(c)	50,000	30,000	..	3,43,399	..	..	..
1912-13	309	(d)	1,50,000	..	..	1,50,309	..	..	..
1913-14	(d)	1,50,000	..	..	1,50,000	..	..	..
1914-15	(d)	1,50,000	..	..	1,50,000	..	..	..
1915-16	(d)	1,50,000	..	..	1,50,000	..	..	..
1916-17	(d)	1,50,000	..	..	1,50,000	..	..	..
Total	87,282	16,13,895	6,39,676	4,62,936	58,047	8,49,373	30,000	37,41,209	7,73,500	2,33,000	..	..	..
Deduct repayment of loans	written off	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
outstanding balance of loan at close of 1916-17
a) for writing off the outstanding balance of loan taken from Government for purchase of the S. T. "Gekko".
b) for construction of buildings
c) for replacing the amount transferred from the Port Fund to the Revetment Account
d) for Port improvement works
													1,45,718
													87,282
													5,27,650

Even here, however, the neglect or even ill will of the Government of Bengal was manifested, for the detailed figures for the revetment of the river bank which the Port Commissioner had submitted to that Government for transmission to the Viceroy, was suppressed by the Bengal Government.¹ The Port Commissioners always believed that had the figures been presented the grants which were eventually made would have been much more adequate than they were.²

The promises of Curzon materialised in the precise form of a grant of Rs 10,00,000 from the Imperial budget for the development of the port facilities (other than jetties which were funded from ^{the} Railway development budget).³ The Port Commissioners pleaded for more generous grants and their cause was very earnestly pleaded by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam but the Government of India did not in the event agree to increase the size of their commitment, observing "it cannot be reasonably expected that the whole cost of an improvement... should be thrown on Imperial Revenues nor is it ordinarily the case that such improvements are entirely financed from general revenues whether Imperial or Provincial. The resources of the port itself should... be made to bear at least a fair share of the burden".⁴ Having failed to persuade the Government of India to increase the size of the grant, the Lieutenant Governor of the new province was unable to offer more from local funds, though he declared to the port authorities, "I share with you the anxiety which the recent reply

1. Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E. B. A., 11 April 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD. Mne, 1906, May 23.
2. Ibid.
3. Note by J. R. Bell, Chittagongs Port Conservancy Inspection. 21-24 February 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1906, May 27
See also Govt. of E. B. A. to Govt. of India 18 April 1906, E. B. A.

Proc. PWS (Mne) 1906, January 10.

4. Govt. of India to Govt. of E. B. A. 15 September 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1907, April 5.

of the Government of India to our application for more funds has created. But when all is said and done, I am in their hands and if they will not foot the bill, the progress and prosperity of this great province will be seriously retarded".¹ Public demand for more funds for overall improvement of the province was not stilled, however, by these refusals. In 1909 for example Moulvi Syed Shamsul Huda in the debate upon the Eastern Bengal and Assam financial statement for 1909-10 vigorously pressed the case for Government assistance "We have inherited a heritage of the accumulated neglect of years and cannot be blamed if we require large sums to put our house in order. We have largely contributed towards the creation of the port of Calcutta out of which the Government of Bengal now derives a considerable income".² Clamour for further grants from the Imperial budget continued unaltered until 1910 when Rs 5, 50, 000 was made available³ - a sum which was quickly absorbed by the fast developing port.⁴

The Government of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam gave due importance to its principal port and matched their interest in and enthusiasm for the development of the port with substantial funds from their own resources. They made the following financial commitments in 1907:

- a) Half the cost of revetment, from 1907 onwards, to a maximum of nine lakhs in all, (this upon an estimated total outlay of thirty lakhs on revetments and dredger combined). Should the final
1. Reply to address by Lancelot Hare. Lt. Gov. of E. B. A. 10 Dec 1906, Ordinary Meeting of the Port Commissioners 1907, 222.
 2. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Financial Statement 1909-10 - 14 March 1910, Eastern Bengal and Assam Legislative Proceeding 1910, 7.
 3. Eastern Bengal and Assam Financial Statement 1909-10, 14 March 1910. E. B. A. Leg. Proc. 1910, 10.
 4. The Eastern Bengal and Assam Revised Financial Statement 1911-12, 13 March, E. B. A. Leg. Proc. 1911, 46.

total exceed thirty lakhs then proposals for increased provincial aid would be favourably considered.

- b) An annual provincial grant of up to Rs 59,624 a year for five years to cover the operating costs of the dredger.¹

The new Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam did not confine their support for Chittagong to financial aid. The port Commissioners had always held that it had been the failure of the Bengal Government to finance the building of the first jetty, or to agree to deferred terms of repayment which had led to the transfer of the jetties and management to the Assam Bengal Railway Company, with all the ill effects that followed from it. After partition the new provincial Government tried to break the stranglehold of the railway by restoring ownership and control to the port authorities. Writing to the Government of India they stated that the Lt. Governor "agrees with the Commissioners in thinking it a matter of the highest importance that the Commissioners should retain and recover full control of the bed of the river and of the foreshore in so far as covered by the railway jetties".²

The Government of India in an uncompromising refusal wrote, "There can be no question of transferring the jetties to the Port Commissioners, as the latter are not in a position to meet the charges on the capital cost of the works. The jetties must therefore remain the property of the Railway Company, and the latter cannot be deprived of the right to manage their property".³ Nevertheless,

1. Proceeding of the 223 Ordinary Meeting of the Port Commissioners of Chitt. 1 February 1907, O.M.P.C. 1907, 107.
2. Govt. of E. B.A. to Govt. of India, 13 January 1911, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1912, April 26.
3. Govt. of India to Govt. of E. B.A. 10 May 1911, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1912, April 38.

the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government continued to press the port authorities case with an obvious desire to be seen to be doing all they could for them, with an almost crusading zeal and though the Government of India remained firm in general it did promise - 10 May 1911 - "to issue directions to the Railway Board that they obtain the views of the local Government when any increase in the rates and charges is proposed...".¹

The Eastern Bengal and Assam Government also consistently used their influence and authority to discourage the attempts of the Railway to develop a coastal trade with Calcutta.

The Railway authorities, after their failure to come to an understanding with the steamer companies and their further failure to establish a flotilla of their own² which could link Narainganj and Chandpur and so open up the jute areas west of the river Meghna - there being no talk of a bridge between Bhairab-Bazar and Ashuganj which might have served the same purpose, had decided in 1904 to enter into negotiations with the Steamer Companies to develop the coastal trade between Calcutta and Chittagong as an alternative. Thus the agent of the Assam Bengal Railway in 1904 had written, "to expect that the Steamer Companies would or could co-operate with this Company to develop an export and import trade via Chittagong and Chandpur, as an independent company would do is, I believe, to expect the impossible. I may add however that there would be no reason why the Steamer

1. Govt. of India to Govt. of E. B. A. 10 May 1911, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1912, April 38.
2. Note by R. S. Strachey, Agent A. B. Rly upon the establishment of an adequate flotilla service between Chandpur and Narainganj 12 March 1904. AL/543. Agents letter to Board 1902. Reason for their failure could not be found.

Companies and the Assam Bengal Railway should not come to some understanding with one another regarding the great traffic which must continue between Calcutta and the districts served by the Railway".¹ In pursuance of that policy J. Stuart the Traffic Manager of the Assam Bengal Railway Company in July 1905 had approached the Calcutta Port Commissioners with a proposal to stimulate coastal trade between Calcutta and Chittagong.² He proposed that the river dues at Calcutta should be reduced from 4 annas to 1 anna a ton on general cargoes and to 1½ annas per ton on coal and manganese ore shipped to and from Chittagong. He also proposed the reduction of the all round rate for unloading and reshipment of jute brought by steamer from Chittagong to the Kidderpore Docks and their trans-shipment into other vessels from the same berth from 4 annas to 3 annas.³

The Finance Committee of the Calcutta Port Trust, which considered the proposal, was not in favour of the reduction of the river dues observing that the Assam-Bengal Railway should reduce its rate if it wished to attract more trade.⁴ The Bengal Chamber of Commerce however, on being informed of this refusal wrote to the Port Commissioners of Calcutta urging the Port Commissioners Committee to reconsider their decisions and advised it to use all legitimate means in its power to capture the

1. Note by R.S. Strachey, Agent, A.B. Rly, upon the establishment of an adequate flotilla service between Chandpur and Narainganj - 12 March 1904, AL/543, Agent's Letters to Board 1902, see also E.B.A. Proc. 1906, April 36.
2. 214 Ordinary Meeting of the Port Commissioners of Chitt. 4 May 1906, E.B.A. Proc. PWD (Mne), 1906, April 37.
3. Chmn. Port Comms to Govt. of E.B.A. 7 May 1906, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1906, April 36.
4. Ibid.

ocean trade of Eastern Bengal so as not to allow Chittagong to rise in status over that of a coasting port. They argued that if the Assam-Bengal Railway were not permitted to secure an increased traffic in co-operation with Calcutta, the company would obtain it without such assistance and to the loss of Calcutta.¹

When the proposal became known in Eastern Bengal and Assam it brought forth a storm of opposition. The Port Commissioners stated, "This is a matter of great regret, as it shows that it is possible for the Assam Bengal Railway Company to be inimical to the true interests of this port".² The Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam declared, "a policy which would aim at rendering Chittagong a feeder port to Calcutta would inevitably retard the attainment by Chittagong of its proper position as an ocean port, and would indeed be inconsistent with the views that have led to the expenditure of large sums of money in facilitating the use of the port by ocean steamers... the future of the railway is bound up with the development of an import trade at Chittagong and (the Lieutenant Governor) would be very unwilling to see a policy adopted which would injuriously affect the prospects of Chittagong as a receiving port of ocean traffic. The Lieutenant Governor is convinced that to give a special stimulus to the coasting trade with Calcutta would have this effect".³ The opposition did not seem to have had any effect however, for the Assam Bengal Railway Company

1. Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. E. B. A. 7 May 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, April 36.
2. Ibid.
3. Govt. of E. B. A. to Govt. of Beng. 22 May 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1906, April 39.

entered into an arrangement with the British India Steam Navigation Company and the Asiatic Steam Navigation Company for through booking of goods to and from Calcutta via Chittagong. Frustrated in this effort the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam sought to develop the trade of the port by improving its communication with those areas of the province lying to the west of the river Meghna, the major jute and rice producing areas of Dacca and Bakarganj. In August 1910, they secured the sanction of the Government of India to construct a branch railway from Bhairab Bazar opposite Ashuganj which was the terminus of the Akhaura-Ashuganj branch of the Assam-Bengal Railway to Tongi, a station on the Dacca-Mymensingh Railway.¹ This line would have connected major jute growing areas by railway to Chittagong. However, the partition was annulled in 1912, the impetus given by the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government was lost and the branch line was not completed until 1916.² In the meantime the Government of Bengal secured for the port of Calcutta a much more convenient and direct railway connection with the jute growing areas of Dacca and Mymensingh by constructing in 1915 the Sara or the Hardinge bridge (the lower Ganges at Paksey).³ The bridge which would have served Chittagong's interests - that connecting Bhairab-Bazar and Ashuganj though considered between 1908 and 1909⁴ was not constructed till 1937.

The annulment of partition of Bengal signified the reversion of the port of Chittagong from the position of principal port of a large

1. From Secretary of State for India to Govt. of E. B. A. 8 July 1910. Govt. of India Rly Proc. (Const) October 1910. October 4, see also Proceedings of the 263 Ordinary Meeting held on Friday, the 9 September 1910, para 20. O. M. P. C. 1909-1911, 592.
2. Railway Department Govt. of India Rly Brd. History of Indian Railways Constructed and in progress corrected up to 31 March 1918, 153.
3. Malik, 86.
4. Ibid., 87.

and developing province to that of being a mere second best to Calcutta under a Government which put the interests of the latter port always to the fore. The table at page 107, earlier in this chapter, shows how abruptly the flow of Government funds for the development of Chittagong port ceased with the abolition of the separate province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The growth of railway communications with places on the west side of the river Meghna slowed to a halt, the plans for seven jetties drawn up in 1906 were abandoned - no new jetty was built after the fourth one until 1947. Not until the new partition of 1947 was Chittagong port rescued from neglect and subordinations and its full potential exploited.

CHAPTER V

The Development of Port Facilities•1892-1912

In the last decade of the nineteenth century Chittagong, the port that Marco Polo had seen six centuries earlier¹ so flourishing was in rather a pathetic condition. This was a consequence of two centuries of neglect and dereliction coinciding with the advent of British power in India. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Calcutta had gradually developed into the premier port of Bengal while Chittagong had found itself relegated to the secondary position of a feeder port. The net result of this relative shift in importance and government attention was evident in the singular absence of any significant port facilities in Chittagong when the Port Trust came into being in 1888. And since it is the quality and number of a port's facilities which largely determine the current volume of trade and future prospects of development Chittagong Port was ill placed to generate either the interest or the income necessary to make much progress.

It was the needs of the Assam Bengal Railway and of the tea planters of Assam and Sylhet which broke the vicious circle of poor facilities and poor prospects. Their demands led to an awareness of the pitiful condition of the port facilities at Chittagong, and their pressure reinforced by the financial and commercial interests of the Imperial power which persuaded the Government of India to invest in the development of the port. These developments can be studied under a number of broad headings: Landing, shipping and storage facilities, navigational aids, river conservancy and the supply of labour together with health and other support services.

1. Nur Ahmed, Some glimpses about the Origin and Location of Chittagong Port and Chittagong Town Port of Chittagong Quarterly October 1962.

In 1893 the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division reported "there are no facilities for landing and storage of railway construction material at Chittagong. The Port Commissioners own only one jetty for passengers and a few small jetties for landing salt. They have no pantoon and no crane. They have no storehouse, even for their own material much of which lies in the open. It was expected that the Railway Administration would procure a pantoon to form a temporary wharf and a crane, but they have not done so... There are no wharves, public or private at Chittagong".¹

The single passenger jetty referred to by the Commissioner was the old iron jetty at Sadar Ghat built in 1879.² It was practically unused and earned no revenues as it did not extend into a sufficient depth of water to be used by ocean-going vessels, or even coasters. The four salt jetties, built in 1891, were opposite the Government Salt Golas or storehouses. They were very minor works and had cost only Rs 7,600 for the lot, though even so they represented a great gain. The Vice-Chairman of the Port Commissioners had claimed of their construction, "It will... be a great boon to all people interested in the landing and shipping of salt as at present the persons so engaged have often to wade up to their waists in mud when landing or shipping salt".³ There had been pressure to extend the iron jetty and to dredge the river so as to allow coaster vessels to lie at it, but when the Commissioner made his report the jetty was still being used by passengers only.

- 1 Comms. Chitt. Div. To Govt of Beng. 17 August 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1893, September 11.
- 2 Admin Rept. 1895-96, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1896, August-December, September 24-25.
- 3 Vice-Chmn Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 25 June 1891, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, January to June, February 225.

At the time of the formation of the Chittagong Port Trust in 1888 it had been pointed out that the principal improvements required in the port were the lighting, the approaches to the port and the removal of the Ring buoy shoal; the acquisition of the foreshore land and the construction of a strand road; the establishment of telegraphic communications with the mouth of the river and the provision of a steam tug, and finally the appointment of medical staff and increased hospital accommodation to serve the port.¹

From this list - or its omission - it appears that the Government of Bengal then proposed to develop the port of Chittagong only as a minor coastal port. No reference was made to the construction of jetties or to the dredging of the inner and outer bars which were the great obstacles to the navigation of the river Karnaphuli. Removal of the Ring Buoy shoal was indeed proposed, but the ring buoy was up-stream near the Sadar Ghat jetty which was then not even fit to handle coastal vessels. It was the need of the Assam Bengal Railway for a port capable of handling ocean-going steamers which finally changed the situation, for the Railway as has been seen in Chapter three, pressed persistently for the building of an appropriate number of jetties. The first jetty was constructed by the railway as agent of the Port Trust. The work being completed by 1899 the construction of a second jetty was taken up and completed by 1904.² It was however soon found that two jetties were not sufficient to meet the trade demands of the port. In a letter to the Consulting Engineer to the Government of India for Railways, the Agent, Assam Bengal Railway, emphasizing the need for a third jetty wrote, "During the coming season one jetty

1 Govt. of Beng. Municipal Dept. to Govt. of Beng. Legislative Dept. 4 July 1886. Beng Proc. Mne Dept 1887, January-March March 3-35.

2 Discussed in Chapter III.

will of course be fully occupied by the Clan Line Steamers, and for the second jetty Messrs. David and Company alone have already chartered four steamers which will practically occupy this jetty with its entire shed accommodation for two months.

There will certainly be other chartered jute steamers which it will be difficult to accommodate during this period whilst any salt, rice or general cargo steamers that might require a berth must be excluded".¹ As a scheme for five jetties in all was already under the consideration of the Government of India² the construction of the third jetty was sanctioned and constructed as a railway work in 1906-07.³ Later however, the Board of Directors felt that five jetties would be insufficient for the port and agreed that seven jetties in all would be required,⁴ and the Agent put up a plan to build up to the latter number, not at once, but as the growth of traffic required.⁵ In the meantime the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam had come into being. The Government of the new province accepted the proposal of the Railway Board and to meet the coastal demands sanctioned the construction of the fourth jetty.⁶ As a result of the support given by the Government

- 1 Agent, A. B. Rly to Consulting Engineer to the Govt. of India for Rlys. Assam, 21 July 1904. Govt. of India Index to the Proceedings of the Railway Dept. (Rly Board) Construction, February-March, 1905, March 98
- 2 Consulting Engineer to the Govt. of India for Railway Assam - to Govt. of India, 31 August 1904, Govt. of India Rly Proc. (Const) February-March, 1905, March 98
- 3 Note by V. Woods Agent A. B. Rly, 20 August 1909, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1912, April 24.
- 4 Board of Directors A. B. Rly, to Agent, A. B. Rly, 22 July 1904, A506, Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const), February-March 1905, March 98
- 5 Commissioner Chitt. Division to the Govt. of E. B. A., 31 January 1906 E. B. A. PWE Mne Proc. 1906, August 16.
- 6 Govt. of E. B. A. to Rly Board, 1 September 1906, E. B. A. PWD Mne Proc 1907, January 10.

of the new province land for the seven jetties had been purchased by 1908¹. By 1910 however the need for still more jetties again was beginning to be felt. The Agent Assam Bengal Railway that year wrote to his Board, "At the close of the busy season 1908-1909 the steady increase of exports from Chittagong, the establishment of a new direct B. l. service from London, and the fact that during that season vessels were shut out to some extent for want of jetty accommodation pointed to the necessity of further jetty extension. The Port Commissioners also strongly supported the proposals for an additional jetty in their Resolution No. 17 of a meeting held on the 5 March 1909".² However, the Railway Board was of the view that there were other more important works which were more urgently required and that available funds could be spent more usefully on the construction of branch lines to the Assam-Bengal Railway system so as to bring more traffic to the system.³ It was therefore suggested that to meet the trade demand jetty number four should be used for ocean-going steamers, instead of for the coasting steamers for which it had originally been built.⁴ Nevertheless, the question of the construction of a fifth jetty again came up in 1911-12. It was felt that on the completion of the Bhairab-Tangi extension of the Assam-Bengal Railway, the connection of the port

- 1 Report of the Committee appointed in Eastern Bengal and Assam to enquire into the State of Affairs as regards the Railway and District Police at Chittagong and to suggest improved arrangements, 26 May 1908. E.B.A. PWD Mne Proc. 1909. February 75.
- 2 The Agent A. B. Rly to the Rly Board, 24 May 1910. Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const) May 1910, May 136.
- 3 Agent A. B. Rly to Rly Board, 24 March 1910, Govt. of India Rly Proc. (Const) May 1910, May 136, see also Comms. Chitt. Div. to Govt. of Beng. 11 November 1913, Beng Proc. Mne Dept. 1914, February 44.
- 4 Ibid.

by railway with the important jute growing districts of Dacca and Mymensingh would contribute largely towards the increased import and export trade of the port which would necessitate additional jetty accommodation for the increased shipping,¹ for if the port was, "then found unprepared to cope with the increased trade, that trade will almost certainly be diverted and the result will be a serious set back to the prosperity of the port".²

It was pointed out that the shipping facilities of the port should be well ahead of the demands upon it and as the four jetties were "only just sufficient for accommodation of ocean-going steamers" the construction of the fifth jetty should be taken up immediately. In support of this argument the following table, showing the gradual increase in the trade of the port and the number of days steamers had to wait for berths since 1903, was submitted.

	No. of berths available each year	Taking one jetty occupied one day as one unit number of jetty days in each year	Taking one steamer waiting one day away from a jetty as one unit number of waiting days in each year	Im-	Ex-	Total
				ports	ports	Imports & Exports
				Tons	Tons	Tons
				omit-	omit-	omit-
				ted	ted	ted
1903-04	2	272	37	7	82	89
1904-05	2	338	31	30	88	118
1905-06	2	384	46	30	108	138
1906-07	3	508	110	77	110	187
1907-08	3	670	84	82	112	194
1908-09	3	642	105	55	138	193
1909-10	3	348	11	53	97	149
1910-11	4	406	4	47	94	141
1911-12	4	563	15	82	113	195
1912-13	4	717	20	90	131	221

1 Admin. Dept. 1911-12 Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1912, September 59.

2 Govt. of Beng. to Rly Brd. 27 January 1914, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1914, February 45.

3 Ibid.

However the annulment of the partition of Bengal in 1912 and the gradual deterioration in the condition of the river Karnaphuli due to silting took much of the wind out of the sail of this argument. No further jetties were constructed till the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

Almost simultaneously with the request for more jetties for the general trade of the port, demands were also made for a special salt jetty. As the trade of the port increased it was found that more and more ships loaded with salt had to be diverted to Calcutta for the want of jetty accommodation at the Port of Chittagong. Thus in 1904 the Jetty Superintendent is found writing, "owing to the Clan Ferguson being at the jetty... we shall be unable to work ^{the} S.S. Hochheimer which is expected towards the close of the present month with a full cargo of salt (3,500 tons). This is not the first or second instance in which we have had to refuse cargoes with salt".¹ Around 1906 a scheme was submitted to the Government for the provision of a salt jetty.² But in 1909 the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam decided not to sanction its construction.³ Commenting on the Government's decision, J.R. Bell wrote, "I want to say that I view with some dismay the conclusion that a separate jetty is not to be sanctioned. If so, use must continue to be made on odd days of any railway jetty that happens to have room... I cannot refrain from expressing a fear that the attempt to do without a special salt jetty will prove a hinderance to the trade of Chittagong and to the development

1 Jetty Superintendent A.B. Rly to the Agent A.B. Rly, 23 January 1904. Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const). February-March 1905
March 98

2 Report on the Maritime Trade of Eastern Bengal & Assam 1906-07, 8

3 Reso. No. 17. of the meeting of the Port Commissioners of Chitt. 5 March 1909, Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const). May 1910.
May 136

through it of the new Province and the Railway".¹

In the absence of source materials the only reason that can be deduced for the salt jetty not being constructed is that its construction would have affected the trade interests of the Port Commissioners for in the absence of a salt jetty at Double Moorings small salt steamers unloaded at the Port Commissioner's salt jetties at Sadarghat. These jetties brought in a small income to the Port. It was therefore probable that the Port Commissioners were not too keen to have their income reduced and indeed to see enhanced the income of the Railway Company at their expense which would have followed from the construction of such a jetty.

The four new jetties which were constructed at the port of Chittagong had a total jetty frontage of about 2,300 feet.² The first jetty was carried out into the river channel to a distance of some 100 feet from high flood water line and gave an average depth of 27 feet at low water along the face of the jetty. The succeeding jetties were built in the same line of front.³

However, while jetties were being built for steamers engaged in foreign or oceanic trade, no jetty was constructed for coastal

1 Inspection Note by J.R. Bell Consulting Engineer A.B. Rly. Ordinary Meeting Port Commissioners 1909.

2 Economic Progress of East Pakistan, 39.

3 Responsibility for dredging River Bed off the Faces of Rly. Jetties - Statement of case for orders of the Rly Board by V. Wood Agent A.B. Rly. 31 October 1913. Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const) November 1914, November 57

trade during this whole period so that the port, as the Government of Bengal pointed out "was far behind other ports in the matter of landing arrangements which are, except for those made by Messrs. Turner Marison and Company, primitive in the extreme".¹ The general practice for handling goods carried in coastal shipping was to load and unload in the stream.² As far back as 1904 J.R. Bell the consulting engineer along with the majority of the Port Commissioners had agreed that the Sadar Ghat pier should be extended into water where coasting and river steamers could come alongside for the use of both passenger and cargo. They had also argued that such a jetty should be under the control of the Port Commissioners. Considerable differences of opinion rose around this question and the proposal was strongly protested against, both by the Agents of the Railway Company and by the Agents of the coasting steamers.³ The other Port Commissioners were equally divided for and against a proposal to build a Trust jetty for landing passengers only, but they were solidly in favour of one for both passengers and goods.⁴ The Agents of the Railway Company opposed this because they wished to have all the steamer trade brought to their jetties at the Double Moorings. The Agent of the coasting steamers on the other hand did not wish to have to take their steamers alongside any jettys, preferring to load and unload in the stream and to thus avoid the payment of full jetty dues, while continuing

1 Note on letter No. 204 Mne, by Govt. of Beng. 19. January 1915, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1915, July 74.

2 Comm. Chitt. Div. to Govt. of Beng. 28 July 1904, E. B. A. Proc. Mne Dept. 1906, April 30.

3 Comm. Chitt. Divi to Govt. of Beng. 28 July 1904, E. B. A. Proc. Mne Dept. 1906, April 30.

4 Buchanan 23.

to make considerable profits from the shipping and landing charges between the vessels and the shore.¹

The idea of a coasting jetty constructed by the Port Commissioners was eventually dropped in view of the anticipated delay in dredging the ring bars.² Nevertheless the question of improved arrangements for coasting jetties was again opened by a letter dated 28 July 1913 from the Indian Merchant's Association, Chittagong to the Port Commissioners.³ Again, however, the Government of Bengal turned down the proposal: "The Governor-in Council considers that the time has not yet come for the construction of jetties by the Port Commissioners. It is more important that the Commissioners should devote their funds to the improvement of the River Karnafuli by dredging than that they should embark on an expensive scheme of constructing jetties for the coasting trade. The proposed jetty scheme must, therefore remain in abeyance for the present".⁴ None was constructed in our period or for many years thereafter.

Just as there was no proper jetty at the port in the later half of the nineteenth century similarly the moorings at the port too were in very poor conditions. In 1893, there were in the port of Chittagong two sets of fixed and nineteen of swinging mooring⁵. In 1896 the Commissioners of the Port of Chittagong addressed

- 1 Comm. Chitt. Div. To Govt. of E. B. A. 28 July 1904, E. B. A. Proc. Mne Dept. 1906, April 30.
- 2 Comm. Chitt. Div. to Govt. of E. B. A. 31 January 1906, E. B. A. Proc. Mne Dept. 1906, August 16,
- 3 Note on letter No. 204, by Govt. of Beng. Mne Dept, 19 January 1915, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1915, July 74.
- 4 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn Port Comms. 15 May 1915, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1915, July 77.
- 5 Inspection Report for 1893 by the Port Officer 2 February 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, April 38-39.

Government on the subject of the renewal of the moorings of the Port, explaining that the moorings were not adapted for the larger class of vessels coming to the port the anchors and chains not being heavy enough.¹ The previous autumn, when several large sailing vessels chartered for the jute trade were moored in the river a cyclone had struck the port. Every one of the ships had broken her moorings and dragged her anchors. As a result the ships captains had threatened that unless the Port Commissioners improved the moorings and so ensured the safety of vessels in port they would urge their owners not to send them in future to Chittagong.² The Port Commissioners, reporting to Government announced that unless heavier moorings were used they would not feel inclined to permit vessels exceeding 1,400 tons burden to use the port. The Government of Bengal that year sanctioned the purchase from England of five new mooring buoys with chain anchors complete³ which were received from England that year and were laid in continuation of the fixed moorings.⁴ All the old moorings were also lifted and relaid.⁵ As a result of all these changes the Commissioners were able to state towards the end of the year that the moorings were "now believed to be trustworthy and capable of accommodating the largest class of vessels visiting the port".⁶

Once the main jetties had been constructed and the flow of trade had increased a whole series of further facilities became necessary -

1 Admin. Beng. 1896-97, 14.

2 Agent and Chief Engineer to Managing Director A. B. Rly, 10 January 1896. Agent's Letter to Board 1896, AL/90.

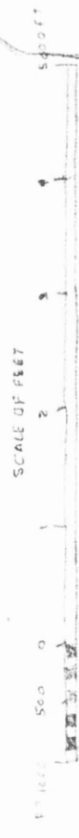
3 Admin. Beng. 1896-97, 14.

4 Admin. Beng. 1896-97, 109.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

RIGHT BANK OF THE RIVER KARNAPHULI



RAMBOLLA SHOH
 M. NAOY
 TARA CO
 PULSE STA
 ROAD

LOUVID CO

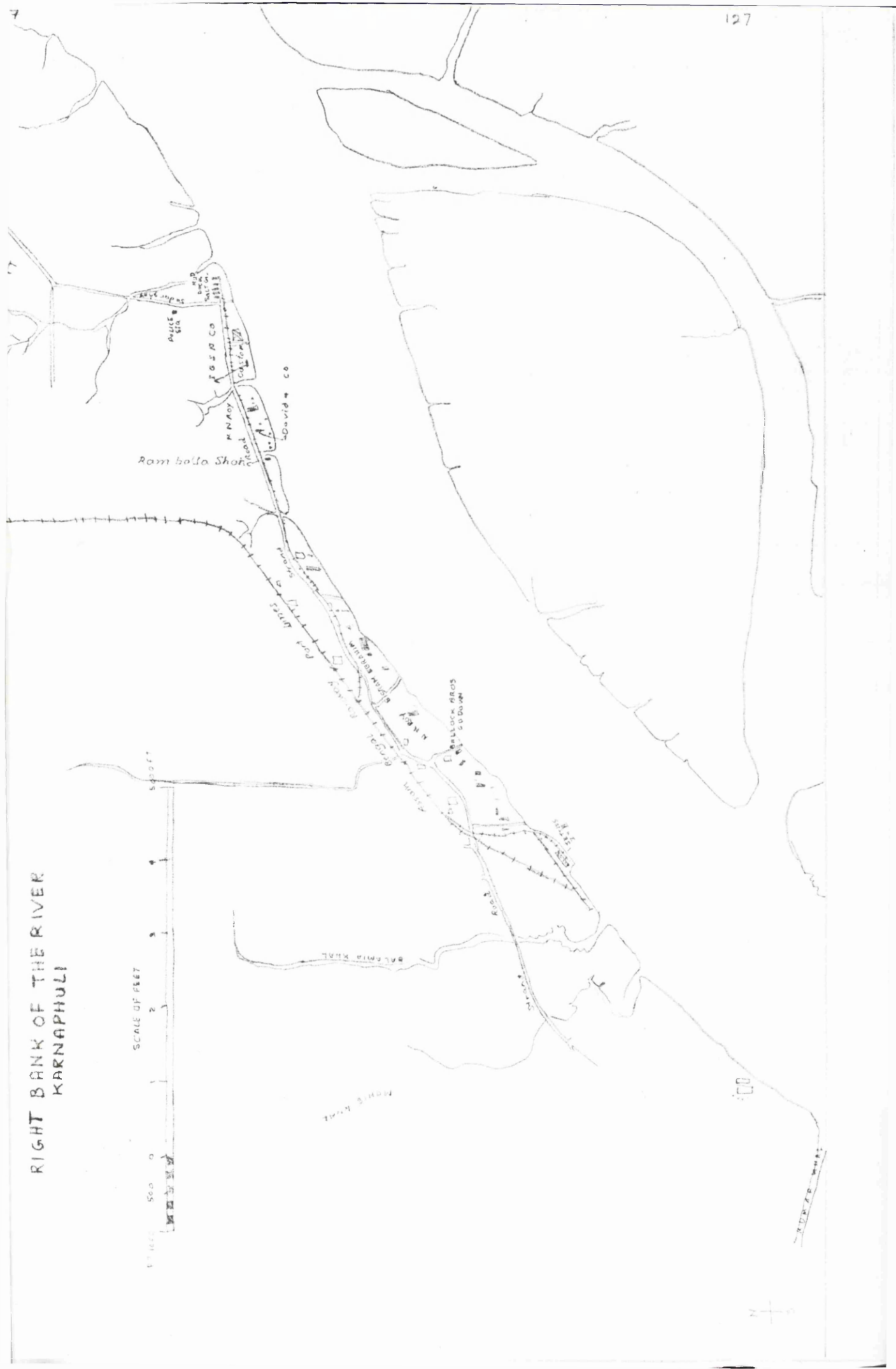
MOH'S KHAL

WALLOCK BRGS
 N. KEY
 W. CO. DASH

W. CO. DASH
 N. KEY
 W. CO. DASH

W. CO. DASH

W. CO. DASH



sheds and warehouses, railway sidings, fire hydrants, water points and electricity. Till 1908 however, very little progress was made in providing these, and the port had to make do with transit sheds, and even these with poor fire fighting apparatus.

In 1905 F. Palmer and F.G. Dumayne in their report had stated that transit sheds should only be used for the collection of goods intended either for vessels actually at a berth or for the next one to follow, and on no account should they be used for storing goods for lengthened periods.¹ In spite of that report however, no storage sheds were constructed till 1908,² when a single storage shed was built. By 1909 however, three storage sheds had been constructed.³ The transit sheds previously in use had been constructed of steel framework with corrugated iron walls and roofs.⁴ The sheds had no boundary wall round them to prevent access by unauthorised persons. They were so constructed that anyone could enter them from the river side and also from underneath the front sheds from the river. The floor of the front godown were of wood instead of the cement used in Calcutta.⁵ The three great fires of November 1906, October 1907 and December 1907 revealed^{that} the sheds were not only ill constructed but were also

- 1 Report by Messrs F. G. Dumayne & F. Palmer Vice-Chairman & Chief Engineer to the Calcutta Port Trust on the Proposals for extending jetty accommodation at the Port of Chittagong for ocean-going steamers, 1905, para 22.
- 2 253 Ordinary Meeting 5 November 1909. OMPC 1909, 462, See also E.B.A. Proc. Mne 1909, February 75.
- 3 253 Ordinary Meeting 5 November 1909, OMPC 1909, 462.
- 4 Report on the Transit Sheds at Chitt. Jetties - by F. Palmer. Chief Eng. to the Calcutta Port Trust - 16 February 1908 - E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne Dept. 1909, February No. 57.
- 5 Calcutta Fire Insurance Agent's Association to the Agent A. B. Rly. 13 November 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne Dept. 1909, February 1.

supplied with an insufficient number of fire extinguishing appliances. After the third fire the Port Commissioners wrote, "the fire of the 16th November 1906 found the Railway Company entirely unprepared with any kind of fire extinguishing appliance that could be worked. The fire of the 12th October 1907 found them equally unprepared. At the fire of Christmas Eve last they had two short hoses, 2½" in size, which were attached to the hydraulic crane mains, and one of those hoses was defective and worked intermittently (vide Mr. Rivett Carnac's evidence). There were also a few bottles of extinguishers but they were of no practical use".¹

The fires brought the railway administration of the jetties under heavy criticism. An enquiry committee was appointed which found the three sheds to be individually too large for the storage of jute and which recommended the division of the sheds into compartments by brick and fire proof partitions so that no compartment should contain more than 7,000 bales of jute; a considerable increase in the number of hydrants around the sheds in connection with the scheme of fire protection sanctioned and ordered from England; the utilization of the hydraulic pressure mains as an auxiliary to the water mains in connection with the fire engine and the installation of sprinklers in the sheds, and the provision of a permanent unclimbable fence with guards around the yard.

In addition to these measures the Committee, agreeing with the Insurance Company, recommended that the portion of the shed

1 Memorandum by the Commissioners on the Chittagong Jetty Fire of 24 December 1907. E. B. A. Proc. Mne Dept. 1909, February 52.

floor decked with timber should be cased or made pucca. The Committee also proposed that all the exterior shed walls except those on the jetties should be of brick, with doors which overlapped the opening by at least nine inches on either side. The steel pale fencing when installed should be supported throughout its length on a masonry wall to prevent access by burrowing underneath it. The Committee also proposed that all the Company's servants be provided with a distinguishing uniform or badge.¹ The Railway Board acting on these criticisms and suggestions instructed their Agent to prepare without delay, in consultation with the Port Trust and the Fire Insurance Association, a thoroughly comprehensive scheme of protective measures against fire at the Company's jetties.² In 1908 a scheme was submitted and sanctioned by the Railway Board. However when the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam expressed the view that the proposed scheme was insufficient to meet the demands of the port the whole proposal was revised and a more comprehensive scheme adopted. According to the new scheme a complete hydrant installation was provided.³ Sprinklers were placed in the transit sheds No. 1 to 4 and storage sheds A, B and C. and on the recommendation of the Fire Insurance Association sprinklers were also placed in the verandahs of the sheds.⁴ In place of the small fire engine previously sent out from England provision was made for a thousand gallons hydrant

1 Finding of a Joint Enquiry held at Chittagong on the 24 and 30 December 1907 and 2 and 4 January 1908 into the Fire at No. 3 Berth on Tuesday 24 December 1907. E.B.A. Proc. Mne Dept. 1909, February 60.

2 Rly Board to Chitt. Port Trust, 21 January 1908 E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 50.

3 Chief Engineer A.B. Rly, to the Agent A.B. Rly 29 September 1909, Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const) January 1911, January 96
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4 Agent A. B. Rly to Managing Director A. B. Rly 3 May 1910. Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const), January 1911, January 99

pump and a much larger storage tank than the one in use was provided.¹ These measures proved effective and there was no further fire, during the period under study except for a small one in 1909² when these improvements were being carried out.

Besides these sheds separate arrangements were made for the storage of kerosine, oil and salt. Arrangements for the storage of kerosine oil was made at Guptakhali³ and of salt in the Government Salt Golas or sheds at Sadarghat. Prior to the construction of the bulk oil installation in 1903 the import of kerosine oil had been very small, only 245,255 gallons⁴ in the year 1892-93, mainly for local consumption.⁵ With the increase in its import, nearly nine folds by 1900, the need began to be felt for storage accommodation at Chittagong and the Burma Oil Company, the principal oil supplying firm at Chittagong, approached the Government of Bengal and secured in 1903 permission to erect a bulk oil installation at Guptakhali.⁶ Soon however, this oil installation proved insufficient to hold the oils imported, so that in 1908 the installation had to be extended by the addition of a new oil tank.⁷

Salt was stored in the salt golas located at the end of the Strand Road. However, arrangements at the golas were in much need of

- 1 Chief Engineer A. B. Rly to the Agent A. B. Rly 29 September 1909, Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const) January 1911, January 96
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- 2 Admin. Rept. 1908-1909, O. M. P. C. 1910, 506.
- 3 Govt. of Bng. to the Comm. Chitt. Div. 15 April 1903, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1903, April 64.
- 4 Annual Statement of the Sea-Borne Trade and Navigation of the Bengal Presidency with Foreign countries and India Ports 1895-96, 41.
- 5 Lyall and Dowling, 19.
- 6 Sec Govt. of Beng. to Comm. of Chitt. Divi. 15 April 1903, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1903, April 64.
- 7 Board's Letters to Agent, 31 July 1908.

improvements. According to the existing practice in the absence of a salt jetty large salt steamers unloaded at the railway jetties at Double Moorings.¹ From there the salt was sent to the golas by rail. At the golas there were no covered sidings from which the salt could be unloaded for carriage to the golas. As a result during the rainy season there was much inconvenience and delay.² Not only was the condition at the salt golas poor the same poor conditions existed at the station at the Strand Road. The railway siding which extended from the jetties to the Sadarghat did so along the Strand Road. This Strand Road siding was a single line of railway, with most of the leading merchant premises tucked in between it and the river and many godowns on the other side of the Strand Road also.³ This siding did not have any proper goods station. The station which was known as the Strand Road Station - to quote from the report of the enquiring Committee - was "not a station at all, as goods cannot be loaded and unloaded at it".⁴ Instead the existing system was to load from the side of the railway wagons in the siding.⁵ There were moreover, no goods sheds⁶ along the sidings which meant that a constant clutter of bullock carts and piles of jute bales was found along the line which added to the confusion, particularly as the "line ran along the busiest street in Chittagong".⁷

1 Comm. Chitt. Divi. to Govt. of Beng. 28 July 1904, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1906, April 30.

2 Ibid.

3 Rept. of the Cttee. appointed to enquire into the State of Police at Chitt - 14 March 1909 - E.B.A. Proc PWD Mne 1909, February 75.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

In 1906 however, the defective arrangement at the salt Golas was remedied and arrangements were made to erect shelters where wagons could be unloaded.¹ Similarly in 1911 steps were taken to improve the condition at the Strand Road by removing the station to a more suitable location to the north of the junction of the Strand Road siding.²

As the increase in the trade of the port demanded sufficient number of jetties and sheds it likewise demanded that night work should be done. From as far back as 1902, therefore, the Railway Agent had begun to press for facilities which would make night working possible and safe. As the Railway Agent wrote, "night work must be done and the danger incurred in burning oil pressure lights, such as 'Wells lights', altogether prohibits their use especially when loading jute".³ He asked therefore for the installation of the new electric lighting. For once no objections were raised. In April 1902 the Government of India sanctioned Rs 18,900 for an electric light installation at the Double Moorings.⁴ In 1905 sanction was given for a separate dynamo for No. 2. jetty and for electric light fittings for the number 5 sheds.⁵ In 1908 capital was sanctioned by the Railway Board for lighting Chittagong yard, goods sheds and station buildings.⁶

- 1 Comm. Chitt. Divi to Govt. of Beng. 28 July 1904, Beng. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1906, April 30.
- 2 Sec. A. B. Rly Co. Ltd., to Agent A. B. Rly. 14 July 1911, Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const), 1911, September/October, October 276.
- 3 Agent A. B. Rly to Consulting Engineer to the Govt. of India for Rly Assam. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1902.
- 4 Govt. of India to Consulting Engineer to Govt. of India for Rly Assam. 30 April 1902, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1902, February 54.
- 5 Board's Letters to Agent 1905.
- 6 General Schedule B. Reso. No. 54. Capital sanctions by the Rly Board to Agent A. B. Rly Assam Bengal Railway Index to Official Meetings 1908.

The railway however, was not the only owner of landing and shipping facilities at Chittagong, for in the absence of railway or other public jetties, shipping lines had had to make provision of their own for carrying on their trade. With the permission of the Port Commissioners¹ certain firms which had been established at Chittagong for many years provided themselves with the moorings, p ntoon landing stages, shed accommodation, offices and the like needed for coastal trade-subject to the condition that they would be removed when required by the Port Trust.²

As in the case of jetties and moorings so in that of more general facilities Chittagong Port lagged behind requirements. Till 1892 she had very little to offer to ships visiting her port: no hospital of her own for the sick, whether passengers or seamen and no workshop or dock for repairs.

- 1 Such permission was given in 1892 to few firms. There were Messrs. Ralli Brothers Agency, Babu Nittya Nanda Ray, Rai Abhoy Chandra Mitra Bahadur and Haji Nasoo Malum - Admin. Rept. 1891-92 Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, October 32-33. Permission was later granted in 1905-06 to Messrs. Kristo Das Nittya Nando Ray to erect two temporary jetties in front of their own godown and warehouses and to Messrs. Turner, Marrison and Co. to erect a pontoon landing stage and to lay moorings for the accommodation of the steamers of the Asiatic Steam Navigation Company and the Retriever Flotilla Co. at a ground rent payable to the port fund of Rs 200 a year. Should the Commissioners order their removal within three years, they would take over the moorings at a valuation. Admin Dept. 1905-06 - E.B.A. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1906, 1 October.
- 2 Admin Rept. 1891-92, Beng Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, October 32-33.

The want of proper medical men and sufficient hospital accommodation for the shipping at the port of Chittagong had long been felt and had been the subject of complaint. At a meeting convened by the Commissioner of the Division on 3 December 1884, and attended by the Captains of ships at the Port and representative of the leading firms it was unanimously agreed that a separate hospital should be provided for seamen.¹ Nothing however was done and the Municipal hospital continued to be used for the treatment of seamen till 1892. That year however, with the outbreak of cholera and small-pox epidemics at Chittagong, the Municipal Commissioner pointed out the necessity of having another hospital for the treatment of patients, specially for Europeans as the Municipal hospital ward for Europeans and contagious diseases were not only unfit for the reception of European seamen but was also inadequate for the number of cases being admitted.² The subject was discussed by the Port Commissioners who were unanimously of opinion that since the site of the municipal hospital was "objectionable and the accommodation insufficient" the Rangmahal Hill should be acquired and the bungalow on it converted into accommodation for European seamen. The Commissioners considered that a suitable hospital for Indian patients should also be erected on the hill.³ In view of the need it was agreed that the hospital port due which had ceased to be collected in 1891⁴ should again be re-imposed. Accordingly Government was moved and sanction was secured for the reimposition of hospital port dues.⁵

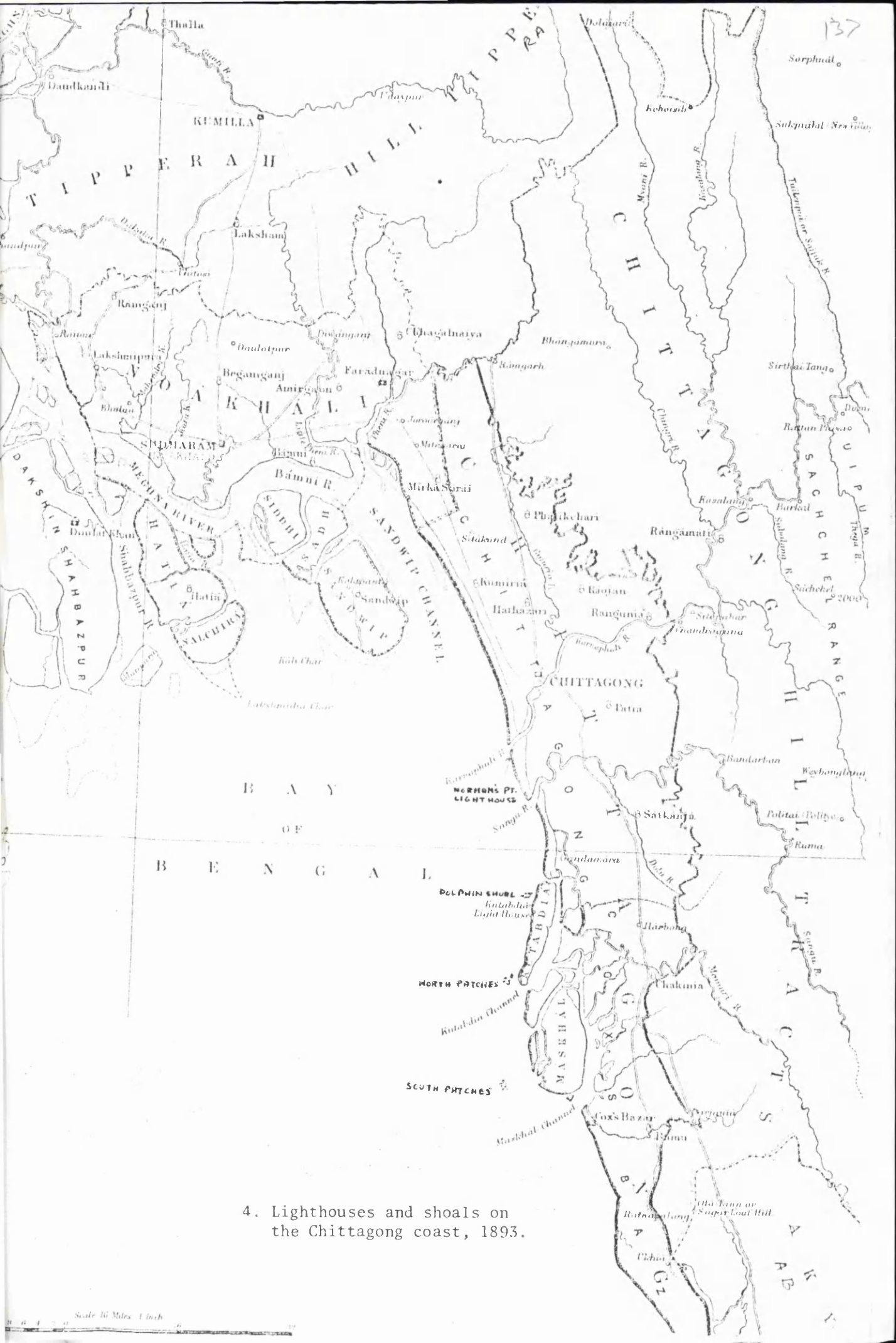
- 1 Govt. of Beng. to Chamber 14 August 1889, Beng. C. C. 468.
- 2 Admin. Rept. 1892-93. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, October 33-34.
- 3 Note by E. Good, Special Officer, 17 September 1902, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne 1902, December 45.
- 4 Vice-Chmn of the Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 2 June 1892, Beng. Proc PWD Mne 1892, July-December, November 64-65.
- 5 Notification No. 83 Mne 20 September 1892, Beng. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1892 - July/December, November 72.

In February 1893, on the completion of the hospital on the Rangmahal Hill the Civil Surgeon of Chittagong was appointed Surgeon to the Port Commissioners. He was also given an Assistant Surgeon.¹

All repair work for the port of Chittagong before the purchase of the Port's two vessels the S. L. Active and S. T. Gekko² had been done in Calcutta.³ After the purchase of those vessels their engine room staffs were employed, when their vessels were not working, to execute all petty repairs in the Port Commissioners Workshop at Sadarghat.⁴ Beside this Port Commissioner's Workshop the Assam Bengal Railway Company had their own workshop at Pahartali.⁵

There was no dry dock in Chittagong and so the dredger boats and flats had all to be sent to Calcutta for survey.⁶ This involved great expense and loss of time which in turn affected the dredging work in the river Karnaphuli. Before 1893 there was not even a mud dock at Chittagong. In that year however, the Commissioners proposed the cutting of a dock on port land capable of handling the

- 1 Admin. Rept. 1892-93 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, October, 33-34.
- 2 See Chart appended. "Vessels belonging to the port of Chittagong".
- 3 Admin Rept. 1895-96, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1896, October, 24-25.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Loco Requirements at Pahartali Shops 27 February 1911, Rly Index OM 1911.
- 6 Vice-Chmn to Govt. of Beng. 21 December 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, February 1.



4. Lighthouses and shoals on the Chittagong coast, 1893.

Gekko and other craft.¹ What was proposed was a mud dock with an earthen bund or embankment in place of gates, in length about 130 feet, breadth on top 60 to 80 and at the bottom about 25 feet and 16 to 18 feet deep.² The natural entrance of the mud dock was the salt golah creek. The Government of Bengal approved of the idea and that year sanctioned the proposal.³ But although a mud dock was built the absence of a dry-dock during the period under study was much felt by shipsvisiting the port, particularly as the approach to the river Karnaphuli and the river itself was not free from shaols and bars.

The marking of these hazards to navigation was another task which was only slowly completed. Between the river Karnaphuli and the south end of the Mohesh Khal were located several shoal patches. These were the Dolphin Shaol, the North Patch and the South Patch.⁴ The Dolphin Shoal was to the north of the Kutubdia Island while the North Patch was to its south. The South Patch lay further south still, near the Mohesh Khal Island and was about 40 miles below the entrance to the river Karnaphuli. Although both the Dolphin Shoal and the North Patch was marked by buoys the Port Officer always found it very difficult to mark the shoal in the South Patch. In October 1892 after a buoy that marked that place had broken adrift a second class conical black buoy was placed in position.⁵ This buoy too broke adrift in December 1894.⁶ A temporary buoy

1 Vice-Chmn of the Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 21 December 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, February 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn Port Comms. 24 January 1894, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, February 2 - Rs 2,036 was sanctioned.

4 A. G. Findley Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal Directory, 1095.

5 Admin. Rept. 1892-93 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept, 1893, October 33-34.

6 Admin Rept. 1894-95, Beng Proc. Mne Dept 1895, October 12-19.

as an experiment was laid in February 1895. But as a result of the cyclone of October 1895 that buoy too disappeared.

The necessity for providing a lightship for the South Patch shoal, so amply demonstrated by the repeated failure to fix any sort of buoy, was more than once brought to the notice of the Government. In 1884 the masters of the vessels then lying in the Port of Chittagong submitted a memorial on the subject. They were unanimously of opinion that a lightship should be placed on this dangerous shoal, and that this would render the approach to Chittagong both safe and easy.¹ But as the Port Fund was unable to bear such a charge nothing was done.² When the Port Trust was formed the Commissioners took up the question again, but owing to the want of funds³ they too were unable to provide a vessel on the Patches. They therefore requested the Commissioners of Chittagong Division to lay the whole matter before the Government. It was however not before February 1906 that a lightship named the Sarsute was procured from the Government of Bengal (the cost to be debited to the accumulations of the Chittagong pilotage funds) and stationed at the South Patches,⁴ thus making the approach to the river Karnaphuli both easy and safe.

Once the shoal and the patches were passed a ship upon entering the river Karnaphuli was faced with further difficulties for though

1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 23 February 1888. Govt. of Beng. PWD Mne Port Trust 1888, April 2.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Admin Rept. 1906-07, E.B.A. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1907, November 6.

the navigation of the river was neither very difficult nor dangerous as compared with the Hughli navigation leading to Calcutta¹ still the channel could not be said to have been totally free from dangers. This was mainly due to the fact that at the commencement of our period no proper attention had been given to keeping the port abreast of the growing needs of its users. There were thus, no correct charts of the river,² as many changes had occurred since the last survey was made in 1883.³ There were several bars which required great caution in the absence of proper marking. There was further no effective lighthouse to mark the approaches nor were there any proper navigational lights on the river. Until the purchase of the Gekko there was not even a tug in the port and till 1906 there was no telephone connection between the port and its outer approaches. Such being the condition of the port, the Port Officer was surely justified in stating in 1889 'I do not think there is another port so isolated and wretchedly furnished with means of assisting vessels in distress as Chittagong'⁴. During the period under study however, these drawbacks were remedied to a certain extent and the river was made navigable both during night and day.

The inadequate lighting of the whole Chittagong coast was a great problem to ships entering the river Karnafuli from the sea. The

- 1 Hist. Calcutta P.T. states "there is not an experienced seaman who will not class it (Hooghly) as one of the most difficult within his knowledge". 10.
- 2 Admin. Beng. 1900-1901, 16.
- 3 Agent and Chief Engineer A.B. Rly to Govt. of Beng. 19 January 1901, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1901, March 5.
- 4 Port Officer to Port Comms. 1889, Port Trust Proc. K.W.

existing lighthouses, the Kutubdia and Norman's Point, were of doubtful utility to ships coming from a distance, being ill sited, ill equipped and ill maintained.

In 1890 the Norman's Point Lights consisted of two lamps, each with four single flat wick kerosine burners. "The lamps", to quote the Port Officer of Calcutta, "are placed at all sorts of angles the light from one lamp throwing it upwards and that from another throwing it to close down, so that the light directly seaward is still lessened by this arrangement. The ventilation at the western light is hardly considered but at the eastern light it is entirely blocked out... the lights are ill-adapted even for the requirements of an anchorage light".¹ In 1891² the Norman's Point Light House was rebuilt on its old site by the Public Works Department.³ A fifth order dioptric accutling port light - installed some fifty-five feet above sea level, visible in clear weather at a distance of ten miles was exhibited from the 1st April 1892.⁴

While the Norman Point Light House was being improved even more radical changes were made at Kutubdia. The height of the lantern was increased from 110 to 121 feet and the old light which was fitfully visible only at a distance of 14 miles was replaced by a first class revolving white light visible for over twenty miles out

1 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn Port Comms. 28 May 1890, Port Trust Proc. 1890, K.W.

2 Admin. Rept. 1891-92, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, October 32-33.

3 Ibid.

4 M.A. Bary, Sixty-Six years of the Port of Chitt. 1888-1954, Monthly Bulletin of the Port of Chitt. February 1960. 10.

to sea, with much more powerful burners of 772 candle power.¹
 The lighthouse was handed over by the Divisional Executive Engineer to the charge of its lighthouse keeper, and the new light was first displayed on 1 January 1893.²

Besides the two lighthouses on the coast, marks were provided at the mouth of the Chittagong river. In 1892, the Patunga Point³ on the north bank was marked by a rigged iron mast 105 feet high with a triangle at the mast-head⁴ while the south bank was marked by a flagstaff.⁵ In 1906-07 to enable vessels to enter or leave the port at night two leading-lights were erected at the outer and inner bars.⁶ These were provided by the Government of Bengal (the cost to be debited to the pilotage fund) at an estimated cost of Rs 4, 275.⁷

In order to show the rise and fall of water a tide guage was erected off J U ldia Hill in May 1869.⁸ Four new automatic tide gauges were

- 1 'Descriptive Rept on the Kutubdia Light House, giving a brief account of the original as well as the new light of the operations connected with its erections of optical adjustments, as also of the necessary alteration to the Tower by J.H. Toogood - Executive Eng. Special Duty Kutubdia Light House, 7 February 1893 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1893, May 1-2. See also in Port Trust Secy's Record Room (Chitt) a separate report.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 A. G. Findley- Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal Directory, 1095.
- 4 See Table Appended - of Tables giving Particulars of buoys and landmarks - 1897.
- 5 A. G. Findley, Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal Directory, 1095.
- 6 Note by Port Officer Chitt. 2 May 1913, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1913, May 55.
- 7 Admin. Rept. 1905-06, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, October 1.
- 8 Tables giving Particulars of Buoys and Landmarks on the Coasts and in The River and Harbours of Bengal also of the Floating Light Vessels. Hooghly River Approaches 1897, See Table Appended.

erected between 1906-1908.¹ These tide gauges were placed at Sadarghat, the jetties, the Gupta Khal and Juldia.² Probably at about the same time an Anemometer was placed at Gupta Khal to give the direction and force of wind.³

River survey work at Chittagong was done by the S. L. Active⁴ built and sent from Calcutta in 1884.⁵ The Port was also in possession of a gig, built in Chittagong in 1879.⁶ This latter had been employed a great deal in taking soundings; after 1884 it was replaced by the Active.⁷

Till 1883 the port of Chittagong did not have the service of any steam tug.⁸ Since the want of a tug was seriously felt by the steamers visiting the port the Commissioner of the Division that year came to an understanding with the Bassein Tug Company whereby they agreed to send one of their tugs to Chittagong but during the jute season only (during the cold season)⁹. This

1 Note on revised estimate for revetment of River Karnafuli at Erosion A. by W.H. Neilson Port Engineer, 2 December 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, October 1.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Chmn. Port. Comms. To Govt. of Beng. 14 November 1890, Beng. Proc. Mne (P. T), April, 5-6.

5 Admin. Rept. 1892-93, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, October, 33-34.

6 Chmn. Port. Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 14 November 1890, Port Trust Proc. 1890, April 5-6.

7 Ibid.

8 Note by D.R. Lyall - Comm. Chitt. Divi. Steam Tug for the Port of Chitt - 15 June 1890, K.W. Notes. Port Trust Proc. 1890, June 1.

9 Ibid.

arrangement proved very unsatisfactory as not only was the tug not permanent but it also remained anchored in the port and a ship visiting the port had generally to anchor and signal for the tug to get up steam.¹ In 1884, therefore the Port Officer of Chittagong addressed the Government strongly recommending the purchase of a steam tug for the port. He wrote, "I would beg to point out for the consideration of Government as to whether the port itself might not be allowed to undertake this work".² At a later meeting of the local mercantile community a resolution was unanimously passed that the port should have a steam-tug of its own.³ However, it appears that nothing happened till 1888 when with the formation of the Port Trust the Port Commissioners approached the Bassein Tug Company with the proposal that they should have a vessel permanently stationed at Chittagong. The Company was willing to do this provided their operation was subsidised. This the Port Commissioners were quite prepared to do, but the terms the Bassein Company asked could not be entertained, as they were deemed exorbitant. Moreover, they only wished to place a small tug the Albert, built in 1877 for towage only - a tug which was without any appliances for mooring works and had neither fire nor salvage pumps.⁴ In June 1889 therefore the Port Commissioners submitted an application to the Government for a loan of Rs, 1, 45, 000 the then estimated cost of constructing and bringing out a tug to Chittagong from England. The loan was eventually raised to Rs, 2, 00, 000⁵ and the tug Gekko reached Chittagong on 29 June 1892.⁶

- 1 Vice-Chmn, Port Comms, To Messrs. A.R. Price and Co. Ship-owners London 15 April 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, September 30 and 31.
- 2 Note by D.R. Lyall Comm. Chitt. Division, Steam-Tug for the Port of Chitt 15 June 1890, K.W. Notes, Port Trust Proc. 1890, June 1-2.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Admin. Rept. 1892-93, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, October 33-34.
- 5 Admin. Rept. 1891-92, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, October 32-33.
- 6 Admin. Rept. 1892-93, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892 October 33-34.

"The Gekko", to quote the Port Commissioners was a "powerful steam-tug (twin screws) fitted with complete fire and salvage gear for the help and assistance of vessels visiting Chittagong". It was, "a most powerful and useful boat and thoroughly efficient for any work, or to cope with casualties happening to vessels".¹ For the first few years however it was found that the Gekko had great difficulty in breaking the monopoly of the Bassein Tug Company's tug Mary on account of the commission of 10 to 15 per cent paid by that tug to the masters of ships visiting Chittagong port and using it.² In 1893 the Vice-Chairman of the Port Commissioners addressed a letter to A. R. Price and Company - Ship-owners enquiring, "whether shipowners usually allow their commander this commission... (and) if you will... obtain the opinion of other ship-owners", on the subject as, "the services of the port tug are not taken, owing to their being debarred from returning 10 to 15 per cent commission on the towage to the ship master".³ In reply the ship owners stated, "Our desire, as ship-owners, is to get our towage done on the lowest possible scale, and to prevent, as far as possible, any return commissions to the masters of our ship... and as the Port Commissioners' tug seems to be by far the most powerful vessel, we are quite disposed to do everything we can to divert business to it... (we) trust that the method adopted will put an end to the system of taking illicit commission".⁴ As a result of this measure by 1895 the Gekko did secure all the towage of the port.⁵ The Gekko unlike the previous tug which used to tow

- 1 Vice-Chmn. Port Comms. to Messrs. A.R. Price & Co. Ship-owners London, 15 April 1893. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1893, September 30-31.
- 2 Ibid. see also Admin. Rept. 1893-94, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1894, October 38-39.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Messrs. R. Price & Co. Ship-owners to E. Good Vice-Chmn. 10 May 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, September 30-31.
- 5 Admin. Rept. 1894-95, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1895, October 12-19.

vessels from their mooring buoys to the outside Bar buoys and then cast off, towed a vessel (in the absence of a favourable wind) down off the Kutubdia Light House twenty-two miles from the Bar.¹ Besides towage the Gekko also took stores to the lighthouses and performed other works for the port like heaving up, shifting, and overhauling the fixed and swinging moorings. This last act was a saving on the port fund as the cost of hire of the Calcutta Port Commissioners' anchor boat and expense of towage to and from Calcutta was saved.²

In 1891 the Port Officer of Chittagong pointed out to the Commissioner, Chittagong Division that a telegram line or telephone between Chittagong and Joaldia was a "matter of great importance"³ since the signal-staff from the station of Juldia at the mouth of the river nine miles from Sadarghat could not be seen in hazy weather.⁴ No action however was taken "in view of the numerous charges falling on the Port Fund." In 1906-07, a telephone exchange system was established by the Telegraph Department in the town of Chittagong between several important Government offices, banks and mercantile firms. The Railway Department and the Commissioners of the Port of Chittagong both took advantage of the new communication system. The Port Commissioners installed a line to their office on payment of Rs 150 a year⁵ and in 1911-12 the Juldia telephone line

- 1 Vice-Chmn Port Comms. to Messrs. A.R. Price and Co. Ship Owners London, 15 April 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, September 30-31.
- 2 Admin. Rept. 1893-93, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1893, October, 33-34.
- 3 Port Officer to Port Comms. 1891, Port Trust Proc. 1891.
- 4 Admin Rept. 1906-07, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1907, November 6.
- 5 Admin. Rept. 1906-07, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1907, November 6.

SPDRGHAT
JETTY NO 4
JETTY NO 3
JETTY NO 2
JETTY NO 1



KARNAPHULI RIVER

LONGITUDINAL SECTION OF THE NAVIGABLE TRACK
1917

SCALES { HORIZONTAL 2600' = 1" }
 { VERTICAL 10' = 1" }

was extended from the Harbour Masters' Office to the Senior Harbour Masters' house and thence to the new Port Office with switches at the two first-named places.¹ The Railway authorities took four connections to the Head Office, at Chittagong Station, at the jetties, and at Pahartali.² Further internal links were sanctioned in November 1910,³ and by 1912 private short distance telephone links had been established between the jetty superintendent's room, the assistant Jetty Superintendent's room the Chief Clerks Room and the offices of the four main sheds or godowns at the jetties, and the hydraulic machinery foreman's office.⁴ This installation was erected by the Locomotive Department with an exchange in the Jetty Superintendent's Office.⁵

The absence of navigational aids at the beginning of the period under study had been all the more keenly felt due to the presence of bars in the river Karnaphuli. The Karnaphuli river due to the nature of its catchment basin and the practice of 'slash and burn' on the hills cultivation - carried a considerable quantity of silt and consequently no permanent deep water channel could exist without artificial means like dredging. Moreover the banks of the river particularly at the location of the port installations were not stable so that river protection works were needed. From time to time the question of river improvement was taken up, though without much result. River

- 1 Admin Rept. 1911-12, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1912, September 26-30.
- 2 Board's Letter to Agent 1905, 32.
- 3 Agent's Memo 5 November 1910, Rly Index O.M. 1910.
- 4 Jetty Superintendent's Letter No. 1901, 29 February 1912, Rly Index O.M. 1912.
- 5 Ibid.

improvement had first been considered indeed, as early as 1893. In that year J.H. Apjohn submitted a report drawing attention to the serious erosion in the great bend and advocating immediate protective measures,¹ but unfortunately no action was taken.² In August 1900 J.H. Apjohn made another study of the Port of Chittagong,³ and stated most forcibly that it would be useless to attempt any improvement of the Port without first taking steps to stop further erosion of the right bank below Chittagong and thereafter to remove the bars by a combination of dredging and river training. His estimate for the complete project was ten lakhs of rupees, but such an outlay was far beyond the resources of the Port Commissioners or the willingness to act of the Government of Bengal and the matter was again dropped.⁴ In November of the same year Messrs. Sir. A. Rendel and Company Consulting Engineers to the Assam Bengal Railway and Company advocated experimental dredging of the bars at a cost of Rs 60,000 to Rs 80,000 but nothing followed.⁵

In the meantime the London Tea Companies and the Indian Tea Association began to exert pressure "to induce the Government of Bengal to make such improvements at the port of Chittagong as will enable full-sized ocean-going steamers to call there with ease and

1 J.H. Apjohn's note on the erosion of the right bank of the river Karnaphuli, 7 December 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept, 1894, February 28-29.

2 Ibid.

3 Report dated 14 September 1900 on measures that might be adopted for the improvement of the Port of Chitt. by the removal of the bars from the Karnaphuli River by J.H. Apjohn, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1900, October 112.

4 Buchanan, 22.

5 Ibid.

safety".¹ The steamer companies were also not idle and in 1902 a firm of solicitors on behalf of the shippers wrote, "As you are probably aware, a service of steamers arranged for under the auspices of our clients has been running from Chittagong...

Only steamers of an extremely special design however, combining large carrying capacity with a minimum draught can carry on this service, and the number of these available is necessarily small. The port is still therefore practically closed to steamers of the necessary capacity of ordinary construction and normal draught and although for the moment the service of steamers mentioned above suffices to meet the requirements of traffic it will be otherwise when the Assam-Bengal Railway is opened to the Brahmaputra Valley (which will be in about a year's time) and the volume of produce coming down to Chittagong is (as we are informed will be the case) increased three or perhaps four fold".² Again however, nothing ensued. It was thus not until 1904 and the Visit by the Viceroy Curzon to the port, when political as well as economic motives for improvement came into play, that anything positive was done. For then, it will be recalled the Viceroy offered Government assistance to the work of river training and dredging.³

After Lord Curzon's promised financial assistance to the Port of Chittagong J. R. Bell was deputed by the Government to report

1 Direct Shipment of Tea from Chitt. to London Rept. Indian Tea Asso. 1900. 30.

2 Messrs. Sanderson, Adkin, Lee, and Eddie Solicitors to Govt. of Beng. 20 December 1901. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1902, April 36.

3 See Chapter IV

on the whole question of conserving and improving the navigation of the Karnaphuli. Bell in his report¹ advised that 4,000 feet down to the Kumar Khal should be revetted in the next two years,² and that the cost of another 6,000 feet of revetment should be provided in the budget for though he hoped that revetment down to Kumar Khal might prove to be sufficient.

Bell had put the total cost of both revetment works at five lakhs of rupees of which he thought half should fall on the Railway budget and half on the contemplated Imperial Grant.³ The Commissioners accepted the united opinion of Messrs. J.H. Apjohn and Bell that the revetment of the cutting bend below the Double Moorings to Kumar Khal should be carried out at once, any further extension depending upon the experience gained.⁴ In the event however, about 1,000 feet of the first 4,000 feet, i.e. down to Mohesh Khal, was later appropriated by the Railway Company for the erection of their third jetty for which they assumed responsibility.⁵ By 1906-07 a length of about 5,700 feet on the right bank of the river below the railway terminal jetties had been revetted, and in the light of the experience gained it was decided to extend the revetment to a distance of about $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles⁶ or 19,150 feet, from just below the railway jetties to the oil tank at Gupta Khal.⁷

1 J.R. Bell's Memorandum 12 August 1904, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1904, September 22.

2 As Bell thought that it would not be possible to procure stone easily.

3 Buchanan, 24.

4 Buchanan, 25.

5 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E.B.A. 11 April 1906, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, May 30.

6 Admin. E.B.A. 1906-07, See Admin Rept. 1906-07, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1907, November 6.

7 Port Officer's note on revised estimate for revetment for River Karnafuli at Erosion A, 11 March 1909 - E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, October 4.

By October 1912, only about 1,600 feet remained to complete the revetment to the Burmah Oil Company terminal at Gupta Khal.¹

Revetment might take care of the swinging, cutting action of the river and protect the shore line on which the port was built, but it could not deal with the second action of the river, the depositing of large quantities of silt, and indeed the building of jetties and embankments in some cases led to the unwanted shoaling of the river or diversion of the deep water channels. It was necessary therefore to take the dredging of the river in hand, no less than its training.

The main obstacle to the accessibility of the Port at all seasons of the year lay in the river bars. These till 1910 were three, the inner bar, the outer bar, and the ring bar,² but in that year the Gupta Crossing bar made its first appearance.³ The Outer bar was at the entrance of the river Karnaphuli from the sea. The inner bar was situated below the junction of the Patunga and Juldia channels.⁴ The ring bar was above the railway jetty but below the Sadarghat jetty.⁵

Just how much of a barrier to navigation these bars formed is made clear by the figures for the depth of water in the river

1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 8 October 1912. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1913, June 12.

2 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 15 May 1900, Beng. Proc Mne Dept. 1900, July 42.

3 Buchanan - 22.

4 Ibid.

5 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 15 May 1900, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1900, July 42.

established by survey in 1900. Thus at the outer bar the water shoaled from thirty, to twenty four and finally to as little as twelve feet across a two hundred and fifty feet wide bar. Inside the bar there was at least twenty foot of water as far as the black buoy marking the inner bar, a much larger shoal stretching some 3,000 feet up the river over which the water shallowed to as little as eleven feet. Above the inner bar there was again twenty foot of water or more, except at the Gupta Khal crossing where the depth was two or three feet less.¹ The ring bar was an uneven shoal and had at places only twelve feet of water, but as this bar was above the railway jetty and the Double Moorings, it was not of such importance as the other two.² Since the rise of tides varied greatly during the year, during neap tides no vessels drawing more than 18' 6" could safely enter or leave the harbour³ and it was imperative after October for steamers and ships drawing over 20 feet draft to complete their loading outside the bar.⁴

In 1905 after Curzon's promise of help the Port Commissioners in consultation with the Port Engineer⁵ and the Public Works Secretary to the Government of Bengal recommended the purchase of a combined suction and ladder bucket dredger. This was subsequently sanctioned⁶ and the dredger Karnaphuli I arrived at Chittagong on 5 March 1907.⁷ One dredger was soon found to

1 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 15 May 1900 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1900, July 42.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Messrs. M. David & Co. Narayanganj - to Govt. of Beng. 30 January 1903 Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1903, May 6.

5 Buchanan, 34.

6 Ordinary Meeting of the Port Comms. 6 April 1906 - E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, August 28.

7 Admin. Rept. 1906-07, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1907, November. 6.

be insufficient to tackle both the main bars particularly in view of the fact that from 1908 some shoaling was discovered at the jetties which also required periodic attention from the dredger. To make matters worse in December 1909 Messrs. Bell and Neilson reported that the Gupta Chur Channel over towards the left bank of the river, opposite the jetties, was cutting and deepening itself thus reducing the efficiency of the main river.¹ To deal with this development, probably caused by the jetty building and river training, the Government of E. B. and Assam applied to the Government of India for assistance in closing the bye-channel.² This was refused³ and in the end the local Government had to ask the Port Commissioners to carry out the work on the Gupta Chur from the revetment grants, with a consequent curtailment "in the current year's Revetment programme to provide for the increased expenditure".⁴

But while one problem was thus being dealt with, the Port Officer of Chittagong had reported in 1911 on the total inadequacy of the single dredger. "For any permanent improvement on either bar," he wrote, "the dredger must work whole time on one or the other. But as the jetties are found to be shoaling rapidly she will be obliged to work at the jetties when vacant and if the dredger has to be laid up for any length of time, all the improvement made might be undone in the course of a few months. Under the circumstances, I think one dredger is not sufficient to tackle both the bars and I consider a second dredger is urgently required".⁵ On the suggestion

- 1 Inspection note by J.R. Bell - Consulting Engineer 6 December 1909, E.B.A. Proc PWD Mne 1910, January 38.
- 2 Govt. of E. B. A. to Govt. of India, 17 January 1910, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1910, January 40.
- 3 Govt. of India to Govt. of E. B. A., 16 February 1910, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1910, January 46.
- 4 Govt. of E. B. A. to Chmn Port Comms. 20 April 1910, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1910, January 50.
- 5 Report of the Port Officer Chittagong on the dredging for the year 1911-12, 26 September, Appendix V, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1912.

of J.R. Bell a special committee was appointed, which reported in June 1912 recommending that a turn screw sea-going suction dredger should be bought with hoppers of 2,000 tons capacity and capable of dredging to a depth of 40 feet.¹ The report of the Committee was sent to Bell but unfortunately with his death² and the annulment of the partition of Bengal the whole matter was dropped. The Government of Bengal took its revenge upon Chittagong, refusing, in a letter to the Government of India, to make any provision for a second dredger which was in fact a reversal of that followed by the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, "it does not appear to His Excellency in Council that the direct Provincial interests in the development of the Chittagong Port are sufficiently strong to justify him in devoting for its upkeep at the expense of the rest of the province so large a proportion of the recurring surplus revenues".³ Towards the end of 1913 the question of a second dredger was again opened, the twin issues discussed and rediscussed being whether Chittagong required a second dredger and if so, what type of dredger, but without coming to any decision.⁴ In 1915 the Bengal Government reported to the Government of India, "From the trade statistics... the Port of Chittagong has shown up to the year 1913-14 a remarkable tendency towards expansion. Since then, however, there has been an equally remarkable set back. To a certain extent this may be due to the war, but it is due even more to the fact that the Port Commissioners have been unable with the single dredger at their disposal to keep open the entrances of the port".⁵ The Government of Bengal however, made clear that it

1 Buchanan - 35.

2 Buchanan - 35.

3 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India 8 October 1912, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1913, June 13.

4 Buchanan, 36.

5 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India 17 September 1915, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1916, June 13.

would not give more than the Rs 1, 50, 000 which had been sanctioned by the Government of India¹ for the purpose but that it was to the interest of the Government of India to improve the condition of the river: "The Assam Bengal Railway involves the Government of India in a net annual loss of about 30 lakhs of rupees and that unless a second dredger be obtained at a very early date, there is every prospect that this annual loss will increase instead of diminish".² While the two Governments wrangled over the apportionment of costs, however, the condition of the river went from bad to worse and the authorities of the Assam Bengal Railway Company saw their Chittagong trade vanish before their eyes.³

The last major problem which Chittagong faced as a growing port and railway terminus was one fundamental of course to all ports - the provision of an adequate supply of skilled and unskilled labour. This problem was particularly severe in Chittagong, because of the economic condition of the people of the district and region. B. Foley in a report on labour in Bengal explained, "The whole of the districts included in the Province of Eastern Bengal are non-recruiting districts, the natives of these districts are too prosperous

1 Govt. of Beng. to India 17 September 1915, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1916, June 13. Govt. of India on the 9th April 1913 had informed the Government of Bengal that "Govt. of India are anxious that the interests of the Port should not suffer by the disinclination or inability of the Local Govt. to provide the necessary fund. . . they have decided therefore to make an assignment of Rs 75, 000 annually for five years to Provincial revenues. With effect from the year 1913-14 on the understanding that a subsidy to the over and above (i. e. another 75, 000) this amount. . . (which) may be necessary must be found from Provincial revenue". Govt. of India to Govt. of Beng. 9 April 1913, Beng. Proc. Mne 1913, April 13.

2 Ibid.

3 A second dredger was not obtained before 1928, Bary.

(to leave their homes in search of work)...and in many of them the more arduous cultivation work is performed by imported labour".¹ This was true for the districts of Noakhali, Chittagong and Tippera to a lesser or greater extent,² the most acute shortage of labour being felt in Chittagong. Where good crops and brisk trade maintained the people in prosperity.³ That being the case the sort of wages payable in East Bengal for jetty and railway works did not attract them. Those who did need to seek paid labouring jobs, or a supplement to their income from over-small land holdings, found their most profitable outlet either in permanent or more usually in temporary employment in Burma, a very under-populated area where rice cultivation was rapidly being expanded. All through the cold weather thousands of reapers travelled overland to harvest the rice and usually could afford to return by steamer from Akyab at the end of the season. The Burma census tables for 1891 showed as many as 58,740 men and 16,273 women, who were born in Chittagong living in that province.⁴ To meet the labour problem in Chittagong labour had therefore to be imported mainly from Bihar and Oudh.⁵ The great

1 B. Foley - Report on Labour in Bengal, 38.

2 In Noakhali the labour problem was less acute. As it was the 'poorest district of the division', (Beng. Admin. 1892-93, 345) "the offer of 5 and 6 annas a day attract a sufficient amount of local labour". But even in Noakhali it appeared that there was a small scale eflux of labour to Arakan and to Bakarganj for the harvest season. Beng. Proc. G. Dept. (Misc) 1893 Nov-Dec, Dec 8. Tippera - In Tippera there was a fair supply of labour. But this supply was mainly due to the presence of gangs of up-country labourers.

3 Beng. Admin - 1892-93, 345.

4 Census of India, 1891, 81.

5 Foley, 38, 43.

majority of these immigrants were employed on work involving hard physical labour, such as earth-work and road construction, or as porters or paliki-bearers.¹ Cleaners and sweepers were also imported from up country to maintain the sanitation of the towns and cities, by the Municipalities.²

These coolies and labourers were recruited by the recruiting officer who gave them an advance on their being recruited and sent them to Chittagong from the recruiting district accompanied by a Sardar or headman. These labourers were generally easy to manage, steady and hard working.³ While labourer had usually to be imported from outside Bengal to meet the need of the port a lesser problem was faced in getting local people to accept the better paid jobs of darwans (guards) and clerks and till 1906 most of them were found working side by side with the up-countrymen.⁴ That year however Robinson the new Jetty Superintendent on one pretext or other dismissed these local men and replaced them by up-country men mostly recruited from Calcutta. Himself being an ex-Kidderpore-dockyard employe⁵ he seemed to have been biased against the local people and believed that, "it is not possible to get local men who are sufficiently trustworthy". However later events suggest that his own honesty was questionable, and that of the men he had recruited, too. He had to admit that seven of the new durwans had to be prosecuted for theft.⁶

1 Census of India 1901, VI, 142.

2 Ibid.

3 Foley, Appendix 4. See also H. Mukherjee, The Early History of the East India Railway 197.

4 List of staff whose services have been dispensed with from October 1906. Filed by Robinson, Jetty Superintendent 2 January 1908. E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909. February 60.

5 Proceedings of the Joint Enquiry into the Fire at No. III Jetty held on the 18/30 December, 2 & 4 January 1908, Mr. Robinson recalled 2 January 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD (Mne) 1909, February 60.

6 Ibid.

The difficulty in getting reliable darwans remained in Chittagong and for a time Pensioners were tried. But they were found too old for their job and even then did not stay long at their job.¹

In the Railway workshop at Pahartali most of the skilled men employed were up-country men.² These men, as well as the darwans in the jetties lived in the workshop and jetty premises, as did the other staff whose presence was required near the jetty. However, the quarters built for them were insufficient and were purely temporary. In 1907 therefore the Commissioners are found pointing out to the Railway authorities that staff quarters "are urgently required as it has been found absolutely necessary with the growing demand for night work for steamers to have the staff at hand and on the spot".³ In 1910 therefore it is found that sanction was given for the erection of permanent quarters.⁴

The question which naturally arises at this point is to what extent these imported workers permanently settled in Chittagong. In Bengal as a whole the census returns show that the extent to which permanent settlement took place varied a great deal according to circumstances and to the caste to which the migrants belonged. Brahmans and Rajputs who came chiefly as priests, constables, jail-warders, zamindars or sweepers, peons and the like, very seldom settled in Bengal. Earth-workers, palki bearers, syces,

1 Note on Joint Enquiry into fire at No.III Jetty by Agent A. B. Rly. 5 February 1908. E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 62.

2 Loco Superintendent to Agent A. B. Rly 27 February 1911, Rly Index O.M. 1911.

3 Extract of Port Comms. Reso. 17, in Agent's Letter to Govt. of E. B. A. 16 September 1907, Govt. of India Rly Proc (Const) 1908, January 58

4 Chief Eng. to Agent 30 May 1910, Rly Index O. M. 1910. See also B. L. C. Johnson 'Site and Urban Regions of Chittagong: Oriental Geographer, 1957, 123.

and mill hands also as a class seldom settled in Bengal. Amongst up-country men who came for domestic service or as petty shopkeepers the number who became domiciled in Bengal was larger. Chamars and sweepers as a rule were imported by municipalities with their families. The pay they got was good and there was no inducement for them to return to their old homes.¹

But generally it was found that though the struggle for existence was far harder up-country than in Bengal Proper, few if any, of the people who came in search of work did so with the intention of settling permanently. The reason for this was that the people who came from Bihar and the United Provinces were Hindus. If they married abroad they were in danger of finding themselves looked upon as a sort of outcast and of being debarred from intercourse with their own people. Moreover the sole object of those labourers was - to make money with which to ~~eke~~ eke out the family income at home. Once they had sufficient money they cherished the hope of spending the rest of their life in their native village.² The coming of the railway merely added to their ability to return. It seems to have been the case in Chittagong, however, that the skilled workmen at Pahartali brought their families with them, and therefore probably settled in the town.³

While the labour for low paid jobs was recruited from outside Chittagong, mainly from the Ganges Valley, the higher paid posts were all held by Europeans. The post of Port Officer, the most important official in the administration of the port, was reserved by

1 Census of India 1901, VI, I, 142-4.

2 Census of India 1901, VI, I, 142-4.

3 Loco. Superintendent to Agent A. B. Rly. 27 February 1911, Rly Index, O.M. 1911.

the Government of India from 1908 onwards for officers of the Royal Indian Marine. Prior to 1880 the pilot establishment of Chittagong had consisted of Indians only. Gradually, however, their place was taken by Europeans.¹ Justifying this policy it was stated² that the ignorance of the English language among the Indian pilots, who did not have much education, was considered a constant source of difficulty and inconvenience to the masters of vessels using the port. Moreover it was stated that since the tonnage of the sailing ships and steamers visiting the port was yearly increasing men of more nautical skill and Europeans, were necessary to manoeuvre them in the confined waters of the Karnaphuli.³ Similarly when a dredger was purchased for the port it was resolved that all the dredger staff should be European. Europeans were also appointed in the lighthouses.⁴ The first jetty was not constructed till 1899 so that there was no native staff to draw on to man the cranes and so on. The senior staff who were taken on, however, were all Europeans and it was only from the post of Shed Officer downward that any Indians were employed.

The policy of Europeanization of the port services was said to have been aimed at getting better quality officers. But to secure those officers the authorities had to pay quite high wages. Perhaps if that same pay had been offered to Indians it would not have been difficult to find qualified men. It might seem appropriate here to quote the following lines from the newspaper Jyoti: "As regards employment

1 See Chapter VI

2 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 12 March 1886, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1887, January-March, February 3-8.

3 Note by E. Good Vice-Chmn Chitt. Port. Trust 26 June 1895 - Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1895, November 51-52.

4 Admin. Rept. 1891-92, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1892, October 32-33. Footnote -"it was found necessary to dispense with the services of the Assitant Light-keeper Mobabuth Ali... & one R. S.N. Sevami," as a "more educated man has been placed in (their) stéad".

under the State, natives naturally have a prior claim to foreigners. But our English rulers act as though this were not the case. There are five native pilots for the Chittagong port, with a European Superintendent. The highest pay for the natives is Rs 100, while the superintendent gets Rs 400 and yet there is nothing to show that the European works harder than the natives, or that the natives cannot do the work done by the European. The Superintendent is soon going to have European Assistant on Rs 250 to Rs 300. Might not a native have been selected at a gain both of economy and efficiency?"¹ The following lines from a note of E. Good Port Officer of Chittagong may be quoted in support of the statement made by the Jyoti. E. Good wrote in connection with the employment of pilots in 1895 "I...beg to point out that it is extremely unlikely that men in the coasting trade would leave their vessels to engage as leadsmen at Chittagong, on Rs 20 a month which at the present does not represent the value of the wage of a seacunic or tindal in any of the coasting steamer services, where the usual pay is Rs 30 to 40 a month and rations found. In the small native coasting vessels serangs get from Rs 25 to 30 per mensem...I would suggest that in future the pilots for this port should be recruited from Europeans serving in the mercantile marine...I opine it will not be feasible to get such men under Rs 150 per mensem rising to Rs 300".²

In concluding it can be remarked that Chittagong port generally lacked a definite development policy or the requisite financial backing to carry one out. The port of Chittagong during the period

1 Jyoti 14 July 1904, B.N.N.R. 1904.

2 Note by E. Good Vice-Chmn, 26 June 1895, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1895, November 51-52.

under study came under three different Governments, the Government of India, the Government of Bengal and the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam whose various attitudes towards the developments of the port differed enormously. The Government of Bengal held that "the maintenance of the Port of Chittagong is a matter of comparatively minor interest to the greater part of Bengal".¹ To the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, "the improvement of Chittagong port is an important factor in the development of this Province".² But it was the Government of India which held the real key to the development of the port and that showed itself more or less indifferent to its fate, refusing "to undertake an unlimited liability on account of the improvement to the Chittagong Port".³

The development of Chittagong was not a technical problem but a matter of will. As Sir George Buchanan pointed out in his report "there is no engineering difficulty in making the Karnaphuli river fit for navigation by the largest class of vessels but that it will be necessary to face a considerable expenditure". Before venturing on such a work he felt that the Government must be clear in its policy towards the port of Chittagong, for, "if it is decided to make Chittagong a first class port, arrangements may be made for carrying out this work and procuring dredging plant".⁴

- 1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India 8 October 1912, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1913. June 13.
- 2 Govt. of E.B. & Assam to Govt. of India, 17 January 1910, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1910, January 40.
- 3 Govt. of India to Govt. of E.B. A.. 20-21, March 1906, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, April 5.
- 4 Buchanan. 39.

In the twenty years from 1892, the port of Chittagong was transformed from a port with no facilities to a port able to accommodate ocean going steamer. But the transformation had been a slow, grudging and piece-meal one, brought to an abrupt halt, moreover, once the backing of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was lost by the annulment of Partition. Had that political revolution not occurred it might well have been the case, as Sir George Buchanan and Sir Francis Spring were to hold, that with a steady progressive policy "Chittagong would today have been in the same rank as Calcutta and Rangoon".¹

1 Buchanan 13, Sir Francis J.E. Spring - was for over ten years a member, Madras Legislative Council and was connected for 15½ years with ^{the} development and management of the Port of Madras as Chairman and Chief Engineer of the Port Authority. He was also the consulting engineer of the Port of Chittagong. Sir George Buchanan was the Chairman and Chief Engineer of the Rangoon Port Trust for fourteen years from 1901. He received the gold medal from the Institution of Civil Engineers in 1916.

CHAPTER VI

Chittagong Port Administration & Finance

PORT ADMINISTRATION

The basic objective of the administration of any organisation is to secure and deploy all the resources necessary and available for achieving the given task in such a way so as to maximise the cost-effectiveness and efficient use of the resources. Such a definition of administration necessarily presupposes unity of purpose, good planning and a goal-oriented deployment of resources in accordance with the plan. Over and above these purposes in the case of a public utility organisation like a port, the total benefit to the society being served by it should naturally be one of the overriding considerations in working out the cost benefit balance sheet. Chittagong port being the natural gateway for the external trade of Eastern Bengal and Assam should have been developed and administered in a way designed to bring optimum benefit to the economy of this area. But except for the years between 1905-1912, that is during the existence of the separate province of East Bengal and Assam, during the entire period under study Chittagong Port was treated merely as a feeder and subordinate port of Calcutta. Since in the scheme of things neither the Government of Bengal nor the Government of India perceived any more important role for Chittagong than that of a subordinate port, its administration suffered from a measure of neglect. The analysis that follows in this chapter serves to confirm that other considerations were given priority over the economic and social benefits which an efficient port of its own would have given to East Bengal and Assam and that sufficient importance was not accorded to the growth and proper administration of the Port of Chittagong. The fact that there was not a single study of the administration of the port during the whole period between 1890-1912 further goes to confirm the ignorance and neglect from which the administration of the Port suffered. There seems ample basis for

the observation made by Sir George Buchanan in 1918, "Under an administration such as has obtained for the last 25 years at Chittagong no port could flourish".¹

The first attempt to develop an administrative and policy making system for the port of Chittagong was taken in 1887 as a response to a sudden and almost accidental growth in the volume of trade passing through it, and took the form of the creation of a Port Trust under the Chittagong Port Commissioners Act of that year. Summarising the rationale for the establishment of a Port Trust the Municipal Department of the Government of Bengal wrote in 1885 "a Port Trust could provide proper towage and other conveniences for the port, . . . could acquire landed property and deal with other questions which are considered beyond the scope of a Government Department. It is therefore thought advisable to take measures for the establishment of a Port Trust".² After a false start in 1887 the Port Trust was lawfully constituted by Bengal Government notifications Nos. 35 and 36 Marine of 15 May 1888³ for the management of the affairs of the Port.⁴

- 1 Buchanan 16.
- 2 Govt. of Beng. Municipal Dept, to the Govt. of Beng. Legislative Dept. 21 December 1885, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept 1887, January-March, March 3-24.
- 3 W. C. to Govt. of Beng. 20 September 1886, Port Trust Proc, October 1889, K.W. Proc.
- 4 The first notification appointing the Commissioners, made on 7 September 1887, was not legal as the law itself did not come into force in the absence of a statutory notification (section I of Act IV B.C. of 1887, lays down that the Act shall come into force on such date as the Local Govt. may by notification direct it to bring into force Admin. Rept. Port Trust Proc, 1890, October 3-4. See also Beng. Leg. Council Debate 1886, 112, 115-120.

The Chittagong Port Commissioners Act of 1887 provided for nine Commissioners, six to be nominated by the local Government and three to be elected by a nominated electorate consisting of local firms nominated by the Bengal Government with the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council.¹ Commissioners served for a term of two years. During the deliberations prior to the establishment of the Port Trust, the Commissioner of Chittagong Division had written in 1884, "We cannot expect the smaller native merchants to take much interest in projects that are for the benefit of European Shipping".² He had correctly gauged both the priorities of the colonial power and the reactions of Indian firms: the Chittagong Port Trust inevitably developed as an instrument for the promotion and preservation of the interests of European shipping and commercial concerns. The composition of the first board of Commissioners emphasised the point: all six nominated members were Europeans, the three elected members were Indians.³ The composition of the board changed considerably over the years, in part because of the introduction of more officials into the group of nominated members, but the European dominance remained unchallenged and indeed was strengthened by changes in the electorate nominated by

- 1 Act No. IV of 1887 - The Chittagong Port Commissioners' Act 1887, Acts of the Legislative Council of the Lt. Gov. of Beng. 1887 to 1890, 18-19.
- 2 Comm. Chitt. Div.. to Govt. of Beng. 20 October 1884, Beng Mne Proc. 1887, March 3-20.
- 3 The first board of nominated Commissioners was formed of the following persons: (1) D. R. Lyall, Esquire (Divisional Commissioner, Chitt. Chairman, (2) E. Good, Vice-Chairman; (3) W. Warden, (4) J. L. Willcox, (5) C. Gairdner, (6) C. A. Mills. The elected Commissioners were, (7) Babu Nittyananda Ray, (8) Babu Durgadas Das, (9) Hajee Nasoo Malum. Bary, 1.

Government. The first electorate consisted of eleven firms¹ of which four were Hindu, four Muslim and three European firms. Such an electorate could not have been expected to and did not in fact return any European elected Commissioner. As a result the Lieutenant Governor made efforts to influence the voting pattern. He ordered that so far as was legal each section of the electors should be given the opportunity of selecting a representative, each elector being given a number of votes equal to the number of vacancies to be filled, which votes might be plumped all on one candidate or distributed. He further ordered that two of the six Government nominees should be Europeans, so long as two at least of the elected members were "natives".² Government's anxiety to promote European commercial interests in the administration of the port became even more obvious with the gradual introduction of more and more European firms into the extended list of electorates. By

- 1 (1) Messrs. Bulloch Brothers, rice exporter, and jute importer
 - (2) Messrs M. David & Co. jute exporter
 - (3) Messrs. Ralli Brothers, jute exporter
 - (4) Messrs Krist Das Kundu, salt importer, rice exporters and brig owners
 - (5) Babu Raj Chandra Sen - salt importers
 - (6) Messrs. Haji Masu Malum & Co, Rice exporter and brig owner
 - (7) Messrs. Essah Sali Mahamed & Sons, rice exporter
 - (8) Messrs Visram Ibrahim & Co, rice exporter and kerosese oil importers
 - (9) Babu Kristo Kumar Ghosal, salt importers and brig owner
 - (10) Messrs. Ram Kamal Ram Ballabh Saha, salt importers and general merchants
 - (11) Haji Abdul Malum, brig owners
- Comm. Chitt. Div. to Govt. of Beng. 9 May 1904, Beng. Proc. Mne 1904, June 70.
- 2 Comm. Chitt. Div. to Govt. of Beng. 6 January 1893, Beng. Proc. Mne 1893, January 46.

1904 out of the fourteen electors a majority were Europeans.¹
 Electorates were so successfully manipulated that in 1908 only one Indian member was elected.²

All six nominated members of the Trust were Europeans throughout the period under study.³ Initially one or more was taken from the European firms based at Chittagong but over the years the domination of Government Officials became more complete.

With the formation of the Port Trust in 1888 the Commissioners were gradually entrusted with the management of the different departments of the port, though the full application of the Act was delayed until 1889. Thus in April 1889 the Port Commissioners were appointed to

1 List of Electors

- (1) Messrs. Bulloch Brothers, rice and jute exporters
- (2) The British Indian Steam Navigation Co. Ltd.
- (3) The Burmah Oil Co.
- (4) Messrs. M. David & Co., jute exporter and salt importer
- (5) The Asiatic Steam Navigation Co.
- (6) Messrs. Ralli Brothers, jute, and cotton exporter
- (7) Messrs. Finlay Muir & Co., general merchant and shippers
- (8) The Clan Line Steamer Co.
- (9) The Planters' Stores and Agency Co., mercantile agents
- (10) Messrs. Krishna Das Nityananda Rai, salt importers and brig owners
- (11) Messrs. Ram Kamal Ram Ballabh Saha, salt importers and general merchants
- (12) Messrs. Krishna Kumar Ghosal & Co, salt importers and brig owners

2 The three elected members of the Port Trust were:

- (1) J. L. Brown, Esq., Manager, Messrs. Bulloch Brothers & Co.
- (2) A. R. Leishman, Esq. Agent Messrs. Finlay Muir & Co., Agent Clan Line
- (3) Babu Nil Krishna Roy, member of the firm of Messrs. Krishna Das Nityananda Roy, merchant - Notification by the Govt. of E. B. and Assam 27 July 1908 E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, Sep. 35.

3 Curiously enough initially Babu Nityanando Roy was made the Vice-President of the first Board, but for reasons that could not be discovered his appointment was declared nul and void on legal grounds. He was not included even among the ordinary nominated members. Keep with Office Note 1890, July - Port Trust Proc. 1890.

perform the duties of conservator of the port under Sec. 7 of Act X of 1889,¹ and in May they were given power under the same Act to collect and administer the port dues.² On 6 May 1889 they were further entrusted with the management of the Pilots and Pilotage Funds.³

In the discharge of these duties the Commissioners proved quite efficient. They effectively reduced the port dues - which had been higher than in any other port in India and therefore detrimental to the interest of the trade of the port of Chittagong. They also compelled the Local Government to make a larger contribution from the Pilotage Fund to the Port Fund,⁴ and as conservators secured the financial help of the Imperial Government for dredging the river Karnaphuli and carrying out revetment works.⁵ Nevertheless, since many of the members represented commercial firms whose interests at times clashed with the larger interests of the port, at the end of the day it was the port that suffered materially.

Moreover, the authority given to the Port Commissioners was very limited. Sir George Buchanan, in his 1918 report on the development of the port of Chittagong notes "The policy of Port Administration adopted in India is similar to that in other parts of the Empire, viz, the creation of corporate bodies with functions and powers granted

1 Admin Dept. 1901-02, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1902, November 52.
- Footnote - It is significant to note here that the full operation of the law was delayed by one year and during this period the Port Trust could not be fully operational.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Discussed later on in the chapter.

5 See Chapter V

by legislation, who are permitted to work out their own salvation,"¹ But that salvation in practice was a narrowly circumscribed one. The legislation from which the Chittagong Port Trust derived most of its powers and functions was not very conducive to the rapid development and efficient administration of the Port. The Chittagong Port Commissioners Act of 1887, which created the Port Trust for the management of the affairs of the port, gave only limited powers to the Commissioner while placing the Trust under the dual administrative and financial control of the Government of India and the Government of Bengal (or for a while in 1906-1912 the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam). Thus according to section 66 of the Act the Port Commissioner's could undertake new works only up to a limit of Rs, 5,000. For estimated costs exceeding Rs 5,000 the work could not be undertaken without the prior sanction of the Local Government and where the estimate exceeded Rs 10,000 the work could not be commenced without previous sanction of the Government of India.² Under Sec.5, three of the nine Port Commissioners were elected, but the Local Government required the previous sanction of the Governor General in Council in appointing the electoral body, which thus suffered from a double measure of official control. Every change in the electorate due to resignation or other causes needed to be approved by the Governor General, yet the Government of India being so remote was not likely to have detailed information either about the aptitudes of candidates or of the special needs of the port and its administration. Without any close understanding of what was a minor port the Government's intervention could contribute little positive while ensuring financial uncertainty and inevitable delay. Similarly, the local Government also exercised certain powers which it seems could

1 Buchanan 2.

2 Rules, Bye-laws, Regulations and Notification Relating to the Port of Chittagong - 1896 - 33, see also Port. Comms. Act 1887, 39.

only retard the development and hindered the day to day administration of the port. The Port Commissioners were precluded by Sec. 62 from employing any servant (except artisans, porters and labourers) without the previous sanction of the Local Government.¹ Under Sec. 12 previous sanction of the Local Government was required to purchase, sell or lease any movable or immovable property.² All acts and proceedings of the Commissions were subject to the approval of the Local Government who could cancel, suspend or modify any act or proceeding.³ All these restrictive provisions reflect adversely on the confidence of the Government in the ability and competence of the Port Trust. Such refusal to delegate power and authority to a body directly in charge of the administration of the Port must obviously have hindered the administrative initiatives and development plans of the Port Trust.

Thus the delay in sanctioning the construction of the first jetty was attributed by the Assam Bengal Railway to "the custom of consulting the Local Government", and "the delays that ensued before the Local Government could be induced to recommend the construction of new works".⁴ In similar vein, after a jetty fire in December 1907 the joint enquiry noted that delay in setting up fire prevention arrangements was "largely due to the number of authorities who have to be consulted before any work can be undertaken".⁵

1 Port Comms. Act 1887, 38.

2 Ibid. 21

3 Ibid. 34.

4 Agent A. B. Rly to Comm. Chitt. Divi. 5 February 1904, Curzon Collection, B. 302.

5 Port Comms. Memorandum on the Chitt. Jetty Fire of 24 December 1907, 20 January 1908, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February, 52.

How the financial and administrative constraints imposed by a double layer of government controls acted to discourage initiative and delay improvement is splendidly demonstrated in the history of the construction of jetties for the port. Docks or jetties are one of the most important if not the most important element in the effective working of any modern port - an integral part of any port's facilities. Yet Chittagong, during the period under study, provided an astonishing example of a port authority operating without any jetty of its own capable of accommodating ocean going steamships, having been forced, by Government inaction to give away under various constraints those rights to acquire, construct and administer jetties on foreshore areas under its legal jurisdiction which the 1887 Act had granted to the Port Commissioners. How little importance was attributed to the provision of the jetties for the port of Chittagong by the authorities either of the Government of India or of the Government of Bengal is clear from the fact that construction of even one jetty was not undertaken for many years after the formation of the Port Trust and even then, as has been seen, it was the Assam Bengal Railway Company which had to point out the need. Astonishingly, in 1895, when the line connecting Chittagong with Chandpur had been opened, "no land for jetties at the port had been acquired, nor had any jetties been sanctioned".¹ The effect of this was that Chittagong did not start operating as a port for regular ocean-going steamers till the beginning of the twentieth century.

Then, when the need for at least one jetty was recognised - the first jetty was sanctioned in 1897² - delay in starting work was

- 1 The Agent A. B. Rly to Comms. Chitt. Divi. 5 February 1904, Curzon Collection B. 302.
- 2 Agent A. B. Rly to Board - 6 May 1898, Board's Letters to Agent 1898, A. 211.

compounded by Government's refusal to make the necessary financial advances to the Port Commissioners so that in 1903 work on and administration of the jetties had to be transferred to the Assam Bengal Railway company. Though the Railway strongly disputed this, there were obvious disadvantages in handing over the management of the only jetties which were capable of handling ocean-going vessels to one of the users of the port's facilities, that is the Assam Bengal Railway. For as Messrs. F. G. Dumayne and F. Palmer, Vice-Chairman and Chief Engineer respectively of the Calcutta Port Trust, said in their report in 1905, the port Commissioners ought to have had "the whole management of the Port... because consideration has to be given to the requirements of traffic in general, and while the Railway Company may be deeply interested in rail borne traffic, the Commissioners have in addition to foster and develop the water-borne traffic".¹ The interests of the Railway and those of the Port were not necessarily co-terminous and it was therefore very much on the cards that the administration of the jetties by the Railway would not serve the best interests of the Port and its other users. In fact that was not intended. Apparently the basic consideration that led the Government of India to hand over the administration of the jetties to the Railway was their anxiety to ensure the recovery of the very large investments they had made in the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway system. The Railway management took advantage of this anxiety to secure and maintain their own administration of the jetties, to the detriment of the general interests of the port.² The real objective of the Railway in claiming

1 Report by Messrs. F. G. Dumayne and F. Palmer, Vice-Chairman and Chief Engineer to the Calcutta Port Trust on the Proposals for extending the Jetty Accommodation at the Port of Chittagong for Ocean-going Steamers 1905, para. 42.

2 As an example we find that when a proposal was made for a coastal shipping jetty at Sadarghat the Railway Company expressed its opposition to "any cargo jetty not part of and controlled by itself" - For detail see Chapter V. Though the net earnings of the Railway increased from a deficit of Rs 8047 in 1895 to a surplus of Rs 17, 29, 637 in 1912 the profits were never sufficient to pay the Government guaranteed interest of 3 per cent on the capital subscribed by the Railway Company (£1, 500, 000). This may probably be attributed to the absence of a bridge over the River Meghna and to the fact that during this period not all the branches of the Railway were opened.

a continued hold on the administration of the jetties was revealed during the consideration of its proposal submitted in 1906 for stimulating coastal trade between Chittagong and Calcutta. The Assam Bengal Railway, the Calcutta Port Trust and the coasting steamer companies were all in favour of the scheme,¹ though this would divert attention and resources away from the development of Chittagong as an ocean terminal. The Port Commissioners very properly made the point that, "for the sake of some present gain to the Assam-Bengal Railway Company and to those engaged in the coasting traffic (we) are not prepared to do anything to jeopardise the future trade of this port, so that it may be a mere auxillary to the port of Calcutta".² But their view went unheeded by the Railway Company. Moreover management of the jetties by the Railway was seen in practice to favour a particular shipping line to the exclusion of others and to that extent the trade of Chittagong port seems to have been adversely affected. The Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong observed in 1906, "At present one line, the Clan Line, practically has preference for one jetty berth and other liners will not come for jute if they have to take their chance of waiting out in the stream".³ Continued allegations during this period by various other agencies⁴ tend to confirm the suggestion of a special relationship between the Railway and the Clan Line which apparently adversely affected the general interest of the Port. The Agent of the Assam Bengal Railway in his capacity as a member of the Port Trust was reluctant to admit other lines of steamers on the same basis as the Clan Line.⁵ The Port Commissioners in para 11(b) of the minutes

- 1 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E. B. A. 7 May 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, April 36.
- 2 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E. B. A. 7 May 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, April 36.
- 3 Comm. Chitt. Div. to Govt. of E. B. A. 31 January 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, August 16.
- 4 American Shipping lines, Resolution of Port Comms. and letters of the Govt. of Eastern Bengal and Assam. E. B. A. Proc PWD Mne 1908, May 12-14.
- 5 A. B. Rly to the Managing Director, A. B. Rly London, 19 June 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1908, May 6.

of their 226th meeting recorded in 1907, "the Agents of the American and Indian line who ship between 20 and 25 per cent of the jute exported from Chittagong, complain of the delays caused by excluding their vessels from the jetties, though there is cargo ready for them in the sheds, in favour of other vessels for which there is little or no cargo".¹ It was felt by other prospective liner firms "that unless arrangements were improved most of the American cargo would be shipped from Calcutta."² By transferring the management of the jetties to the Railway the Government of India completely reversed their earlier policy and damagingly divided the overall management of the Port of Chittagong. The role of the Port Trust was reduced practically to that of an agency required to provide limited services like maintaining the navigable channel and providing other navigational facilities.³ With the sole management of the jetties the Railway had monopolistic control over the volume, content and direction of the overseas trade from Chittagong and appeared to have used it largely to foster its own limited commercial interests. The Port Trust was left to manage the iron jetty at Sadar Ghat and some small salt jetties up river, with consequent partial influence on coastal and inland trade. But the use of even these jetties was not compulsory so that some coastal shipping companies remained outside the effective control of the Port Trust in landing and loading goods. It is obvious that the Port Trust had very little administrative influence over the growth or direction of either trade.

The Port Trust was directly under the Local Government and in certain matters the decision of the Government of India was also

- 1 Memorandum - by Agent A. B. Rly attached to letter dated 9 April 1907 to Board, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, May 6.
- 2 Chmn Port Comms. to Agent, A. B. Rly 22 July 1907, E. B. A. Proc. 1908, May 12.
- 3 Buchanan 16.

necessary. On the other hand the Railway was under the direction of the Agent in India for the Company in London and under the final control of the Government of India exercised in part through their consulting engineer. The management of the jetties was a major element in the overall pattern of the port administration yet the final result of the Government of India's policy was to prevent any single authority assuming the responsibility for planning the operation of the port and to subject the Port Trust and Railway to control by two governments which did not always see eye to eye on policy. Indeed after the creation of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam it was often the case that the Port Trust and the Local Government were in direct conflict with the Railway Company and the Government of India over the administrative control of the port. No arrangement could have been more damaging. A good example of the conflict and confusion which ensued is provided by the debate involving the right of the Railway Company to alter the rate of jetty dues or to grant a monopoly right of use of the jetty to a particular shipping line. The Port Commissioners objected to the changes made in the jetty charge for the handling of tea introduced by the Company in May 1907 and insisted that they had a right to be "notified of any proposed change of either rules for control or rates for charges at the jetty".¹ Dwelling on this theme the Vice-Chairman of the Port Trust wrote, "the Port Commissioners desire to be consulted beforehand on all questions involving change of management of the jetties, in which they have a residual interest and in the effective working of which they are as the Port Trust, immediately interested".² V. Woods the agent of the Assam Bengal Railway rejected the assertion that Port Trust had any right to be "consulted beforehand" and in favour of his interpretation of the

1 Vice-Chmn. Port Comms. Chitt. to Agent A. B. Rly, 31 May 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, May 7.

2 Ibid.

formal position he quoted the Government of India's letter No. 01RC dated 27 March 1903.¹ This in paragraph 4 stated that the control of the jetties passed entirely from the Port Trust to the Railway, and that being so, he argued, the power to fix and revise rates for the future use of the jetties and their accessories could no longer be exercised by the Port Trust, but devolved on the railway, subject to the control of the Consulting Engineer. This complete severance of the jetties from the control of the Port Trust, as the Government of India had pointed out, appeared to be essential to their efficient working, which any dual control would tend to hamper.² To this it might be replied that the interest of the Port Trust in the jetties had not been completely excluded by the Government of India's letter for that laid down under what circumstances the Trust was entitled to resume control of the jetties and the Trust also had a claim to the surplus profit from the jetties after 4 per cent interest on the capital cost had been earned.

The Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam supported the interpretation of the Port Trust and in a letter addressed to the Railway Board explained that it was important to maintain a balance between the two conflicting interests in the development of the Chittagong port. The local Government also required the Railway Board to "refrain from taking action in such matters without the prior approval of the Government".³ However, as already stated the Port Trust was not able to regain the control of the jetties, the Government of India pronouncing against them.

1 See Chapter III

2 Agent A. B. Rly, to Chmn Port Comms. 10 June 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1908, May 7.

3 Govt. of E. B. A. to Rly Board, 11 June 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1908, May 4.

The legal and administrative confusion created by the Government of India in 1903 by transferring the management of the two jetties for ocean-ships to the Railway Company was further confounded in 1905. A question then arose regarding the applicability of Port laws and bye-laws in respect of those jetties which in practice had become the private jetties of the Railway Company. In order to enable the Railway Company to levy tolls and fees for the use of the jetty and to have legal control over the ships alongside their jetties the Government of Bengal by their notification No. 41 (Marine) of 31 March 1905, excluded those jetties and surrounding waters from the operation of the Ports Act.¹ The legality of this transfer of jurisdiction became a matter of controversy and finally the Government of India admitted in 1909 that, "the legality of the transfer of the jetties to the Railway Company has been brought to the notice of the Government of India. The Government of India understands that counsel, whose opinion was obtained in this matter by the solicitors to the Railway Company, have advised that the land on which these jetties are constructed cannot be divested from the Port Commissioners by a notification altering Port limits, that the jetties consequently remain vested in the Port Commissioners and that the rights of property conferred on the Port Commissioners can only be transferred to the Railway Company by fresh legislations".² Therefore it is seen that while amending the Chittagong Port Act of 1887 in 1914, the Government of India by the Chittagong Port Act of 1914 legalized the transfer of the jetties to the Assam Bengal Railway Company.³

One thing is quite clear at this point that the working relationships between the Port Trust and the Railway Company were none too

- 1 Note by Vice-Chmn. Port Comms. on the Railway Terminal Jetties at Chitt. 27 January 1910, Beng. Proc. Mne 1912, (enclosure) April 24.
- 2 Govt. of India to Govt. of E. B. A. 20 August 1909, Beng. Proc. Mne 1912, April 21.
- 3 Bary - 7.

happy both at the policy and the field level. The Railway Agent, in his capacity as a Commissioner of the Port Trust, was in a particularly ambivalent position, torn between the interests of the Port and those of the Railway. The continued tension between the Port Trust and Railway Company, reflected inter alia in the tug of war between the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam and the Government of India, could scarcely help to establish efficient and beneficial administrative arrangements at the Port of Chittagong.

The day to day administrative arrangements of the port, like the longer term policy making previously discussed, were much bedevilled by the division of authority between the Port Trust, responsible for the conservancy of the river and movement of shipping, and the Railway Company in charge of the jetties of ocean going vessels and the foreshore facilities. They were also seriously hampered by the presence on the Port Trust board of so many members who could not devote much time and energy to its affairs. The Chairman of the body of Port Commissioners who were responsible for the running of the Port Trust was the Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong, a man, the multifarious nature of whose work demanded that the day to day administration of the port be left to someone else. Under such circumstances the man who had the most say in the everyday administration of the Port was the Port Officer.

Prior to the formation of the Port Trust in 1888 the administrative work of the port of Chittagong was carried out by an officer who

1 Buchanan, 15.

was both Customs Collector and Port Officer.¹ Afterwards he was given an assistant, who was his assistant in both capacities.² In 1879 the two appointments were separated. A certain Mr. Warden was appointed as Customs Collector and Shipping Master and E. Good as Port Officer and Registrar of Shipping.³ With the formation of the Port Trust a good many of the duties of the Port Officer were taken from him,⁴ and in November 1887 the Chairman of the Commissioners of the Port of Chittagong therefore proposed to the Government that the Port Officer should henceforth also be appointed an Officer of the Port Trust. He pointed out that there was not work enough for a Port Officer and a working Vice-Chairman and he urged therefore that both posts should be held by one man.⁵ In 1889 Good, the Port Officer was duly appointed Vice-Chairman of the Port Commissioners.⁶ However, with the increase in the trade of the port it was found necessary, the retirement of Good in 1898 providing the occasion, to separate the two posts, the District Magistrate thenceforth being appointed ex-officio as Vice-Chairman.⁷ Ten years later, in 1908 the Government of India, recognising the growing importance of the port sanctioned the reservation of the post of Port Officer for officers of the Royal Indian Marine. The appointment was classed as a 4th class port appointment to be ordinarily held by a third grade Commander.⁸

1 Ordinary Meeting of the Port Comms. 7 June 1888, Port Trust Proc. 1890, K.W. January 1.

2 Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 9 November 1887, Port Trust Proc. 1888, K.W. September.

6 W. B. B. to Joint Sec. 13 April 1889, Port Trust Proc. 1889, K.W. July.

7 Bary 1.

8 Chmn. Port Trust to Govt. of E. B. A. 6 June 1908, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, May 1.

As no adverse criticism was directed against the Port Officers during the period under study it can be assumed that they were efficient in their work.

The Port Officer was in charge of the establishment of pilots who were responsible for handling inward and outward bound vessels, for notifying the customs inspectors if ships were from dutiable ports and the Port Officer if there was epidemic disease abroad. The pilot was also responsible for seeing that no vessel went to sea without an order signed by the Port Officer and custom clearance.¹ Prior to 1880 the pilot establishment of Chittagong consisted of seven Indian pilots and one apprentice.² The pay of the pilots being very poor³ it did not attract very efficient men. With the growth of the port need began to be felt for more efficient pilots. In 1879 it was therefore resolved by the Commissioner that in order to improve the efficiency of the pilotage European or Eurasian pilots should be appointed and that to secure a better class of Indian pilots, a better scale of pay than was being paid should be offered.⁴ That year therefore a European or Eurasian pilot on a pay of Rs 150 a month and an increased scale of pay for the Indian pilots whose number was reduced to six with two apprentice was sanctioned. The total cost of the establishment under the revised scale was Rs 475.⁵

1 Rules, Bye-Laws, Regulations and Notification relating to the Port of Chittagong - 1896, 'Rules for Pilots in the Port of Chitt. as sanctioned by the Noti. of the Govt. of Bengal General Mne Dept. 31 October 1884, amended by Noti. No.35. Mne, 18 March 1889.

2 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 12 March 1886, Beng. Proc. Mne 1887 January-March, February 3-8.

3 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 12 March 1886, Beng. Municipal Proc. Mne, 1887, January-March, February 3-8. 3 Pilots at Rs 40, 4 Pilots at Rs 30, 2 apprentice at Rs 15, total Rs 255.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

In 1905-06 in order to provide appointments carrying sufficient pay to attract Europeans the services of Harbour masters and Pilots were combined.¹ Previously there had been one European Pilot doing the work of Pilot and Harbour Master.² By 1912 there were three European Pilot-cum-Harbour Masters.³ Thus during the period under study the pilotage administration was strengthened and re-organised.

Before 1905 the port of Chittagong was without an engineer of its own, and as a result whenever necessary the Assam Bengal Railway provided necessary assistance. The visit of Lord Curzon and his financial help infused new hope for the future of the Port and in April 1905 J. R. Bell (a retired P. W. D. Officer) was appointed consulting Engineer to the Port. In March of that year moreover, a Mr. Blabers was appointed as the Port Engineer. Previously Blabers had been an Executive Engineer 3rd grade in the Public Works Department.⁴ Soon the need began to be felt for an acting Engineer and in 1907 A. O. Drehler was appointed on a temporary basis.⁵ The port engineer of Chittagong was appointed to manage "the works of improvement" and was mainly concerned with the revetment and dredging operations.⁶ The Port Officer however was in administrative charge of the dredger and all returns of work done went from the Port Engineer to him. The programme of work of the dredger was laid down by the Port Commissioners at each monthly meeting.⁷ The dredger was worked by a European crew.⁸

- 1 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E. B. A. 21 September 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne , 1908, July 4.
- 2 Chmn. Port. Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 19 May 1904, Beng. Proc. Mne 1904, June 27.
- 3 Admin. Dept. 1911-12, Beng. Proc. Mne , 1912, September 26-30.
- 4 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E. B. A. 30 August 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne , 1908, April 52.
- 5 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E. B. A. 19 January 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, April 58.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting 10 April 1907, OMPC, 1907.
- 8 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt of E. B. A. 30 August 1907, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, August 28.

Those areas of port administration which were the sole concern of the Port Officer seem to have been handled with fair efficiency but the management of the jetties by the Assam Bengal Railway Company left much to be desired. The Assam Bengal Railway Company, like the other railway companies in India, was till 1905 under the Railway Branch of the Central Public Works Department. From that year the Railway Branch was replaced by a Railway Board, "a body of practical businessmen entrusted with full authority to manage the railways of India on commercial principles".¹ The man at Chittagong who was under the Board of Directors of the Assam Bengal Railway Company at London was their Agent. The Agent for the Railway was a Commissioner of the Chittagong Port Trust, but in administering the jetties from day to day the authority was delegated to a Jetty Superintendent, with his assistant, appointed by the Railway. Other officials so appointed were the hydraulic machinery foreman, the shed officer, the chief clerks, the tally clerk, the watchmen and the shunting staff. In addition there was also an assistant engineer who was in charge of jetty construction and repairs.²

The administration of the port of Chittagong by the Railway Company showed a marked want of administrative capacity.³ The authorities

1 G.S. Khosla, Railway Management in India 15-17.

2 To be found in the February proceedings of 1909. E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne., 1909. The duties of the assistant Jetty Superintendent was to exercise general outdoor superintendence. The shed officers were subordinate to him but worked independent of one another. Previously, their job was done by a Jetty Foreman who controlled all the outdoor staff. The foreman was replaced by two shed officers in 1907.

3 This was due to a certain extent to the number of authorities who as already noted had to be consulted before any work could be carried out. Thus as G.S. Khosla pointed out, "the centralisation of control... resulted in a growing tendency towards greater bureaucratic and departmental administration and even trivial matters were referred to Government. Cases of differences from the Central Secretariat and the Railway administration, went up to the Viceroy. All this resulted in marked deterioration and delay in the disposal of important matters and the administrative machinery was clogged by unnecessary attention to minor details". Khosla 16. See also J.N. Sahni, Indian Railways 100 Years, 1853-1953, 29.

seemed too preoccupied with getting control of the jetties and other privileges to appreciate the need for proper day to day administration. There were thus apparently no formal rules or regulations to cover the appointment and employment of jetty staff,¹ it being generally left to the Jetty Superintendent to select and appoint men of his choice. Under these circumstances a great deal depended upon the character and quality of the Superintendent, and it is apparent that one choice of Superintendent at least was very ill advised - that of W. W. Robinson who took office in 1907.² Robinson was an irresponsible and headstrong officer who seemed more interested in hunting than looking after the administration of the jetty. After his appointment two fires broke out at the jetties, one in October, the other in December 1907. On both occasions Robinson was away hunting. At the time of the third fire by what was surely more than coincidence, he had gone away to hunt without informing anyone, even though he knew that the assistant jetty superintendent was away on leave. Excusing his action at the time of the enquiry he stated that he had not informed anybody as he had not been able to make up his mind about going till the last minute.³ The enquiry revealed that on his appointment his first step had been to discharge all the existing staff on one charge or another,⁴ - the men discharged being Hindustani up country men.⁵ He then had Mukund Singh who had served under him at the docks in Calcutta, pick up a staff of darwans in Calcutta,⁶ most of whom, it appeared, had been deserters from the Patiala battalion returning to the Punjab.⁷ Later many of

1 Finding of the Joint Enquiry on the jetty fires held on the 28-30 December and 2, 4 January, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 60.

2 Ibid.

3. Ibid. W. W. Robinson's Evidence

4 Port Comms. Memorandum on the Chitt. Jetty Fire of 24 December 1907, 20 January 1908, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 52.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

these darwans were found to have been involved in illicit activities in league with local bastiwalas or slum dwellers.¹ What is apparent is that no senior railway official had made any check of Robinson's activities or of the men he was recruiting. Robinson in his evidence stated that it was the general practice at the port of Chittagong to get the jemedars or labour foreman to pick up the darwans needed.² What is certain is that the Company had no system of records of addresses or references for their darwans.³

Once recruited the darwans were slackly controlled and supervised in their work as gate and door keepers on the jetties. There were no such printed schedules of duties and responsibilities of the shed officers at Chittagong such as were used in the port of Calcutta. When asked about this the shed officer replied, "I understood my duties to be the same as in Calcutta". One of those duties, however, was that of seeing personally to the opening and locking of the doors of the sheds. The investigation of the third fire of 24 December 1907 showed however that the shed doors had not been locked. Moreover Robinson in his evidence stated that he had passed no orders as to the custody of the keys and that the keys were kept in the office, but no check was exercised over the number of keys brought in by the darwans.⁴ When there was night work an officer was always present,⁵ and the Jetty Superintendent also went around the jetties at such times.⁶ There was however no check on the night watchmen by a superior officer.⁷

1 Port Comms. Memorandum on the Chitt. Jetty Fire of 24 December 1907, 20 January 1900 E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 52.

2 Ibid.

3 Report of J. T. R. Carnac, Deputy Inspector General of Police, 17 May 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1909, February 76.

4 Finding of a Joint Enquiry on the Jetty fires, 1907 - Robinson's Evidence (recalled), 2 January 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 6.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

It might be argued that the Railway Company were just unlucky in their choice of Robinson, who certainly at this distance appears to have been a complete rogue. But no one in the Company seems to have been surprised or to have felt any need for an investigation of Robinson's curious knack of being out hunting whenever a fire broke out. Nor did anyone in the Company seem to have felt any urgency in improving fire precautions on the jetties. No attempt was made to install unclimbable fences round the sheds or to supply proper fire fighting apparatus.¹ Nor, it seems, was much attention paid to the evidence that the first fire had been deliberately started. The Englishman on 14 October 1907 stated in its editorial, "The line of fire was far too systematic to suggest an accident, and I understand that an anonymous letter had been received some months back threatening the destruction of the jetties",² - yet neither after this fire, nor that of December was any police enquiry instituted by the Railway Company. The Commissioner of Chittagong Division, if a hostile was not an unfair critic when, after the third fire he declared, "if the management was not able within 14 months to arrange somehow for the putting up of an unclimbable fencing round the sheds abutting on three continuous jetty berths, a work which a Calcutta firm would have carried out in about three months, the management is admittedly not efficient".³

The jetty fires caused considerable destruction to property and, "retarded temporarily the development of the trade of the port". Confidence must certainly have been destroyed as well as property, for the police investigation after the third fire revealed "organised

1 See Chapter V.

2 Big Blaze at Chittagong, The Englishman October 14, 1907,

3 Comms. Chitt. Divi to Govt. of E. B. A. 23 May 1908, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 74.

fraudulent misappropriation of the Company's jute" in which the Railway's employees had been involved, and which found that the second and third fires had been deliberately started to conceal shortage of stock in the shed. One welcome outcome of the third fire and subsequent enquiries however, was that the Company was jolted from its lethargy. In 1908 the Agent Assam Bengal Railway informed the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam that, "the superior staff and to a large extent the subordinate staff, at the jetties have been reconstituted and increased".¹ By 1910 steps had also been taken to further strengthen the administration by framing new rules for the jetty.²

The other major consequence of the series of fires was that a radical overhaul of the policing of the port was set in motion. The free flow of trade either by land or water demanded a police force capable of giving protection to the traders in the province. In Eastern Bengal and Assam the general police force, as R. Nathan explained, was not only "inadequate and ill organised" but "its strength was far below that which was considered necessary in other provinces of India".³ As a result there was great disturbance to trade particularly that borne by the waterways. As has already been mentioned,⁴ "dacoities and robbery on the rivers of the Lower Provinces had been endemic from time immemorial" but "it was not until the twentieth century that a serious and sustained effort was made to tackle this evil".⁵ Police reports⁶ and reports of

1 Agent A. B. Rly to Govt. of E. B. A. 30 July 1908, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1909, February 79.

2 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting 10 July 1910, OMPC 1910.

3 E. B. A. Revised Financial Statement 1911-12, Revenue & Expenditure -Police explained by R. Nathan 13 March 1911, E. B. A. Proc. Legis. 1911, 37.

4 See Chapter II.

5 Sir Percival Griffiths, To Guard My People, The History of the Indian Police, 392.

6 Conference of police officers in December 1900. Report of Inspector Amdad Ali 1902. Bramleys Report 1904.

Police Commissions of 1902 continuously pointed out this danger to trade but it was not till 1911¹ that a system of river police was approved.² by the Secretary of State and brought into operation. Although the River Police which was thus introduced was effective in making trade comparatively safe - the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division reported in 1913, "no cases of river dacoity were reported... and that theft decreased"³ - its jurisdiction did not extend to Chittagong District. Just why was explained by E. C. S. Baker: "The district of Chittagong is bounded on the west coast by the Sandip channel which is practically open sea and is beyond any River Police jurisdiction. In the interior of the Chittagong district, with the exception of the Feni river which forms its northern boundary and has already been dealt with in considering the needs of Noakhali, there remain only two rivers of any importance, the Karnafuli and Sangoo. Neither of these rivers require to be brought under the River Police. Crime is practically non-existent upon any portion of them, and their size and character are such that they can be easily controlled by the District Police".⁴ In Chittagong therefore, beside the District and Town police and the Railway Police the only special police force in existence was the Port Police.

1 Griffiths 392.

2 Ibid. 394. Under the scheme twenty-seven thanas were to open and a force of 342 officers and men with 36 launches were to be employed. The main feature of the scheme was a series of floating thanas. Its operations were eventually to include all the principal waterways of the province from Dhubri to the Bay and from the Bengal boarder to the east of Sylhet. The whole system was to be under the Superintendent of Police whose headquarters were to be at Narayanganj - Admin. Beng. 1911-12, 160. Admin. Beng. 1912-13, 17.

3 Admin. Beng. 1913-14, 16.

4 Report on the proposal of a River Police force in Eastern Bengal and Assam by F. C. Stuart Baker, Deputy Inspector General of Police in charge of the Criminal Investigation Dept and Railway and River Police. 10 July 1909, E. B. A. Proc. Judicial Dept - Police, 1910, October-November, November 23.

From the foundation of the Port Trust in 1888 till 1907 the Port Police consisted of one European constable¹ under the control of the District Superintendent of Police.² Though he was paid from the Port Fund his boat and crew of four men were paid by the police department. There was an understanding however that in case of need the District and Town Police would give assistance.³ In 1906, the Port Commissioners took up the question of reorganising the Port Police without waiting for the general reorganisation of the River Police of the Province as a whole to come into effect.⁴ By 16 September 1907 they had secured the sanction of the Local Government for an increase in strength of the Port Police to two sub-Inspectors, one European constable, six Indian constables and a steam launch with a crew of five men.⁵ The jurisdiction of this Port Police was confined to the river Karnaphuli and the foreshore and did not extend to the railway terminal jetties which were under the Railway Police.⁶ Proceedings of a meeting of the Port Commissioners of 16 December 1910 approving a definition of the jurisdiction of the Port Police which included the warehouses and jetties suggest however, that the Port Police had taken over control from the Railway Police, except for the Double Mooring station which was reserved to them.⁷

- 1 Rept. of the Committee appointed to enquire into the state of the Rly and Dist. Police at Chitt. and to suggest improved arrangements 14 March 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 75.
- 2 Comm. Chitt. Divi. to Comms. Port Trust, 3 February 1888, Port Trust Proc. 1888, February 24-25, K. W.
- 3 Rept of the Cttee. on the Rly and Dist. Police at Chitt. 14 March 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1909, February 75.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Rept of the Cttee. on the Rly and Dist. Police at Chitt. 14 March 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1909, February 75.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting 16 December 1910, OMPC 1910, 625.

In the Autumn of 1912, after the annulment of the partition of Bengal the Government of Bengal ordered a drastic reduction in the Port Police force¹ exhibiting another example of the seemingly deliberate destruction by that Government of all that had been achieved under the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam.

The Railway Police at the time of the constitution of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, in October 1905, consisted of one Inspector, two sub-Inspectors eleven head constables, and forty seven constables.² In August 1907 the Local Government with the concurrence of the Agent Assam Bengal Railway, sanctioned an increase to the full cadre allowable under the Secretary of State's previous orders. Accordingly the force was increased to two Inspectors, eight Sub-Inspectors, eighteen head constables and seventy constables.³ Before this increase the Chittagong Railway Police thana which was under the Railway Police, had consisted of one Inspector and four constables. The number of cases handled by this small force was excessive, especially as besides the local cases of which criminal information was lodged at the thana they had to deal with cases reported from the rest of the thana up to Hinguli.⁴ As a result it was found that in 1907 out of 178 investigations only two had resulted in a conviction while twenty four cases were still pending final disposal in March 1908.⁵ In 1907 when the increase in the Railway Police was sanctioned the

1 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting 11 October 1912, OMPC 1912, 102.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Rept. of the Committee on the Rly and Dist. Police at Chitt. 14 March 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1909, February 75.

Chittagong section was rather more than doubled. The jurisdiction of this thana included the terminal jetties and extended to Hinguli, 43 miles above Chittagong.¹ It included the railway lines except the Strand Road sidings which was under the District Police.² Even this force however did not prove sufficient to deal with the law and order situation at the jetties. In 1908 therefore it is found that as a result of widespread crime on the waterways, repeated complaints by the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Indian Merchants Association regarding the state of law and order, and the three great fires on the railway jetties several investigations took place into police administration of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam.³ These investigations revealed that the police administration required total overhauling, that the railway employees were in collusion with local people in carrying out theft, and that the existing condition of the Port encouraged theft. J. T. R. Carnac the Deputy Inspector General of Police, believed that there was an, "organised fraudulent misappropriation of the Railway company's goods and that its employees were in collusion with the local people in carrying out theft." In his report he argued that the fires had been an attempt to conceal shortages in the goods in their care. He believed that the jute stolen, other than that which was broken up and disposed of locally in and around Chittagong, was sent back by brig or country boat or by other means to Chandpur and was there resold and shipped to Calcutta for export.⁴ Similarly "tea so stolen was sent by Baksi Bazar firms to Dacca and elsewhere, while other consignments, undoubtedly from the same source, were sent to Rangoon by other receivers".⁵ Such an unfortunate situation

- 1 Rept. of the Cttee. on the Rly and Dist. Police at Chitt. 14 March 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, February 75.
- 2 Joint Enquiry on Jetty fires E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1909. February 60.
- 3 J. T. R. Carnac's Rept., E. C. Stuart Baker's Rept., Rept. of the Committee, 1908.
- 4 Rept. of J. T. R. Carnacs - Dept. Inspector General of Police, 17 May 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne, 1909, February 76.
- 5 Ibid.

was due mainly to the fact that the Railway Police was terribly understaffed and because there was no fixed rule for employing the railway servants, whose antecedents were not verified. In such a situation it was just too tempting for the dishonest employees that the jetty yard was neither properly fenced nor guarded. Most of the cases of dishonest short loading appear to have been from the Strand Road sidings and this was again due to the fact that there was no proper station or shed at the Strand Road.¹

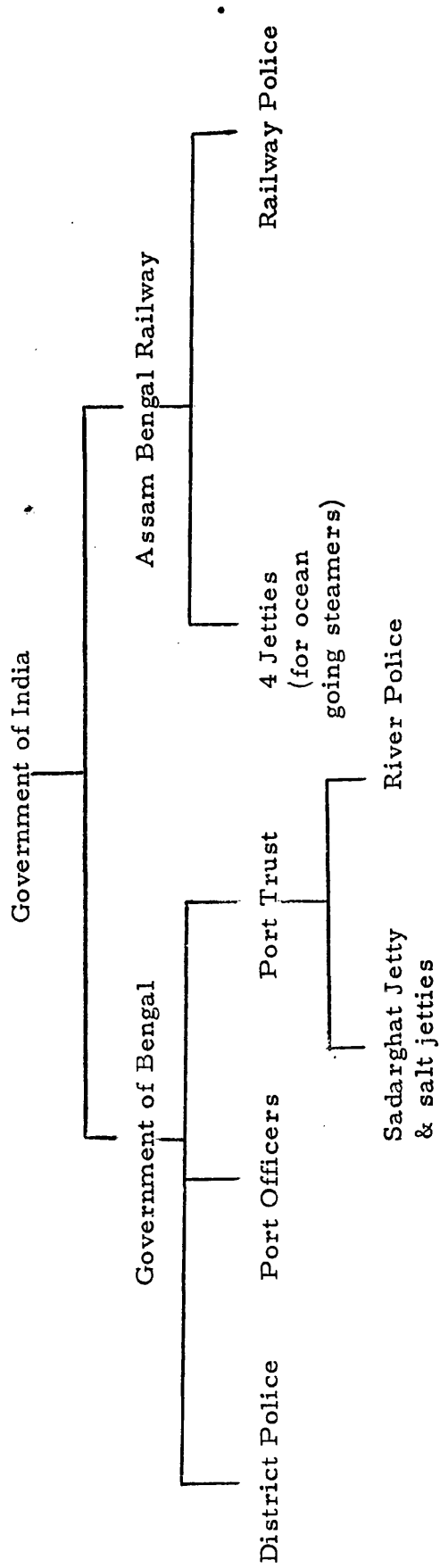
In August 1908 to remedy this state of affairs the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam sanctioned an extensive addition to staff of the Assam Bengal Railway Police.² According to it a second inspector who was to be in charge of the line north of Hinguli was appointed, as was also appointed a special Sub-Inspector to conduct the prosecutions in Railway cases. In view of the great development of the trade of the port an independent outpost at the jetties with a staff of one Sub-Inspector, one head constable and six constables was also established.³ In addition the Railway authorities on their part also took measures to prevent and discourage thefts from the trains and the jetties. From that year wagons loaded with goods were provided with locks and trains were not run on the port line after dusk, except when absolutely necessary. The jetties were also safeguarded by the erection of a fence around them.⁴ As a result of these measures the Inspector General of Police was able to report in 1908 that, "As a result

- 1 Rept. of the Committee on the Rly and Dist. Police at Chitt. 14 March 1908, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne., 1909, February 75.
- 2 Report on the Police Administration of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1908, 12.
- 3 Police Admin. 1909, 12.
- 4 Police Admin. 1908, 13.

partly of these various measures thefts on running trains have practically ceased and crime connected with the Railway and Jetties in and around Chittagong has been reduced".¹ .

1 Police Admin, 1908, 13.

Port Administration - Chittagong



PORT FINANCE

The most inauspicious aspect of the birth of the Chittagong Port Trust was perhaps the absence of any fairy godmother to provide it with suitable capital endowments and assurances of capital finance. The Government of Bengal and India appear to have thought their duty was done by presiding at the birth of the child, and that neither gifts - nor wet nurse - were needed by the sickly infant that the Port Trust was in 1888. The financial predicament of the ill-endowed new Port Trust was compounded by the fact that it could not attract loans, at least not during its early years, either from Government sources or from the money market because its income was not sufficient to guarantee the payment of interests, not to speak of the repayment of the principal.¹ The vicious circle was completed by the fact that since the Port Trust did not manage a port with the required facilities for a major ocean terminal it could not earn sufficient to finance its day to day administration let alone invest in further development. Right from the outset the Chittagong Port Trust thus found itself in a sort of 'poverty trap'. The complexities of the financial situation were to an extent accentuated by the competing commercial interests of

1 In 1895 the Commissioners stated that they *were* not in a position to raise a loan as they "have no guarantee for funds beyond their income and cannot speculate" - Note on Reso. 5. of the Port Comms. meeting 21 August 1895, Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1895. October 30-31.

of the Assam Bengal Railway, which saw in the port, particularly the jetties, an assured source of income and an instrument of control over trade to be used to augment earnings from the newly formed Railway network. The interests of European companies at Chittagong, particularly the coastal shipping companies, several of whom were nominated to seats on the Port Trust Board, seem also to have interfered adversely with the development of the revenue earnings of the Port. Since Calcutta based firms¹ and organisations, including the Calcutta Port Trust, were also unwilling to see a rival flourish at their expense and pursued policies which destabilised the prospects of the Chittagong port still further, Chittagong's financial difficulties proved long lasting and damaging to its growth.

In 1888, the Chittagong Port Trust found itself confronted with an enormous task of building a port very much from scratch as there were no jetties for ocean going vessels nor were there other facilities normally required of any port worth its name. The scale of investment involved in such an undertaking was evidently beyond the scope of the meagre financial resources of the Port Trust. The natural sources of capital of the required size were the Government of Bengal and the Government of India. Both the Government of Bengal and the Government of India may have had their own priorities and rationale (if there were any) for withholding capital funds and for giving capital aid at the time and in the way they did. But the logic of their actions was not easy to discover,

1 The Bengal Chamber of Commerce asked anxiously at the time of the consideration of the question of the formation of the Chittagong Port Trust in 1886 about, "the character and cost of the improvement of the port to be undertaken", and argued that it would not be advisable to expand a large amount of capital in improving the port. Beng. Chamber of Commerce to Govt. of Beng. 14 May 1886, Beng. Proc. Municipal Mne 1887 January-March, March 3-34.

as the Agent of the Assam Bengal Railway declared in 1896, "I must confess I am unable to understand the force of the argument which would deny the employment of Imperial Funds in providing trade facilities at a Port, and yet allow them to be employed in the construction of a Railway".¹

Some of the reluctance of the Government to provide capital funds can possibly be explained in terms of the status of the Chittagong port, since it remained a 'minor port' till 1 April 1928.² But it is difficult to understand the virtual absence of any substantial establishment and fund at the creation of Chittagong Port Trust while the Government provided generous funds and established substantial facilities at the creation of other port trusts. On the formation of the Bombay Trust in 1873 Government properties were handed over to it valued at more than two and a half crores of rupees of which some forty-two lakhs were an outright grant and the rest repayable on easy terms over ten years. Madras Port Trust received a loan of over forty lakhs repayable over a period of forty years. Later they were given another loan of forty lakhs repayable in sixty years at 4% interest. Karachi Port Trust received seven lakhs on the formation of the Trust in 1886 and fifteen and a half lakhs later, both repayable in thirty years at an interest of $4\frac{1}{2}\%$. The Calcutta Port received loans both for extension of port facilities and for dock works, their combined total amounting to no less than three and a half crores of rupees, with interest of 4% and $4\frac{1}{2}\%$ repayable over a maximum period of forty six years.³ The plight of Chittagong port in 1888 can be

- 1 Agent and Chief Engineer, A. B. Rly to Managing Director A. B. Rly 10 January 1896, Agent's Letter to Board 1896.
- 2 Administrative Report of the Comms. for the Port of Chitt. 1928-29, 4, see also Bary 8.
- 3 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting, 5 April 1907, OMPC 1907.

understood when these figures are set against the total non-availability from Government sources of any capital funds whatsoever in the early years. D. R. Lyall, Commissioner of Chittagong Division, wrote in 1888, "I believe almost every other port in the empire has obtained some help from the public funds to a larger amount in the case of some port and to a smaller amount in that of others, but still aid has been given while Chittagong has obtained no such aid".¹

One explanation of the reluctance of the Government to provide capital funds may possibly be that in their scheme of things Chittagong at the initial stages of its development, was conceived of only as a feeder to the port of Calcutta and not a port to be developed in its own right, to accommodate large ocean going steamers. Thus it will be recalled that at the time of the creation of the Port Trust the improvements demanded of the port were not those required by an ocean terminal. And when Apjohn in his reports of 1893 and 1900 urged the need for jetty construction and river conservancy at Chittagong Government gave no financial assistance.

The construction of the railway and the erection of the first jetty changed the prospects of the port of Chittagong, however, and as the Traffic Manager Assam Bengal Railway wrote, "the potentialities of the Port were fully realised by those who are in the best position to judge. Everyone in any way connected with this Port, even if they never realised before the possibilities of increased trade here, are now unanimous in believing that a great future lies before it".²

1 Comm. Chitt. Divi. to Govt. of Beng. 17 February 1888, Port Trust Proc. 1889, June 1-2 K. W.

2 Traffic Manager A. B. Rly to Agent A. B. Rly 2 January 1902, Agent's Letter to Board, 1902.

In 1900 for example the tea planters of Assam, Cachar and Sylhet sent a memorial to the Government of Bengal representing the great importance of the port and urging the necessity of improving the entrance so that large steamers could enter and discharge cargoes at all times of the year.¹ Yet despite the evidence of increasing traffic and the enthusiasm of the railway and of the Assam planting community, the Government of Bengal remained quite unwilling to help the port. They replied to the planters' memorial with a letter expressing their sympathy but refusing their aid, declaring that the sum required to improve the condition of the river was beyond the means of that Government.² The plaint of the Port Commissioners in May 1902, "that in order to increase the trade of the port and remedy its indebtedness, it is indispensably necessary that a loan should be granted by Government. The policy of small loans to meet occasional debits is unsatisfactory, and a loan should be granted to Chittagong in the same way as was done for Calcutta",³ was met with a similar direct refusal. In the meantime to make matters worse, the Government of India had proposed in 1901 that the income derived from the working of the jetties at Chittagong should be credited to the Government of India.⁴ (This despite the series of substantial budget surplus of the Indian Government from 1898-99 to 1904-05.)⁵ The commissioners strongly protested against the proposal and stated, "If the profits of the jetty are taken from the Port Commissioners, the Government of Bengal must be prepared to face a still greater annual deficit in connection with the Port. The transfer involved, according to the current budget, an immediate difference of income to the extent of

- 1 Memorial of the tea Planters of Assam, Cachar and Sylhet, 8 February 1900, Beng. Proc. Mne 1900, March 5.
- 2 Buchanan, 5-6.
- 3 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting, 7 May 1902, OMPC 1901-1907.
- 4 Port Comms. to the Govt. of Beng. 16 September 1901, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne, 1901, October 18.
- 5 P.J. Thomas, The Growth of Federal Finances in India, 258.

15,000. At present even with this help, the Port Commissioners cannot meet their liabilities, far less contemplate much needed improvement".¹ They pointed out that the Government should rather 'waive their claim to any profits on net earnings of the jetty in order to place the funds of the Port Trust on a more substantial footing and to relieve them from the hand-to-mouth policy hitherto forced upon them by the want of funds".² They further suggested that the Government of Bengal in order to increase the facilities of the port should grant to the Port Trust a special loan of twenty lakhs³ and take over the debt incurred in constructing the existing jetty and "guarantee the interest to the Imperial Government".⁴ The Government of Bengal in reply stated that every item of possible revenue should be carefully scrutinised by the Port Commissioners with a view to increase the revenue and that if the scrutiny revealed that, "there are reasonable prospects of their position being financially sound within the next three years, this Government is prepared to assist the Commissioners with a contribution to the extent of Rs 10,000 annually for that period, and to ask the Government of India to allow the repayment of the Government loan... being deferred for the same period, charging interest only on the outstanding balance".⁵ The Chairman of the Port Commissioners however informed the Government that "there is no prospect of their being able to undertake the payment of interest charges, which on the capital cost of the jetty buildings up to 30th June 1902... amount to Rs 80,000 without the aid of a Government loan or grant much more liberal than that offered.

1 Chmn Port. Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 9 June 1902, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne 1903, January 73.

2 Chmn. of the Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 16 September 1901, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne 1901, October 18.

3 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn Port Comms. 13 September 1902. Beng. Proc. PWD Mne 1903, January 74.

4 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 9 June 1902, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne , 1903, January 73.

5 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn. Port Comms. 13 September 1902, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne , 1903, January 74.

They considered it undesirable at present to increase the charges of the Port, and would point out that it is not sufficient only to consider the receipts and expenditure of the next three years but to provide for the improvements and extensions"¹ required for the future. To this appeal the Government of Bengal replied by declaring that in view of the financial condition of the Port Trust they would approve the Government of India's decision to transfer the jetties to the Assam Bengal Railway Company² and that they had so informed that Government.³ They continued sanctimoniously to urge upon the Trust that an effort should be made to improve the financial condition of the Port and to voice the hope "that the Commissioners will now clearly understand that they must not consider the Provincial Revenues as a convenient reserve fund from which any deficit that may occur may be met, but that the trade of the port must pay for facilities provided and improvements made for its benefits".⁴ So ended in failure all attempts by the Port Commissioners to secure the help of Government. In fact the Government had gone completely against all established policy, as Buchanan pointed out: "In the matter of finance it is universally recognised that the capital cost of a port cannot in its earliest stages, be wholly paid out of charges imposed, and that the State or other controlling power must, in the general welfare make up the part of a permanent debt".⁵ The policy of the Government of Bengal not to extend any financial help to the port seems all the more strange as the financial condition of the province during that period, as is apparent from the following table, was generally sound and as its

- 1 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 13 October 1902, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne 1903, January 82.
- 2 Govt. of India to Govt. of Beng. 28 April 1902, Beng. Proc. PWD Mne 1903, January 71.
- 3 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn. Port Comms. 18 December 1902 - Beng. Proc. PWD Mne 1903, January 85.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Buchanan 16.

budget from 1893-1903 showed a continuous surplus¹. In fact from 1898 its finance received a further boast when as a result of 'heavy surpluses'² 'year after year'³ in the Government of India's budget on account of the stabilization of the rupee and the growing demand for opium in China, that Government was, "able to make generous grants to the provinces for education, public works, police reform and other purposes".⁴

Financial Condition of Bengal 1893-1903 - Annual Surpluses and Deficits

1893-4 Rs	1894-5 Rs	1895-6 Rs	1896-7 Rs	1897-8 Rs	
+36,887	+1,69,796	+1,49,808	-1,86,558 ⁵	-34,34,937 ⁶	
1898-9	1899-1900	1900-1	1901-2	1902-3	1903-4
+21,03,660 ⁷	+7,01,899 ⁸	+3,13,524	+4,77,096 ⁹	+6,23,640	+87,23,496 ¹⁰

The financial position of the port of Chittagong till 1904 was fairly summarised by an editorial in The Pioneer on 20 February 1904: "As we have frequently pointed out Chittagong has received anything but fair treatment in the past, and it is high time her interests were

1 Except for 1896-7 and 1897-98 - the years of the famine.

2 P.J. Thomas - Federal Finances in India, 261.

3 Ibid.

4 P.J. Thomas - Federal Finance in India, 261.

5 Ibid. 258.

6 Admin Beng. 1897-98, 277.

7 Admin Beng. 1898-99, 241.

8 Admin Beng. 1899-1900, 164.

9 Admin Beng. 1901-2, 284.

10 Admin Beng. 1903-4, 115.

considered on their own merits alone, and without reference to the jealousy of her great rival across the Bay. The Local Port Trust in their address to the Viceroy Curzon pointed out, more in sorrow than in anger, that for the last twenty-five years the Bengal Government had only given Chittagong free grants of money aggregating Rs 30,000 whereas the Trust had been obliged to spend two lakhs on a single lighthouse alone. A loan of Rs 2,33,000 had certainly been forthcoming from Bengal;¹ but with a stationary income of Rs 70,000, out of which the whole port had to be equipped, this did not afford much relief, and a balance of a lakh still remained to be paid off".²

It was not until 1904 that fortune smiled on the port of Chittagong for the first time when Lord Curzon promised financial help to the port. Even then this help³ sprang rather from a desire to sell the idea of the partition of Bengal and to get a return on the money spent on the Assam Bengal Railway than from a direct concern for the port of Chittagong. This Curzon made clear in his speech on the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway: "When the Government of India started some twelve years ago upon the task of constructing the Assam Bengal Railway... they little dreamed that... before the end had been reached the bill would have been swollen to a sum of more than nine millions sterling... if any one were to tell me that nine millions might have been spent to greater advantage elsewhere, I might not perhaps be disposed to contest him".⁴ And to drive the point home Curzon continued in his address at Chittagong to confirm

1 This was for the purchase of the Tug Gekko.

2 The Pioneer 20 February 1904, see also 'Address of the Port Commissioners' - The Englishman 16 February 1904.

3 See Chapter IV.

4 A Short Account of the Construction of the Assam Bengal Railway 1904, 7, see also The Pioneer, 18 February 1904.

that having spent "enormous sums" on the railway, "from the strictly business point of view the best chance of getting a due return for our outlay is to provide the proper facilities for the trade which it is in a position to create".¹ Any plan for Chittagong was therefore subordinated to political considerations or the needs of the railway. Events from 1904 to 1912 combined fortuitously to give a brief relief to the port and when these special conditions were removed it again sank back into oblivion.²

Unaided by Government the Port Commissioners had to make the best use they could of the resources they themselves commanded. Till 1904 the main sources of income of the Port were its port dues - on the tonnage of vessels entering the Port, and mooring fees for vessels. Other income was received from services rendered and included receipts for water supplied, jetty hire, sale proceeds of stores, recoveries for services rendered to other department, fines, sale proceeds of promisory notes, contributions from the pilotage fund, fees for licensing passenger and cargo boats and fees for the use of the port tug.³ But the receipts from all these sources of revenue did not amount to much and certainly were not sufficient to meet the full requirements of the port. In 1901 the Sub-Committee appointed to consider and report upon the landing and shipping of goods recorded, "we find that the Port working shows an annual deficit, amounting to approximately Rs 7,000,

1 Viceroy's Address at Chitt. 14 February 1904, P. P. 1906, LXXI, 845.

2 Except for Rs 3,25,000 for revetment work, Rs 8,00,000 for the purchase of a second dredger, 30,000 for pilotage and Rs 10,00,000 to the Port Fund mainly for construction work, no further grant was made to the port at least until 1944-45.
Admin Rept. . . . 1944-45, 21.

3 Chitt. Port Trust Ordinary Receipts and Expenditure 1905-06, E. B. A. PWD Mne 1906, October 1.

the average expenditure for the last three years ending 31 March showing an income of Rs 66,000 against an expenditure of Rs 73,000. Apart from this, the Special Officer points out that...additional expenditure is necessary".¹ The Government of Bengal in order to balance the account, had from time to time made grants to the port from Provincial revenues.² In 1900 however, the Government stated "this arrangement cannot be allowed to continue, and it is imperatively necessary for the Commissioners to take steps to make the Trust self-supporting."³ It then proceeded to outline how this self sufficiency might be achieved either by imposing new charges or by increasing existing rates. A Sub-Committee of the Trust was thereupon appointed to work out the details of a possible financial scheme, and in due course it set out a series of possibilities. One was merely to increase existing charges, but it also suggested that income could be enlarged by making pilotage compulsory, by ensuring that the jetty was fully utilised by sea-going vessels, by maintaining the Kutubdia lighthouse from the coast light dues, by increasing the contribution from the pilotage fund to the port fund, or by imposing a river due.⁴

1 Proceeding of a meeting of the Sub-Committee appointed...to consider and report upon the landing and shipping of goods in regard to weekly cargo steamers - 4 May 1901. Beng. Proc. Mne 1901, September 26.

Footnote - The Additional expenditure were for coastbuoys, mooring buoys, heave-up boat, conical river buoys, can river buoys, half inch chain and new mooring chains and anchor needing a total of Rs 34,030.

2 Resolution by the Govt. of Beng. Marine Dept. 13 March 1900. Beng. Proc. Mne 1900, March 78 .

3 Ibid.

4 Rept. of the Sub-Committee on the Port Finance 6 June 1900, Beng. Proc. Mne 1900, October 102, see also Govt. of Bent. to Chmn. Port Comms. 18 December 1902, Beng. Proc. Mne 1903, January 85.

These proposals were received with mixed feelings. The idea of compulsory pilotage and compulsory use of the jetties by all vessels foreign and coastal, was opposed by the Port Commissioners¹ some of whom were owners or agents of coastal shipping lines.² The Government of India being addressed on the subject of compulsory pilotage, expressed the opinion that it was desirable that a system of compulsion should be based on grounds other than improvement of the financial position of the Trust, and that it should be shown that compulsory pilotage was necessary in the general interests of public safety.³ The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal visited Chittagong in 1903 and after enquiries stated that compulsory pilotage was not essential to the Port of Chittagong.⁴ The question of compelling vessels to come alongside the jetties had been brought up from time to time without any results. In 1903 the Government of Bengal accused the Commissioners of not using their powers in that respect and stated "It has been brought to the notice of the Government that the Port Commissioners by a majority, recently refused to pass a resolution to exercise the powers conferred on them by section 22 of Act IV of 1887 and ordered all sea-going vessels to come alongside the jetty if there is room".⁵ The opposition of the Commissioners can be attributed to the fact that many of the Commissioners in the early years of the Port Trust were also ship owners and merchants whose trade would have been effected by the imposition of new rates. However when in 1911 the question of compulsory use of the jetties came up the owners and agents of the coastal steamer companies gave a variety of reasons for opposing the measure.

- 1 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 18 December 1902, Beng. Proc. Mne 1903, January 85.
- 2 Messrs. M. David & Co. Narayanganj, Messrs. Finlay Muir & Co.
- 3 Govt. of Beng. to Comms. Chitt. Divi, 25 February 1903, Beng. Proc. Mne 1903, October 47.
- 4 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India, 20 May 1903, Beng. Proc. Mne 1903, October 50.
- 5 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn. Port Comms. 18 December 1902, Beng. Proc. Mne , 1903, January 85.

Thus they then argued that the shipowners had no voice in the management of the Railway Company's jetties, neither as regards the rates to be paid nor as regards their allotment, working arrangement and administration. The Railway Company was bound to regard their own carrying trade as of first importance. Under those conditions the ship owners were afraid that "The convenience and interest of the ship owner must be sacrificed to those of the Railway Company".¹ A second point which they made was that the coasting steamers had had to make their own provision for carrying on their trade before the construction of railway jetties.²

Compulsory use of the railway jetties would mean that the capital sunk in land, offices, godowns, pontoons, boats and cooly lines by the coastal steamer companies would be thrown out of employment.³ Finally they argued that Calcutta, Rangoon, Bombay and Karachi were essentially terminal ports for coasting vessels where they landed and received the bulk of their cargo and stores. Chittagong on the other hand was only a port of call, of which there were many on the coast where earnings were very small - out of all proportion to the increased charges to be borne under the compulsory sections of the proposed new Port Trust Act.⁴ During the period under study the use of jetties was therefore not made compulsory.

The proposal of the Sub-Committee, that the Kutubdia lighthouse should be maintained from the Government Coast Light Dues did not meet with the approval of the Government of Bengal. The Sub-

- 1 Messrs. Turner, Marrison & Co. to Govt. of E.B.A. 18 February 1911 - & Fr. Messrs. Bulloch Brothers & Co. Ltd. Agents British India Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. to Govt. of E. B.A. 31 January 1911 - E.B. & A. PWD Mne 1912, April 31, 32.
- 2 See Chapter V.
- 3 Bullock Brothers & Co. to Govt. of E.B.A. 31 January 1911, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1912, April 31.
- 4 Note on proposed new Port Trust Act - by G. Scoones - Chitt. 27 July 1911, Beng. Proc Mne , 1912, April 45.

Committee had proposed that as the Kutubdia lighthouse was 22 miles away from the port of Chittagong and as other lights at Akyab and elsewhere which were nearer to their ports and more indispensable to them were kept up from the coast light dues, the port of Chittagong had a claim at least to assistance in the upkeep of the Kutubdia lighthouse.¹ To this the Government of Bengal replied that for them to maintain the lighthouse would require the levy of light dues, which would result in the increase of the charges of the port, "this", the Government pointed out, "in the present condition of the trade to the Port was undesirable as any increase in the charges of the port in the initial stage of its development would adversely effect its trade!"² The proposals to impose a river due and to increase the contribution from the pilotage fund to the port fund however, received the approval of the Commissioners and of the Government of Bengal. In December 1902 the Government of Bengal proposed that a river due of four annas a ton should be levied from the commencement of the next financial year.³ The Port Commissioners agreed to the levy of a river due but disagreed as to the amount to be levied.⁴ It was finally settled that a river due of two annas per ton should be levied on all goods landed from or shipped into any sea-going vessels within port limits.⁵

Another resource of the Port Trust might have been an improvement in the earnings of the jetties, for it will be recalled that at the time of the transfer of the jetties it was laid down that the Port Trust

- 1 Vice-Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 15 June 1900, Beng. Proc. Mne 1900, October 102.
- 2 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn. Port Comms. 5 September 1900, Beng. Proc. Mne 1900, October 105.
- 3 Govt. of Beng. to Chmn. Port Comms. 18 December 1902, Beng. Proc. Mne 1903, January 85.
- 4 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 13 October 1902, Beng. Proc. Mne 1903, January 82.
- 5 Govt of Beng. to Chmn. Port Comms. 25 June 1903, Beng. Proc. Mne 1903, August 152.

would be entitled to the surplus profits after four per cent interest on the capital cost had been earned. The jetties, however, as the Vice-Chairman of the Port Commissioners pointed out, "have shown no profit for several years".¹ This may be attributed to the fact that since the use of the jetties was not compulsory only steamers engaged in foreign trade used them, coastal steamer companies having already provided for their own landing and shipping facilities. As a result the earnings from the use of the jetties did not increase, especially since charges were by the ship handled, and the number of ships visiting the port did not grow significantly. Moreover, the four jetty fires destroyed many articles of export and import affecting not only jetty earnings but saddling that head with expenditure on new sheds, heavier sleepers and new fire prevention apparatus.²

The other charges levied at the port were the hospital dues, the port dues, and the charges levied for pilotage.

The Pilotage Fund formed part of the Provincial Revenues of the Government. Although it was administered by the Port Commissioners, its accounts were kept separate from the Port Fund under orders contained in the Bengal Government PWD letter No. 981 Mne, dated 16 May 1889.³ Judging from the practice in other ports the Sub-Committee found that the pilotage account was not debited with certain charges which were fairly debitable to it. The Port Commissioners had for years urged that the annual contribution from

- 1 Note by Vice-Chmn. Port Comms. on the Railway Terminal jetties at Chitt. 27 January 1910, Beng. Proc Mne 1912, April 24.
- 2 Admin Railway 1912, Appendix 9, 242.
- 3 Budget Estimate for the year 1908-1909, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, June 1.

the Pilotage Fund to the Port Fund for work done to improve the port had been insufficient. With difficulty they secured an increase from Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,200 in 1892; from Rs 1,200 to Rs 2,500 in 1903; and from Rs 2,500 to Rs 4,000 in 1906.¹ The result was that the Port funds suffered to the benefit of Provincial revenues. In 1908 relief however, was extended to the Port Fund when the Government of India on 14 February declared that the old Pilotage Fund was to be converted into a separate fund called "the Chittagong Pilotage Fund", administered by the Port Commissioners as at Bombay, Madras, Karachi and Rangoon.² The Chittagong Pilotage Fund was therefore opened in 1 April 1908 with a balance of Rs 6,604.12-9,³ and various charges formerly debited to the Port Fund were thereafter set against that fund. These were half share of the Port Officer's salary; and of the charges for the Port Office and Semaphore establishments, and half of the expenditure from the Port Fund for printing, advertising and stationery, municipal assessment, office expenses and furniture, postage, telegrams, telephones and for petty construction and repairs.⁴

As a result of this measure the income of the Pilotage Fund by 1912 was "just sufficient to meet the ordinary recurring expenditure". It however did not leave any balance required for the purchase of appliances e.g. a strongly built wooden cutter of modern type estimated to cost Rs 50,000 proposed to replace the old Pilot cutter now in use".⁵

- 1 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E.B.A. 21 September 1907, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1908, July 4.
- 2 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of E.B.A. 1 August 1908, E.B.A. Proc. PWD Mne 1909, April 1.
- 3 Budget Estimate 1909-10, E.B.A. Proc PWD Mne 1909, April 27.
- 4 Budget Estimate 1908-09, E.B.A. Proc PWD Mne 1908, June 1.
- 5 Admin Rept. 1911-12, Beng. Proc Mne 1912, September 26-30.

Thus it is found that beside the river due of 2 annas no addition was made to the Port revenues in our period though the creation of the Chittagong Pilotage Fund did give a certain amount of relief. This increase in revenue however was more than balanced when from 1906 the Port Commissioners set about reducing various port charges instead of increasing them.

One of the leading policies of the Port Commissioners had always been that, "none of the charges [at the Port of Chittagong should], if possible be higher than at Calcutta".¹ Justifying this policy, the Chairman of the Port Commissioners wrote, "From conversations which I have had from time to time with merchants and sea-faring men, I know that the smallest differences in the charges at the different ports are keenly considered by them".² They further felt that higher charges than at other ports would also be suicidal in the initial stage of the development of the port. In 1906 the Port Commissioners made concrete efforts to reduce dues the rates of which were higher than those in the port of Calcutta. These were found to be in hospital dues, and port dues.

Hospital port dues were levied on all ships, whether manned by European or Indian crews. Till 1906 the rate was one anna per ton for each arrival while a compound rate of two annas per ton a year was levied on all vessels calling at fixed intervals and on regular line steamers trading with the Port of Chittagong.³ From 1 July

1 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting, 1 June 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, September 28.

2 Chmn. Port Comms. to Govt. of Beng. 9 June 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, September 27.

3 Notification by the Govt. of E. B. A. 10 May 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, September 24.

1906 therefore the hospital port dues at Chittagong were reduced to the existing rates at Calcutta, then fixed at 9 pies per ton for each trip and 1 anna 6 pies for the compounded rate.¹ It was further reduced to 6 pies moreover, when the hospital port due at Calcutta was further reduced from 9 pies to 6 pies a ton.² This reduction however did not affect the finances of the port as the hospital due fund was a separate "excluded Local Fund", the fees from which were not credited to the Port fund.³

The first schedule of the Indian Ports Act X of 1889 provided that the maximum rate of port dues was to be four annas a ton for Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Karachi. The maximum leviable at Rangoon under that schedule was six annas a ton⁴ but the rate actually charged was less than 4 annas a ton.⁵ When a comparative statement was called for by the Local Government it was found that port dues at Chittagong at four annas six pies a ton, levied under Act No. XXXV of 1857⁶, were higher than in any other port in India. The Port Commissioners in 1906 therefore, pointed this out to the new Government of Eastern Bangal and Assam: "It is most detrimental to the interest of Chittagong that the port dues here should be levied at a higher rate than at any of the other ports mentioned, and the Commissioners beg... His Honour the Lieutenant Governor... to direct the reduction of the Chittagong port due to annas 4 a ton".⁷ From 1 July 1906 the port dues at Chittagong were thus reduced and the exiguous revenues of the port declined accordingly.

- 1 Notification by the Govt. of E. B. A. 10 May 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, September 24.
- 2 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting 1 June 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, September 28.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Acts of the Govt. of India 1854-57 - Act No XXXV of 1857.
- 5 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting 1 June 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, September 18.
- 6 Index to the Acts of the Govt. of India 1854-57, Act No. XXXV of 1857.
- 7 Port Comms. Ordinary Meeting 1 June 1906, E. B. A. Proc. PWD Mne 1906, September 28.

Thus it is found that during the period under study there was no substantial increase in the revenue of the Port. It may be argued that the increase in trade must necessarily have led to an increase in port dues and mooring fees. The receipts of the port however did not increase in proportion to the rise in value of the foreign trade.¹ Mooring fees and port dues depend on the number and tonnage of the ships visiting the port. It will be seen from the following table of vessels visiting the port that except for the year 1906-07 when the rice trade enormously increased the traffic and receipts of the port, the number of ships and the total tonnage increased very little in spite of the enormous increase in the value of the foreign trade carried in them.

	1903-04	1904-05	1905-06	1906-07	1907-08
Ships	354	339	337	341	370
Tonnage	2, 85, 773	3, 04, 216	3, 26, 725	4, 36, 477	4, 88, 387
	1908-09	1909-10	1910-11	1911-12	
Ships	394	384	378	388	
Tonnage	4, 37, 331	3, 73, 770	3, 55, 293	3, 62, 993	

2

The explanation is that previously vessels that came to the port of Chittagong left with their holds unfilled. As the trade expanded the same vessels were able to carry more and more cargo to and from

1		1904-5	1906-7	1901-10	1910-11	1911-12
		Rs	Rs	Rs	Rs	Rs
	Mooring fees	15,684	28,509	21,609	20,413	26,774
	Port Dues	49,232	65,613	49,983	38,567	52,860
	River Dues	31,176	51,838	29,011	29,177	41,482
	Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India,	8 October 1912, <u>Beng. Proc. Mne</u>				
		<u>1913, June 13.</u>				
2	Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India,	8 October 1912, <u>Beng. Proc.</u>				
		<u>Mne 1913, June 13.</u>				

Chittagong without there being any necessity for more vessels. As a result although the vessels were carrying more cargo they were not paying higher mooring fees or port dues than before.¹

The financial stability of a port as Buchanan pointed out, depends on its block value, its annual revenue and expenditure and its reserve funds. The total value of the block of the port of Chittagong in 1911-12 was Rs 17,56,952. And since the capital expenditure with small exceptions was not directly revenue producing it was a dead weight on the trade of the Port.² As for the revenue and expenditure of the port it was found that in 1911-12, the Port Fund had an income of Rs 1,44,250 and an expenditure of Rs 2,30,932, a deficit on the year's working of Rs 86,682.³ The pilotage fund was self-supporting but the Dredger and Revetment Fund required an annual working expenditure of Rs 75,000 apiece.⁴ Moreover the port lacked any substantial reserve fund from which to meet depreciation and to deal with major replacements or additions such as a dredger, or to cope with any marked fall in income.⁵

By the end of 1912 therefore, the port was faced with the necessity of meeting a recurring deficit of at least one and a half lakhs without there being any possibility of corresponding increase to its income.⁶

1 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India 8 October 1912, Beng. Proc. Mne 1913, June 13.

2 Buchanan - 9.

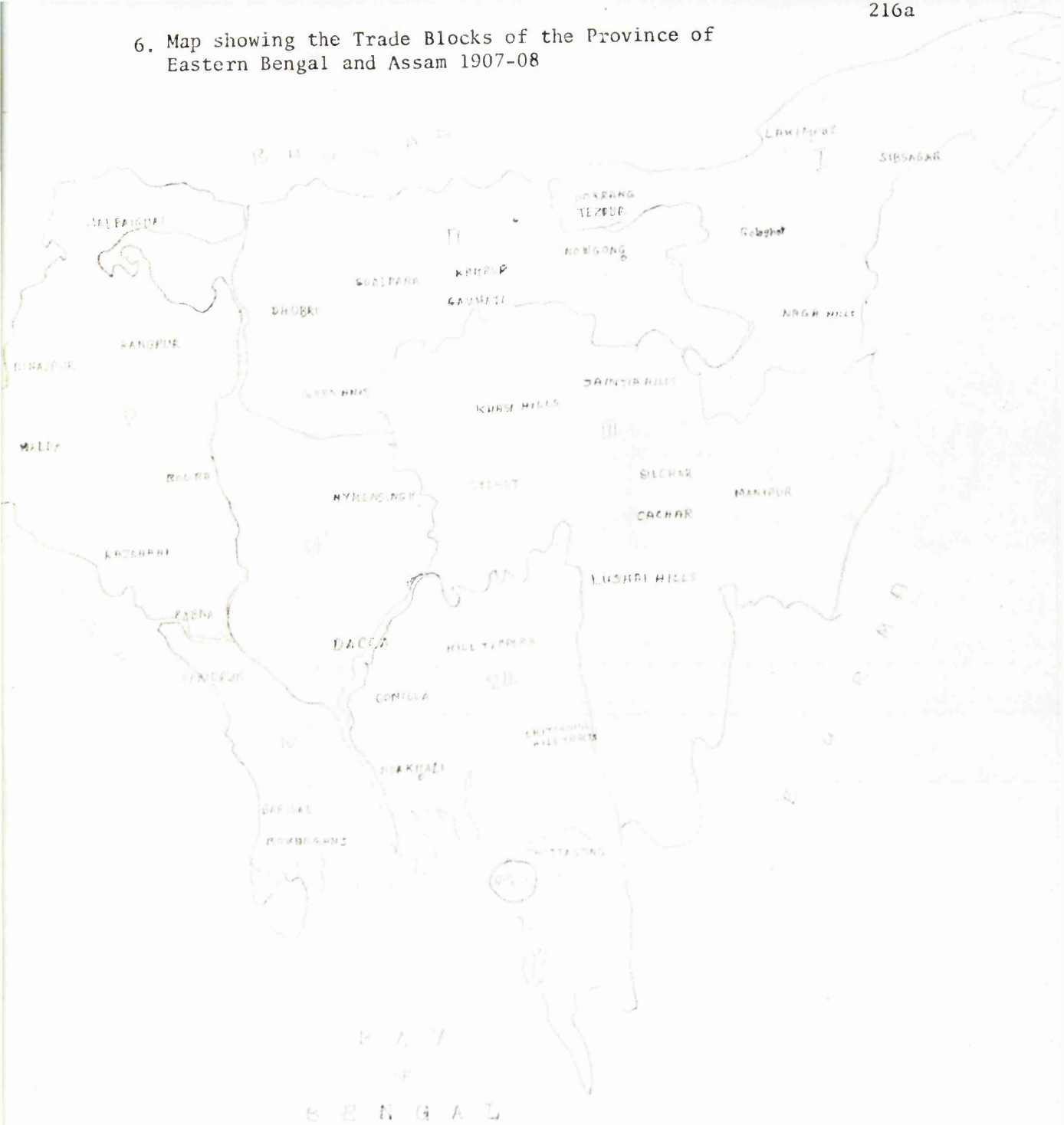
3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Buchanan 10.

6 Govt. of Beng. to Govt. of India 8 October 1912, Beng. Proc. Mne 1913, June 13.

6. Map showing the Trade Blocks of the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1907-08



BLOCK I - Upper Assam: Darrang (Sadr subdivision), Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, Naga Hills

BLOCK II - Lower Assam: Garo Hills, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang (Mangaldai (subdivision))

BLOCK III - Surma Valley: Sylhet, Cachar, Manipur, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Lushai Hills

BLOCK IV - Bakarganj: Bakarganj, Faridpur

BLOCK V - Rajshahi: Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Bogra, Pabna, Jalpaiguri, Malda

BLOCK VI - Dacca: Dacca, Mymensingh

BLOCK VII - Tippera: Tippera (including Hill Tippera), Chittagong (excluding Port and Town), Noakhail, Chittagong Hill Tracts

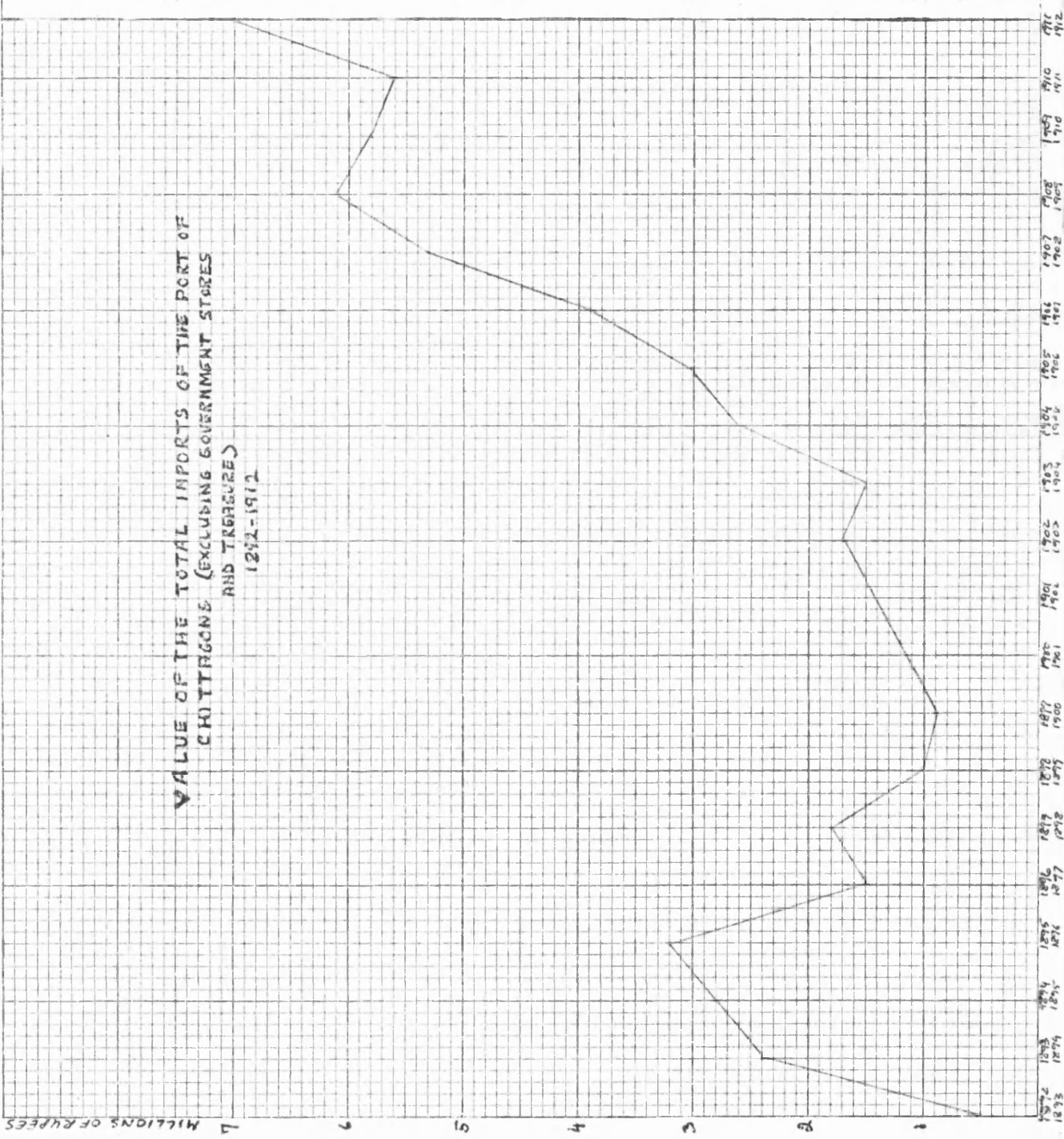
BLOCK VIII - Chittagong Port: Chittagong Port and Town

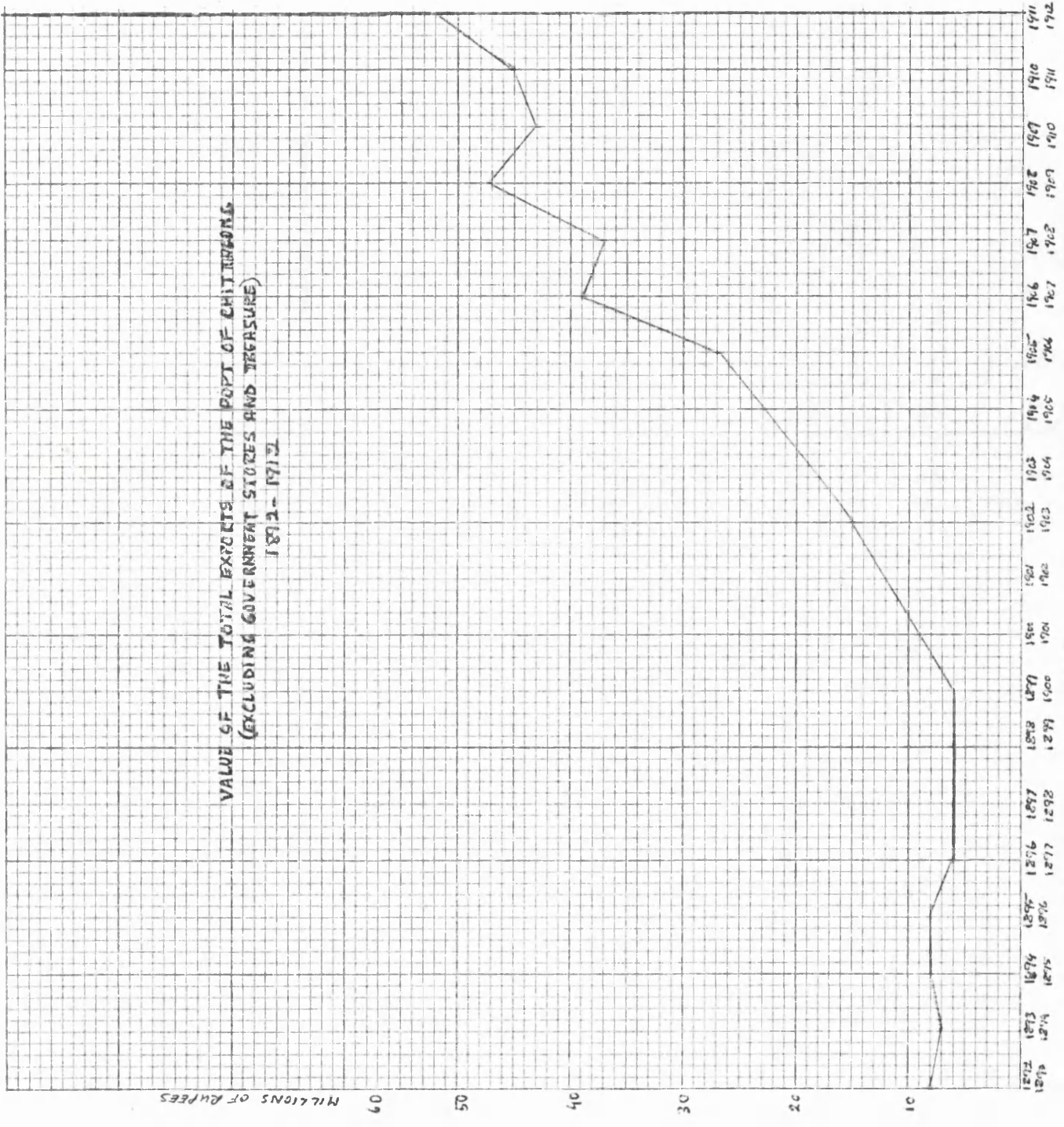
Trade-Development of Overseas Trade and Changes in the Internal Trade

During the years 1892 to 1912 the trade of Chittagong port registered a clear-cut overall increase. Perhaps the performance of the port fell short of the expectations of its patrons but under the circumstances already described, the port authority may be thought to have done quite well. There were sharp fluctuations in the figures for both imports and exports between 1892 and 1905, but once the first jetty had been brought into use and the main structure of the Assam Bengal Railway was in operation, a pretty constant rise began of impressive proportions: in the decade 1902-1912 exports rose by 250 per cent and imports by 300 per cent. The erratic nature of the movements registered in the dozen years after 1892 may be seen as an indication of the lack of development of the port and its hinterland, which made it very vulnerable to shifts in the outturn of one or two major crops and to the seasonal uncertainty of navigation by small sailing crafts of the hazardous Meghna estuary and exposed coasting run to Chittagong. After about 1905, however, aided by the government of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, the port secured an effective command over a much wider hinterland and began the process of attracting ocean-going shipping. The changes in the pattern of trade which followed from these developments form the subject of this chapter.

A simple definition of the hinterland of a port, given by B. Nagorski,¹ is 'the area which is using the port for its overseas trade'.

1 B. Nagorski; Port Problems in Developing countries Principles of Port Planning and Organization, 277.





Unfortunately, for quite half our period, there is little or no statistical evidence on which to define the hinterland of Chittagong, for it was only after the creation of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam that a tolerably effective record was made of the total trade of the port. Before the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway the trade from Chittagong into the interior was effectively limited to coastal shipping which linked the port with the vast river network of Bengal.¹ Prior to August 1901 there was an inland traffic registration office under the supervision of the Custom Office at Chittagong at which the traffic entering or leaving the port by country boat used to be registered.² But as the Government of Bengal recognised this provided a very inadequate gauge of the total trade - 'The registration work now done at the Buxi 's Hat Station consists of only those goods that are landed at the Chaktai Khal which is the sole approach to the office from the river. Most of the country boats that carry on the inland trade of the district on that side discharge their cargoes below the Sadarghat Jetty where merchants buy up the large quantities of grain imported, thus giving no opportunity to the inland registration clerk to deal with the vessels'. What is more, the Director went on, "the figures which are supplied by the merchants to the registration office are, it is believed, totally untrustworthy and valueless. These vessels come from no declared port, and are, therefore, without Customs papers and are not obliged by any law to notify their arrival and departure to the Customs Officer. A considerable quantity of trade in other articles also, it is alleged, escapes registration owing to the fact that the khal is now impassable at certain times. Moreover a large portion of the trade has been diverted by the opening of a

1 See Chapter II

2 Director of Land Records and Agriculture E. B. A. to Comms. Chitt. Port Trust, 19 July 1906, Govt. of Beng. Financial Dept. (Commercial), 1914, February 2-9, K.W. Proc.

railway which carries the daily bazar articles from places lying adjacent to the line, besides a very large quantity of rice and paddy from the Noakhali district: There is reason to believe that not even 5 per cent of the traffic is registered at Buxi's Hat Office, and that the figures annually given by the office are quite unreliable and do not give the real value of the trade".¹

So unreliable indeed were the statistics thus collected at the Buxi's Hat that on the recommendation of the Chittagong Port Officer and with the approval of the Government of Bengal the registration office was abolished from August 1901.² Thereafter there are no detailed Customs figures at all from which to trace the evolution of the trade of the port until 1909. Once the Assam Bengal Railway was completed in 1904 it is possible to use the figures in the Rail and River Borne Trade of Bengal, but only in respect of goods carried by rail. On the constitution of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, the Provincial Director of Land Records and Agriculture had suggested to the local Government that since the Port of Chittagong would increase in importance every year, it might usefully be made for statistical purposes into a separate trade block, the trade entering or leaving it by all routes being recorded as in the case of the Calcutta block. This proposal was accepted by the Government in their reply of 29 March 1906, and a system was introduced for the registration of the trade of the Chittagong Port block by all routes from 1 February 1909.³ The figures,

- 1 Director of Land Records and Agriculture to Comm. Chitt. Port Trust 19 June 1906, Beng. Fin. Dept (Com) 1914, Feb 2-9, K.W. Proc.
- 2 Director of Land Records and Agriculture E. B. A. To Comms. Port of Chitt. 14 July 1906. Beng. Fin. Dept. (Com), 1914, February 2-9, K.W. Proc.
- 3 Abolition of the Chittagong Port block as a special separate block, A Note by R.K.M. and L.D'Santos, 5 November 1912, Beng. Fin. Dept. (Com), 1914, February 2-9, K.W. Proc.

excluding those for road traffic the registration of which was subsequently abandoned, were published for the first time in tables VI and VII of the rail and river borne trade of the province for 1909-10.¹ It is thus only for the last two or three years of this study that a reasonably complete record of the trade of the port is available. It is within these limitations that an attempt has therefore to be made to trace the growth of trade at Chittagong and define the hinterland of the port.

One marked feature of Chittagong's hinterland, which after the opening of the railway included most of East Bengal and Assam, was that it was also the hinterland of the port of Calcutta, so that over the years there was a constant tug of war between the two ports for the trade of the region. In some products Chittagong was able to secure a significant share of the trade, in others, however, it could make but little impact upon the established dominance of its great rival.

One, perhaps the major, item in the market economy of Eastern Bengal and Assam was the cultivation of jute. Jute had long been grown in the region and since at least as early as the eighteenth century jute cloth had been the common wearing apparel of the people of North Bengal.² Moreover in 1906 of the total of 3,500,000 acres of jute growing land in Bengal, 2,700,000 were to be found in Eastern Bengal and Assam,³ mainly in the Dacca and Tippera blocks. Nevertheless, till very late, the flow of jute from this

- 1 Abolition of the Chittagong Port block as a special separate block, A Note by R.K.M. and L.D'Santos, 5 November 1912, Beng. Fin. Dept. (Com), 1914, February 2-9, K.W. Proc.
- 2 Report of the Bengal Jute Enquiry Committee - Majority Rept. Minority Repts. 1934, I, 9.
- 3 B. C. C. 1914, Appendices 187.

whole region was to Calcutta not Chittagong.

One obvious reason for this was that Calcutta was not only a port early equipped to handle exports by ocean-going vessels to Europe and America but was also a centre of jute manufacture. The first power driven jute mill in Bengal was established at Serampore in 1855.¹ With its establishment was hastened the total extinction of the indigenous handloom jute industry in Bengal the decadence of which had in fact started with the establishment of jute mills at Dundee in 1835.² After the establishment of the first mill in Bengal others followed rapidly till to quote Sir George Watt, "the banks of the Hughli literally teemed with their smoking chimneys."³ The first Bengal mill had been opened in 1855, by 1891-92,⁴ there were twenty six mills, by 1901-02 thirty six and by 1911-12⁵ fifty nine. The rapid growth of the jute industry was the indirect result of the Crimean and the American Civil Wars. The former by shutting off Russian supplies of flax and the latter by depriving the manufacturers of cheap American cotton for bags, ensured the pre-eminence of jute as the best and cheapest packing medium of the world.⁶ In the years that followed the export of Indian jute products, mainly gunny bags going to Australia, the U.S.A., U.K., and Chile and gunny cloth going in

1 Sir George Watt, The Commercial Products of India, 423.

2 B.J.E. Cttee, 1934, 75.

3 G. Watt, 423.

4 Ibid. 423.

5 Ibid., See also Statement Exhibiting the Moral and Material Progress and Condition of India, 1911-12, P.P. Accounts and Papers, 1913, XLVI, 823. White 53. The figures for 1901 to 1912 are for the mills in the whole of India but as the M.M.P. stated "Practically all the mills are in Bengal in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, in 1911-12, the only mills outside Bengal were two in Madras".

6 B.J.E. Cttee, 1934, I, 76.

large quantity mainly to the United States¹ increased by leaps and bounds. Thus from 1885 to 1895 exports of bags rose from 64 million to 168 millions and exports of cloth from 7 million yards to 114 million yards, with "the United States easily the best customer".² By 1894 the jute mills in Bengal were so firmly established and they expanded their scale of operations to such an extent that they began to compete effectively with the Dundee mills in the markets of the United States of America.³ The following table will show the increase in the export of jute manufactures from India to the United States.

Imports of Jute Manufacturers into the United States (£ 000)			
	1897	1907	1913
From the United Kingdom	1,641	1,785	1,525
From India	786	5,385	7,159

4

And more significantly for Chittagong, by 1913 the exports of jute products had made such rapid progress that their exports were only a little lower in value than those of the raw material.⁵ Since Chittagong was not able to participate in this industrial revolution, lacking the easy access to coal fields that Calcutta enjoyed, and lacking, too, entrepreneurs and capital to establish jute mills, she was forced to rely upon the raw jute trade, either with Europe or with Calcutta.

1 S. B. Saul, Studies in British Overseas Trade 1870-1914, 192. See also M.M.P. 1911-12, 279, G. Watt, 425.

2 Saul, 193.

3 B.J.E. Cttee. 1934, I, 78.

4 Saul, 193.

5 Saul, 192.

The first commercial consignments of raw jute from India to Europe commenced in 1828 though from 1795 onwards sample bales from Calcutta had been forwarded to Dundee for experimental purposes.¹ Large scale consignment however began with the establishment of jute mills at Dundee in 1835.² This was brought about as a result of the demand for cheap sacking and packing materials in the nineteenth century following the enhancement of manufacturing enterprise in Europe and the demand for foreign food supplies.³ The largest purchaser of raw jute from India was the United Kingdom followed by Germany and the United States.⁴ Jute as the cheapest fibre in the market was at first used for the making of packing cloth, bags⁵ and heavy carpet backing.⁶ Later on it was used for making carpets and rugs.⁷

Though the export of jute from India began in 1828 it was not till 1877-8 that export from Chittagong began. This export, almost the result of an accident, was brought about when the jute firm Messrs. David and Company⁸ was compelled by the high rates charged by the Eastern Bengal Railway on the route to Calcutta to ship their jute instead from Narainganj to Chittagong for reshipment abroad. The venture proved so profitable that another jute firm, Messrs. Ralli Brothers, followed suit and continued the practice all through the period under study.⁹ Jute from the port of

1 B.J.E. Cttee. 1934, 9.

2 Ibid, 75, see also G. Watt, 423.

3 G. Watt, 411.

4 Imperial Institute - Indian Trade Enquiry Rept. on Jute and Silk 1918, 3-4, see also P.P. A & P 1913, XLVI, 836, M.M.P. 1911-12, 292.

5 M.M.P. 1911-12, 292, see also P.P. A & P 1913, XLVI, 836.

6 Saul 192.

7 M.M.P. 1911-12, 292, see also P.P. A & P 1913, XLVI, 836.

8 M.J. Seth, Armenians in India from the earliest times to the Present day 575.

9 Lyall & Dowling, 20.

Chittagong was mainly sent to Britain but a small quantity was also sent to the United States of America.¹ This exportation, in spite of the fact that jute products were one of India's major exports,² was confined almost exclusively to raw jute. Explaining the situation the Director of Agriculture thus wrote, "There is... scarcely any production of gunny in this province, for there is no power loom and the weaving of gunny on hand looms is an industry now almost defunct".³

Jute was grown in the main in three districts, Dacca, Mymensingh and Tippera, of which the principal centres were Narainganj, Bhairab Bazar and Chandpur,⁴ respectively. At each of these, numerous jute baling establishments were created, pressing the raw jute fibre either into the lightly pressed cutcha bales of $3\frac{1}{2}$ -4 maunds destined for the Calcutta mills or the pucka bales, more tightly pressed and weighing about 5 maunds, which were the standard unit of the export trade to Europe and to America. By 1910, for example, there were seven European and two Indian jute baling firms at work at Chandpur.⁵

Originally Chittagong participated in the export trade in jute by using country craft and coastal vessels to bring the baled jute by river to the port. In 1891-92 some 13,00,000 maunds⁶ were thus collected for export. With the coming of the railways, however, this pattern largely changed, though in the absence of any registration

1 See Table 3.

2 Saul, 192-3.

3 Report on the Trade carried by Rail and River in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1907-98.

4 N. C. Choudhury, Jute in Bengal, see also E. B. D. G. Dacca V III, B. D. G. Mymensingh

5 N. C. Choudhury, Jute and Substitutes, 121, see also Jute in Bengal.

6 River Borne Traffic 1891-92, 66.

of imports by river into the Chittagong block before 1909-10 it is not possible to quantify this. However the figures for 1910-11, when the new pattern of registration of imports by all routes was in its second year and presumably reasonably effective, it is found that the movement of jute to Chittagong by river, whether by steamer or country craft, was negligible,¹ - consisting in effect of some thousand maunds from Tippera. By that date the movement of raw jute to Chittagong was mostly by rail.

But, as has already been seen, the Assam Bengal Railway was unable in this period to establish an effective link with Narainganj and the Dacca district, thanks to the opposition of the steamer companies and the lack of any bridge over the Meghna river. Most of the jute grown in the Dacca block which was linked by its own railway system with Calcutta, continued therefore to pass by rail or steamer service to Calcutta. In 1910-11 only 1,40,000 maunds reached Chittagong by all routes from Dacca,² while 33,80,000 maunds went to Calcutta.³ Mymensingh jute, concentrated at Bhairab Bazar, could also pass by steamer link to Narainganj or by the Eastern Bengal State Railway and in the absence of any Assam Bengal Railway link, that too flowed to Calcutta, the figures for the district being merged with those for Dacca district in the overall statistics of the Dacca Block. It was therefore on the jute production of Tippera that Chittagong could most readily draw, for though Chandpur was connected by daily steamer service with Narainganj it was also

- 1 See table appended on 'Quantity (in mds) of articles imported into the Chittagong Trade Block by River, Rail and Sea (coasting and foreign) in 1910-11.'
- 2 Rept. on the Trade carried by Rail and River in the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam 1910-11, Table V and VI
- 3 Trade by R.R.E.B.A. Table II, 56-57.

the terminus of the Laksam-Chandpur branch of the Assam Bengal Railway from 1895 onwards. In 1906-07 of the total quantity of jute brought down to Chittagong, some 2,182,000 maunds, no less than 1,575,000 maunds were from the Tippera block.¹

It should also be noted that as Calcutta overhauled Dundee as the world centre of the jute industry an increasing percentage of all the raw jute produced passed to Hooghly side. The exports of jute from Chittagong, though they may have grown quite markedly within this period, were destined increasingly to go by coaster to Calcutta rather than to Europe and the wider world - a shift actively encouraged, as will be seen later, by the Assam Bengal Railway. The following figures show the fluctuations in the movement of jute from Chittagong to Calcutta, due mainly to the unsteady arrangement that existed between the Railway Company and the coastal steamer companies.

1902-3	1903-4	1904-5	1905-6	1906-7	1907-8	1908-9	1909-10	1910-11	1911-12
cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.	cwt.
411	528	679 ²	255,966	75,762	11,307	7	89	49,516	5,154 ³

1 Trade by R.R.E.B.A. Table V, 74.

2 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, Table 9.

3 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, Table 9, 53.

With the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway jute slowly gave way to tea as the leading article, in all but the odd year, in the list of exports from the port of Chittagong. The export of tea from India in sufficient quantities to justify its being recorded separately commenced in 1864.¹ From that year the export of tea steadily increased, from 2,800,000 lbs. then, to 24,360,000 lbs. in 1875-76.² By 1886-87 Indian tea had begun to replace China tea,³ which hitherto had had a complete monopoly of the British market. The market in China had suffered from the increasing political instability of that country: China tea faced an export duty of thirty-five per cent, from which Indian tea was free:⁴ and the ability of British merchants to exercise a strong control over methods of production and sale of Indian tea did much to displace China tea on the British market.⁵

1 Sir George Watt, The Commercial Products of India, 241. In 1788 Sir Joseph Banks suggested the desirability of cultivating tea in India. Little was accomplished, however, until Lord William Bentinck became Viceroy in 1834, when a Committee was appointed to enquire into the possibility of cultivating tea in India. In 1835 the government established experimental gardens, first at Lakhimpur, and later, after its failure, at Jaipore. The Jaipore garden was sold to the Assam Company in 1840. This, the first tea company, was established about 1839. By 1859 many gardens had been established in different districts. The first public sales of Indian-grown tea took place in Calcutta during 1841, when 4,613 lbs. were sold. A sample of Indian-made tea had, however, been sent to England a few years earlier (1838). Ibid., 239, The Tea Cyclopaedia 9-11.

2 G. Watt, 241.

3 Sir Percival Griffiths, The History of the Indian Tea Industry, 124. See also I.T.A., Rept.1898, statement showing English consumption of Indian and China tea.

4 Ibid., see also I.T.A., 1898, 179.

5 Saul, 197.

The early profits made in Indian tea encouraged a large increase in production. Between 1885 and 1901 the area under tea expanded by 85 per cent, and output by 167 per cent. This great rise in the supply, unaccompanied by an equal expansion in the market for Indian tea, involved the industry in great difficulties.¹ As a result, the Indian Tea Association became "much alive to the need for capturing foreign markets".² The Chairman of the Indian Tea Association in his speech at the Association's annual meeting in 1897, expressed the anxiety of that Association when he referred to the need to produce tea suited to the Russian taste, and so to capture that market from China.³ However, in 1901, 92 per cent of the tea from India still went to the United Kingdom.⁴ In 1903, therefore, with the object of promoting the consumption and sale of Indian tea, a small duty was imposed by the Tea Cess Act on Indian tea exported from India to provide a fund from which to promote the sale of Indian tea in other markets.⁵ The effort proved a modest success at least with regard to Russia, where the export increased from 1,625 lbs. in 1901-2 to 26,414 lbs. in 1911-12. On the whole, however, the export of Indian tea remained mainly confined to the United Kingdom.⁶

1 M.M.P., 1901-02, 231.

2 Griffiths, Tea, 128. See also I.T.A. Rept. 1901, 3, 85-89.

3 Griffiths, Tea, 128. See Also I.T.A. Rept. 1901, 14.

4 M.M.P., 1901-02, 231.

5 S.M. Akhtar, The Growth and Development of the Indian Tea Industry and Trade 1834-1932, 211. See also Review of the Trade of India 1905-06, 24, M.M.P., 1911-12, 276.

6 M.M.P., 1911-12, 276.

While in the late nineteenth century rapid strides were thus being made in the export of tea from India and new markets were being sought, Chittagong secured scarcely any share in the trade. Until the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway, the effective hinterland of the port was limited to the tea gardens of Chittagong district, and the vast output of Assam and Sylhet was carried by steamer to Calcutta for export. Thus in 1890-01, out of the total export of 1,235,488 lb. of tea, only 54,445 lb. were moved through Chittagong, the rest all passing through Calcutta.¹ But once the Assam Bengal Railway was extended through Sylhet and Cachar to the Assam Valley, the picture was entirely changed. During 1905-06, tea and jute came to constitute 89 per cent of the whole external trade of the port, or 97.6 per cent of the export trade with foreign countries. The export of tea alone was valued at Rs.156 lakhs that year, and that of jute at Rs.126 lakhs.² From then on the export of tea from the port of Chittagong was to increase steadily. Thus, as H.A. Antrobus wrote: "The completion of the Assam Bengal Railway came as a great boon to the industry, not only by reason of the accelerated communications it provided within the province itself and with Calcutta, but the opening of Chittagong as a seaport for direct shipment of teas to London was a big step promptly taken advantage of by tea interests, and in 1904 the whole of the Assam Company's produce, except the gardens of the Rookung Division, Mahakutie, Doomur, Dullong and Koomtai, who continued to use the river service to Calcutta, were despatched by this new route".³

The railway, once established as a link with Assam, cut time, costs and excessive handling. Until plywood came into regular use for making

1 Admin.Rept. 1890-91, Beng.C.C. 1891-1892 II, 429.

2 Admin. E.B.A. 1905-06, 150.

3 H.A. Antrobus, The History of the Assam Company 1839-1953, 91.

tea chests the ordinary wooden chests were easily damaged, especially where the tea they contained was very fine and the contents of the chest correspondingly heavy. The use of the railway route to Chittagong where tea could be put directly on board the steamer for Europe, reduced handling to a minimum, and this was a considerable advantage, and boosted Chittagong as a tea port.¹

With the construction of the jetties and the establishment of communication with the United Kingdom by steamer, the export of tea went up further. Thus it is found that after the construction of the first jetty and its coming into full use in 1902-03,² the export of tea from the port went up from Rs.61,000 in 1899-1900, to Rs.75,000,000. Similarly, when the second jetty came into full use in 1904-05, the export increased to Rs.14,062,918,³ and when the third jetty came into use in 1907-08, it was Rs.15,899,363. At the time when the fourth jetty was completed in 1910-11, the figure had swollen to Rs.26,141,705.⁴

The railway provided the easiest means of transport for much of the Assam tea, especially that from the tea areas of Kamrup, Darang, Nowgong, Lukhimpur and Sibsagar. The railway also served the Surma Valley tea admirably, for the line ran for some hundred and twenty miles, from Kasimnagar in the southwest corner of the district to Badarpur, through

- 1 The establishment of direct steamer routes from Assam via the Sunderbans to Calcutta, though taking much more time by similarly eliminating handling of tea at transshipment points served the same end on the Calcutta route. White 47.
- 2 Admin Rept. 1906-07. E.B.A. Proc.P.W.D. (Mne.) 1907 Nov.6
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 See table on the Export of Tea from Chittagong. p 284-87

or close to the tea gardens. It soon attracted a considerable portion of their crop.¹ During the five years ending in 1905-06, which saw the rail links established, the movement of tea to Chittagong went up by 300 per cent, and in that year nearly 42,000,000 lbs. of tea was exported by way of Chittagong, all but the 17,000 lbs. produced in Chittagong district being from Assam and the Surma Valley.² By 1910-11 the total quantity had increased to 53,000,000 lbs.³

By 1908 the export of tea from the port of Chittagong had increased to such an extent that the Director-General of Commercial Intelligence was able to report, "Five years ago Calcutta shipped 94 per cent of the entire tea exports of India. Last year she did only about 75.4 per cent of the total, while Chittagong in the same time has raised her percentage from 8.2 to 18".⁴

Tea from Chittagong was mainly to the United Kingdom, a small quantity was also exported to New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria.

Not all of this growth in the use of Chittagong had been at the expense of Calcutta, for the total export of tea from Bengal and Assam had been 181,000,000 lbs. in 1901, 223,000,000 in 1906 and 267,000,000 in 1911.⁵

1 Assam District Gazetteer Sylhet II, 181-182.

2 Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers, Chittagong 1908, 123.

3 See Table on the Export of Tea from Chittagong

4 Review of the Trade of India in 1906-07, P.P. 1908 LXXV 750.

5 Beng.C.C. 1914, Appendices 194.

(Chittagong's larger tea exports, in other words, were partly accounted for by the expansion in the total exports from the region.) In 1905-06 Calcutta, despite the fact that her "percentage of the total exports shipped....(had) decreased in each of the last five years, chiefly on account of the larger proportion shipped from Chittagong", still handled about four-fifths of the tea export trade.¹

Calcutta's dominance obviously rested on a number of factors, not least being her institutional maturity in terms of banking, insurance and managerial skills. In some cases, however, the choice of Calcutta was the outcome of the interlocking of interests within particular managing agencies. Thus Messrs. Macneill and Company and Begg Dunlop and Company, who were tea garden owners on a considerable scale, also had an interest in the Rivers Steam Navigation Company.² It was natural for them to send their tea to Calcutta by steamer rather than to Chittagong by rail. Again for certain grades of tea the choice of port for despatch turned upon the prices current in alternative markets. The lighter flavoured tea of Cachar went to Calcutta when prices were high in the Persian Gulf markets which Calcutta served, to London when prices were higher there, and in that case through Chittagong. The quality of Upper Assam teas on the other hand, were such as to suit the taste of the British public and the bulk of Upper Assam production therefore was normally shipped through Chittagong to London.³

1 Admin.Beng. 1905-06, 74.

2 Sir P. Griffiths, A History of the Inchcape Group, 16-17. See also I.T.A. 1896, 288.

3 Agent's Letter to Board, 7 January 1902, Agent's Letter to Board 1902 AL/283.

The development of Calcutta as a tea market in its own right (as opposed to its function as handling agent for tea destined for the London tea market in Mincing Lane), also reinforced Calcutta's leading position - and reflected it. "Although the earliest tea sale in Calcutta was held as far back as the year 1841", S.M. Akhtar notes, "the importance of this market grew with the importance of other consuming countries than the United Kingdom. By the end of the century a respectable proportion of the crop was being offered at Calcutta annually. During the early years of the 20th century a number of foreign agency houses established themselves in Calcutta".¹ No such market was established at Chittagong. Nevertheless, Chittagong was able to compete effectively for a share in the tea trade in the twentieth century, as the table of exports to foreign countries clearly demonstrates.

It should be noted, too, that Chittagong handled smaller but substantial quantities of tea moving in the coasting trade to other parts of India, mainly to Bengal and Burma. The quantity going to other ports in Bengal remained fairly constant at about the one million pound mark, but tea exports to Burma grew over the years to something under 100,000 lbs. in 1902-03, the peak year.²

The third bulk component in the export trade of Chittagong, rice, did not increase in the way tea did during this period but rather declined, though rice in normal years always figured as a substantial item. Rice

1 S.M. Akhtar, The Growth and Development of the Indian Tea Industry and Trade 1834-1932, 205.

2 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, II, Table IX, 49. See also Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, II, Table IX, 59.

was grown universally in Bengal though the greatest concentration was found in the active, fertile, deltaic districts of Bakarganj, Faridpur, Noakhali and Chittagong itself, in Dacca and Tippera, and also in Sylhet.¹ Rice was exported to the United Kingdom and many European countries, to the Americas,² and, as the Imperial Gazetteer put it, "to any region to which the Indian or Chinese coolie finds his way".³ The rice exported to Europe was mainly used in starch or for distilling, while that exported to Asian countries was meant for food consumption.⁴

The foreign trade in rice handled by Chittagong port in the nineteenth century was very considerable, amounting in 1873, according to Customs' records, to some thirty lakh maunds of rice and paddy (rather under 100,000 tons).⁵ With the opening of regular river steamer services between Calcutta and Eastern Bengal, a considerable part of this trade was diverted to Calcutta. Nevertheless, until the end of the century rice figured prominently in the export trade of Chittagong, and given that the rice was moved by country boat and that Chittagong port was almost unprovided with modern facilities, the scale of the traffic in the 1880's was really very considerable. For the six years 1883-84 to 1888-89, exports to countries outside India in round figures totalled 34,000, 20,000, 32,000, 14,000, 32,000 and 19,000 tons.⁶ In the next decade

- 1 Agricultural Marketing in India. Report on the Marketing of Rice in India and Burma, 7.
- 2 S.A. Latif, Economic Aspects of the Indian Rice Export Trade, 28-29. Saul, 196; G. Watt, 841.
- 3 Imperial Gazetteer 1907 III, 284-5, See also G. Watt, 841.
- 4 Latif, 29; Saul, 196.
- 5 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 8.
- 6 Sea Borne Trade Beng.1892-93, I 48.

rice exports declined steadily, however, the low point being 1892-93 when only 9,000 tons or so was shipped abroad.¹ This was attributed by the Collector of Chittagong to the cyclone of 1892 and high prices ruling in the past year in internal markets.² But the downward movement of the foreign trade in rice persisted with no more than an occasional comeback as in the exceptional year 1899-1900, when 17,000 tons were exported owing to a good harvest coinciding with the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway.³ From 1906-07 to 1911-12, however, total exports never reached even 3,000 tons a year.

The coastal trade in rice was always more significant than shipments to foreign countries - indeed, rice was the most important single item in Chittagong's coastal traffic. Madras was the division to which shipments were usually made, followed by Bombay, other ports in Bengal and Burma.⁴ The amounts involved in the coastal trade varied considerably, depending on the out-turn of particular harvests.⁵ Thus, in 1898-99 exports had been about 10,000 tons, while in 1899-1900 they shot up to some 47,000 tons, sent mainly to Ceylon, Madras and Bombay.⁶ (This was a bumper year for rice exports to foreign countries, some 17,000 tons being shipped out.)

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1892-93, I 48.

2 Ibid.

3 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1899-1900, I, .58.

4 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, II, Tablx IX, 44.
See also Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12,

5 The rounded figures for the years 1892-93 to 1899-1900 are as follows:

1892-93	: 10,000 tons
1893-94	: 3,000
1894-95	: 25,000
1895-96	: 19,000
1896-97	: 1,500
1897-98	: 3,000
1898-99	: 10,000
1899-1900	: 47,000

6 Sea Borne Trade, Beng.1899-1900, I, 58.

On the other hand, in a scarcity year, rice was moved internally from one trade block to another and little was exported, and in the near-famine years of 1896-97,¹ 1897-98,² 1905-06 and 1906-07,³ rice was largely imported from Burma. Thus the Port Commissioners noted in their 1906-07 Report "The main feature of the coasting trade was the large importation of rice from Burma, which rose in value from 15.15 lakhs of rupees in 1905-06 to 246.40 lakhs of rupees in 1906-07. This was on account of the scarcity in Eastern Bengal and Assam from the shortness of the crops there during the last two years. Usually rice is exported from Chittagong in considerable quantities".⁴

In the first twelve years of the twentieth century, if the scarcity years are to some extent discounted, the overall trend in the coastal trade seems to have been downwards.

There have been various explanations for the overall decline in the coasting and export trade in rice handled by Chittagong port. The coming of the Assam Bengal Railway, improved access to rice growing areas in Sylhet, Tippera and Noakhali may at times have helped move stocks down to Chittagong, but it also made it easier to move rice from the northern hinterland districts of the port up into Assam, just as the growth of steamer services made it possible to divert stocks to Calcutta or the western districts. And the railway, of course, provided no link with the

1 River Borne Traffic 1896-97, 57.

2 River Borne Traffic 1897-98, 68.

3 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, 2.

4 Admin.Rept. 1906-07, 7 June 1907, E.B.A. Proc.P.W.D. (Mne) Nov.6.

towns of Bakarganj and Rajshahi lying west of the river Meghna.

The almost total failure of Chittagong to attract rice from these districts is vividly demonstrated in the statistics of the rice trade for 1910-11. In that year 2,000,000 maunds of rice went from Bakarganj to Bengal,¹ 2,000 maunds to Chittagong,² and 1,000,000 maunds went from Rajshahi to Bengal, and nothing to Chittagong.⁴ Over ninety-eight per cent of all the rice brought into Chittagong block by rail or water, husked or unhusked came from Tippera block.⁵

A more positive factor at work to produce the decline in rice export was often thought to be the growing popularity of jute among East Bengal cultivators. From the end of the nineteenth century, as jute became increasingly rewarding economically to farmers, they put more and more land under jute. The result, so the Annual Statement of Sea-Borne Trade and Navigation for 1892-3 argued, was that "a large amount of cultivation, which had formerly been devoted to rice, had been devoted to jute".⁶ Fears were expressed that Bengal's self-sufficiency in food was being endangered.

1 Trade by R.R. E.B.A. 1910-11, Table II, 24. See also E.B.A. Proc. (Leg) 1911, 4.

2. Ibid., Table VI, 98-101.

3 Trade by R.R. E.B.A. 1910-11, Table II, 24.

4 Ibid., Table VII, 98-101.

5 Ibid., Table V, 72.

6 Sea Borne Trade Bengal 1892-93, 108.

A leader in the Hitavadi in 1892 made this point: "The extensive scale on which jute cultivation is carried on in East Bengal is doing a good deal of injury to the country. It is true that the cultivators have now more money in their hands than they ever possessed before, but properly considered, their condition has at present become worse than when they devoted themselves to the cultivation of paddy.....Jute cultivation is responsible for the fact that the cultivators instead of growing paddy even for home consumption, grow jute and purchase paddy; and this leads to the scarcity of rice in the country.....Jute is enriching foreigners at the expense of the Indians".¹ It has been vigorously argued since then that the allegation that rice land was being taken up for jute were not true, or not in the way the Hitavadi presumed. N.C. Choudhury has argued that though jute certainly was very popular with cultivators because of the high prices which it fetched, and the cultivation of jute in Bengal and Assam did expand rapidly, the total area under jute nevertheless did not come to exceed more than 6 per cent of the total cultivated area in the two provinces of Bengal and Assam. On the other hand, "the area under rice, which [was] between 60 and 65 per cent [of the cultivated area] does not appear to have been reduced to any extent".² What can properly be inferred then seems to be that while the area under rice was not reduced, it was also not increasing to any significant degree. (Yield per acre was not improving either in the period here under consideration.)

- 1 Jute Cultivation in East Bengal, Hitavadi, 15 September 1892, (a Calcutta weekly), B.N.N.R.R., 1892, 956.
- 2 N.C. Choudhury, Jute in Bengal, 1-2, see also N.C. Choudhury, Jute and Substitutes, 4.

RICE IN BENGAL : ACREAGE AND YIELD

	1891-92	1894-95	1897-98	1900-01	1903-04	1906-07
Acres	39,552,008	38,639,500	39,549,500	36,013,900	34,931,500	40,612,000
Yield Cut	284,804,161	416,857,200	398,142,000	311,508,600	316,669,700	317,938,200 ¹

However, figures of output and demand for rice in India show that the quantity grown in India was not sufficient to meet the demand for consumption inside India itself - as for example, in the period 1911-15 when the average output was 28.38 million tons² and the estimated consumption 33.51 million tons.³ Moreover, in this period while the Indian population as a whole was growing quite slowly, that of East Bengal and Assam increased by 8.5 per cent in the decade 1891-1901,⁴ and by 11.5 per cent between 1901 and 1911,⁵ a significant element in that increase being provided by immigration of labour to the plantations and more locally to railway construction sites. The surplus available for export was thus steadily being eaten away by rising home consumption. It must be noted too that East Bengal could not, or did not, aim at the quality market. There were no modern rice mills in the hinterland of Chittagong,⁶ the

1 N.C. Choudhury, Jute in Bengal, 193.

2 Latif, 13.

3 Ibid., 10.

4 Census of India 1901, II, 10.

5 Accounts and Papers 1912-13, CIII, 277, 581.

6 N. Ahmad, 220.

prepared rice which was exported had been hand pounded and was certainly no match for the milled rice from Burma, for example. This the Commissioner of Chittagong frankly acknowledged: "Husked rice is brought for sale, but the husking is not well done in the villages, this rice therefore does not command the position in the European^{market}, which it might, and is disposed of in Indian ports or sent to Mauritius".¹

The falling off of rice exports, caused by the erosion of the exportable surplus, if it limited the trade in Chittagong in normal years did mean business for the part in years of poor harvest when it handled imports of Burma rice. There was always some movement of superior grades of rice from India to the outside world and some movement of cheaper and inferior rice from Burma.² But besides this regular importation, Burma supplied India with rice whenever there was famine or serious short-fall in the Indian rice crop. Burma thus became a reserve granary from which any large and unexpected demand in India could at once be supplied.³

There were two other exports in Chittagong of some significance, cotton and coal. Cotton was grown in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and in the Tippera Hills, and it had figured in the trade of Chittagong from Mughal days.⁴ But the cultivation in the hills was on a small scale and it was Assam where the bulk of the cotton was grown. In the

- 1 Commissioner Chittagong Div. to Govt. of Bengal, 11 Feb. 1882, Beng. Proc. P.W.D. (Rly) 1882, April-May, April 14. The first power-driven mill was built in Rangoon in 1861. By 1881 there were 48 mills in Burma. Cheng Siok-Hwa, The Rice Industry of Burma 1852-1940, 78.
- 2 Latif, 32. See also Siok-Hwa, The Rice Industry of Burma 1852-1940, 315.
- 3 Siok-Hwa, 211. See also G. Watt, 841.
- 4 A.M. Serajuddin, The Revenue Administration of the East India Company in Chittagong 1761-1785, 168.

Brahmaputra Valley and the hills which bordered it, cotton weaving was at best a minor home industry carried on by women. Even in the Surma Valley and Eastern Bengal where weaving was on a large scale, it never became more than a cottage industry.¹ Most of the cotton was therefore exported unginning from the province. The firms which exported cotton from Eastern Bengal and Assam were Abdul Gaffur Saudagar, Krishna Das Nityanando Roy, Har Mullick Amlok Chand Roy Murwari, Ralli Brothers, and Naju Mia. Of the five firms Abdul Gaffur Saudagar, Naju Mia and Har Mullick Amlok Chand Roy Murwari used to send unginning cotton to Calcutta. Ralli Brothers used to send unginning cotton to their ginning factory at Narainganj, while Krishna Das Nityanando Roy, having started a ginning factory at Chittagong in 1905-06, sent his cotton there.² Though the factory was new and reportedly not "under sufficient expert management",³ it was successful in a modest way. In the first year some 24,000 maunds of cotton was sent to the new factory,⁴ and in subsequent years the movement of cotton to Chittagong by rail and river steadily increased. In 1910-11 some 40,000 maunds came in by rail, 167,000 maunds by river, and 56,000 by coasting steamers.⁵

Assam also possessed a number of coalmines, twenty-one in the Khasi Hills, two in Sibsagar and the Naga Hills, two in Lakhimpur and two in the Garo Hills, of which the two most important were the Barapani coalfield with an annual output of about 470,000 tons, and the Moosanram field which

1 G.N. Gupta, A Survey of the Industries and Resources of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 1-5.

2 Ibid., 5.

3 Ibid.

4 Trade by R.R. E.B.A. 1907-08, Table V, 70.

5 Trade by R.R. E.B.A. 1910-11, Table VII, 70.

produced 63,000 tons a year.¹ Most of the coal from the Assam fields was taken up by the steamer and the Assam Bengal Railway Trading Company for their own use.² Some, however, was sent by rail to Chittagong³ for bunkering and other purposes, though the amount was never large.

During the development of the port Assam was also drawn upon for supplies of stone for the harbour and river training works. An attempt was initially made to bring stone from the upper reaches of the Karnaphuli river, but the supply was quite insufficient. Then Rajmahal was tried, in Western Bengal, but the initial cost and high freight charges proved prohibitive. It was therefore from the Jettinga Valley in Assam that the stone for the revettment work at Chittagong was drawn from 1905-06 onwards, by way of the Assam Bengal Railway.⁴ From just over one lakh cubic feet in 1905-06, the quantities moved grew to over ten lakhs a year in 1909-10, and 1910-11 when the port works programme was at its height.⁵

One of the major imports of Chittagong port was also the product of the development of the port and of the Assam Bengal Railway - that is iron and steel fabrications. Of the goods thus imported the Assam Bengal Railway and Chittagong port itself were major consumers. Railway engines,

1 M.K.U. Molla, The New Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam, 154.

2 White, 58.

3 Trade by R.R. E.B.A. 1906-07, Table V, 69.

4 Chmn. Port Comms. to Agent A.B.Rly., 6 January 1909, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1912, Feb.8.

5 Admin.Rept. 1911-12, Beng.Proc.Mne. 1912, Sept.26-30.

and rolling stock, rails and fish plates, bridges and signalling equipment, ironwork for the jetties, cranes, and so on, were major items in the machinery, iron and steel import of the period, together with some timber from Sydney,¹ and railway sleepers from Western Australia, in 1905-06,² and New South Wales in 1908-09.³ But as the railway system expanded, tapping more and more of the tea garden areas in Sylhet and Assam, it also met other demands. The imports of iron, for example, rose from 6,213 cwt. in 1902-03⁴ to 185,000 in 1911-12.⁵ Much of this iron was in the form of corrugated iron sheeting. Initially imported to serve the railway and port goods sheds, station canopies, latrines and the like, it was increasingly used by the tea and other industries, as the Collector of Customs explained in his report for 1909-10: "The large increase in imports of this metal is principally due to the price of corrugated iron having fallen which induced buyers to purchase largely for building purposes".⁶

By 1911-12, the continuing low prices had given a further impetus to the import trade in corrugated iron sheeting, it was reported, as the wealthier classes started to use it in preference to thatch for roofing their houses.⁷ The growth in imports of machinery and mill works also marked the tapping of the tea estate market by the railway, though in

1 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1905-08, 3.

2 Sea Borne Trade Bengal 1905-06, I, Table XVI, 85.

3 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 I, Table XVI, 39.

4 Sea Borne Trade Bengal 1902-03, I, Table XVI, 82.

5 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 I, Table V, 8.

6 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1909-10, 5.

7 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 5.

1906-07 the figures were boosted by machinery imports for a cotton gin and in 1907 and 1908 by machinery for the construction of a cotton mill in Chittagong.¹ From as early as 1909 there was also a large increase in the importation of such articles as "pruning knives, hoes, etc., for use in the tea gardens",² "direct from Europe instead of from Calcutta",³ such items standing at over one lakh a year by 1911-12.⁴ Tin was another import of the tea gardens⁵ and of the Burma Oil Company,⁶ which used it for soldering its oil tins manufactured in Chittagong; tin imports rose from two cwts. in 1898-99⁷ to 49 cwts. in 1911-12.⁸ The rise reflect the beginning of a shift of trade from Calcutta to Chittagong and a growth in the two industries in the years before the outbreak of the first World War. A similar trade was that in imported tea chests - Indian woods were often too scented and green to use - which was quite substantial, being worth nearly eight lakhs in 1911-12.⁹

The development of the port and of the railway system also altered the pattern of trade in consumer goods - salt, sugar and cloth for example. Many items previously imported and distributed by way of Calcutta began

1 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1907-08, 3.

2 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1909-10, 5.

3 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1910-11, 5.

4 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 4.

5 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1907-08, 3.

6 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, 3.

7 Sea Borne Trade Bengal 1898-99 I, Table 8A, 50.

8 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 4.

9 Ibid. See also P. Gaswami, The Economic Development of Assam with Special Reference to the Twentieth Century, 226.

to be imported direct to the port of Chittagong. Hardware and cutlery, nearly all from the United Kingdom, reached a total value in 1896-97 of Rs.51,242¹ and provisions for the Europeans in the port and districts, and on the tea gardens, earlier mainly brought from Calcutta by rail and steamer, were also tried out as a direct import - a tiny quantity Rs.3,500 worth in 1892-93.² The results were promising, and in 1907-08 the figures had risen to Rs.56,398 - an increase attributed, as the Collector of Customs noted,³ "To larger importations of condensed milk, bacon and ham, etc., direct instead of via Calcutta".⁴

In 1911-12 a further impetus was given to this import by the formation of "co-operative stores at Chittagong", and their "obtaining their supplies direct from Europe".⁵ As with provisions, so with liquor - also imported almost exclusively from the United Kingdom - there was a steady shift to the use of Chittagong as the point of entry. By 1908-09 merchants had found it to their advantage to import wines, spirits and beers for Eastern Bengal and Assam through Chittagong, it being "cheaper to import direct from Europe instead of obtaining these requirements by rail from Calcutta".⁶ Sugar was another commodity which had not normally been imported, most of the area's requirements being met from the United Provinces, Bihar and Madras, and foreign sugar coming in through

1 Sea Borne Trade, Beng. 1896-97 I, Table 9A, 49.

2 Sea Borne Trade, Beng. 1892-93 I, Table 8A, 40.

3 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 I, Table V, 7.

4 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1907-08, 3.

5 Maritime Trade 1911-12, 5.

6 Maritime Trade 1909-10, 6.

Calcutta.¹ In 1905-06, however, "a cargo of 600 cwt. was specially imported from China.....as an experiment".² In 1906-07 there was a trial of German beet sugar, and in 1907-08 some 999 cwt. were imported from Java. This last proved a much more successful experiment, and formed the first of steadily increasing shipments to Chittagong of Java sugar, which was then invading the Indian market³ thanks to greater technical efficiency.

Much the same pattern can be seen in the trade in piece-goods. The Commissioner of Chittagong noted in 1884-85, "there is a very large trade in piece-goods and yarns.....these are imported entirely from Calcutta",⁴ whence they were distributed to consumers throughout the districts. Only a small proportion of these imports were re-exported from the district,⁵ the neighbouring areas of Noakhali, Tippera and

1 G.N. Gupta, 66.

2 Maritime Trade 1906-07, 4.

3 Java under the Dutch planters had long been supplying sugar to America and Japan, but the closure of these markets to this sugar in the late 19th century - resulting from the importation of Cuban sugar in America and the development of a sugar industry by the Japanese in Formosa, led the Dutch to turn towards India. C.N. Vakil, S.C. Bose, P.V. Deolalkar, Growth of Trade and Industry in Modern India: an Introductory Survey, 82.

4 River Borne Traffic 1884-85, 96.

5 Ann.Gen.Rept.Chitt.Div.1880. Beng.Proc.G.(Misc.) Dept.1880, Aug.38.15.

Dacca usually receiving their supplies from Calcutta.¹ By 1893-94, the beginnings of direct importation of piece-goods can be seen, however, in the annual statistics, and with the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway and the establishment of more regular steamer communication with Great Britain, a direct trade gradually grew up. By 1907-08, as the Collector of Customs noted, imports of piece-goods formed nearly ten per cent of all the foreign imports of Chittagong port,² while the value of the goods rose from some Rs.50,000 in 1893-94,³ to nearly Rs.6,000,000 in 1911-12.⁴ The bulk of the trade was with the United Kingdom, with small consignments from Belgium, Holland and Austria. There was also a very small, but quite rapidly expanding, importation of made-up cottons - sarees, scarves, dhutis and so on - "distinct signs", as the Chittagong Commissioner pointed out, "of growing prosperity".⁵ (These were good years for the tea industry, as Griffiths has pointed out,⁶ and as Bagchi records, "The jute industry had an almost unbroken record of prosperity from 1895 onwards".⁷

Of much greater significance, however, than any of the consumer items so far discussed, were salt and kerosene.

1 River Borne Traffic, 1884-85, 96.

2 Admin.E.B.A. 1907-08, 58.

3 River Borne Traffic, 1895-96, 31.

4 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 5.

5 Admin.E.B.A. 1910-11, 37.

6 Griffiths, Tea, 142.

7 A.K. Bagchi, Private Investment in India 1900-1939.

For centuries salt had been produced in the coastal areas of Chittagong,¹ but during the British rule a heavy duty was imposed on the country-made salt, and as a result the industry died off completely.² Foreign salt for private sale in Bengal began to be imported at some time around 1835.³ The bulk of the salt imported through Chittagong in the eighteen eighties was chiefly consumed in the town and district of Chittagong itself,⁴ smaller quantities going to Narainganj and Noakhali.⁵

Salt was mainly brought to Chittagong in the ships visiting the port to pick up export cargoes of jute and rice.⁶ Until 1896-97 Chittagong's salt trade was almost entirely with the United Kingdom. In 1889-90 and again in 1892-3, a cargo of salt was brought from Hamburg,⁷ but the salt was not received favourably, the Commissioner of Chittagong arguing that, "The people.....have now acquired a taste for this kind (Liverpool) of salt, and the consequence has been that no other kind of salt is now imported".⁸ However, in 1897-98 Hamburg salt was again imported, and this

1 G.Plowden, Rept. upon the Manufacture and sale of and tax upon salt in British India, P.P. 1856, XXVI III, 142.

2 District Census Report, Chittagong 1961, 23.

3 Salt Rept. by G. Plowden, 151.

4 Lyall, 16.

5 Ibid., 17.

6 Beng.C.C. 1891-1892 II, 429.

7 River Borne Traffic 1892-93, 33.

8 Ann.Gen.Rept.Chitt.Div.1880. Beng.Proc.G.Dept.(Misc.) 1880, Aug.38-15. See also C.N. Vakil, S.C. Bose, P.V. Deolalkar, Growth of Trade and Industry in Modern India, 86.

time economic considerations prevailed over personal likings, for it is found that from that year Hamburg was one of the major exporters of salt to Chittagong.¹ The success of the export of Hamburg salt was due to "the high price of Liverpool salt".² Salt from Aden to the port of Chittagong made its first appearance in 1902-03,³ and from 1905-06 onward there were larger exports of salt from Aden to Chittagong (except for the year 1910-11) than from the United Kingdom,⁴ the shift again being due to the price advantage enjoyed by the new competitor.⁵ From 1907-08 Spanish salt also began to be imported through the port of Chittagong. Its import from then on was almost equal to that imported from the United Kingdom.⁵

One important point about the growth of the salt trade in Chittagong, as in the whole of India at the beginning of the twentieth century, was the impetus given by the successive reductions of salt duty⁶ from Rs.2-8

1 River Borne Traffic 1897-98, 69.

2 River Borne Traffic 1896-97, 57.

3 See Table.

4 See Table.

5 The average market prices of salt during the years 1911-12 are given below:

Liverpool Panga	Rs.90 per 100 mds.
Hamburg	90 "
Spanish	80 "
Aden	70 "

Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 5.

6 See Table on the Import of Salt from Foreign Countries.

and Rs.2 per maund in 1902-03, to Rs.1 in 1907-08, and as it fell consumption and imports rose - at Chittagong imports almost doubled. This reduction was brought about under the pressure of nationalist politicians and under the advantage of several successive surplus budgets.¹

The growth in salt imports at Chittagong also owed something to the better port facilities at the port, but it would have been much larger if there had been a separate salt jetty at Chittagong. As has already been explained, the absence² of a separate jetty for salt led very often to the diversion of salt steamers to the port of Calcutta, especially when the movement of rice through Chittagong was heavy.

The development of an import trade in kerosene, used as an alternative to vegetable oils as an illuminant, and of smaller quantities of oil for machine lubrication - and in Bengal for 'batching' jute during its manufacture - was a feature of the 1880's. At that date, output within India from the small oilfields of Baluchistan, the Punjab, Assam and Burma³ was very limited,⁴ so that almost the whole demand was met from abroad. Until 1886, America as the leading producer of oil in the world, was the principal supplier, the bulk of the sales being of kerosene.⁵

1 C.N. Vakil, et al., Growth of Trade and Industry in Modern India,
An Introductory Survey, 82.

2 See Chapter V.

3 From 1886 to 1936, Burma was administratively a part of India.

4 Sir George Watt, The Commercial Product of India, 873-75. The total output of the oilfields in the Punjab and in the U.P. in 1903 amounted to 1,793 gallons, and in 1906 to 871 gallons. In Assam the output of the Assam Oil Company in 1902 was 1,756,759 gallons.

5 B. Dasgupta, 2, 17.

Chittagong at that time received its share of American imports by coaster, either direct from Calcutta or via Narainganj.¹ It also drew a small amount of kerosene from Burma,² though at that time the Burmese oil industry was still in its infancy, with production mostly from indigenous hand-dug wells.³ Then from 1884-85 a complete change in the course of trade at Chittagong occurred with oil to the value of just over two lakh rupees coming from Boston and New York direct.⁴ With that shipment began a rapid increase in the consumption of American oil until it drove out the Burmese oil to a considerable extent. The direct movement of American kerosene also checked the imports into Chittagong from both Calcutta and Narainganj, the movement by country boat from Calcutta falling from 38,000 to a mere 4,000 maunds between 1889-90 and 1890-91, while in the latter year Chittagong, instead of receiving kerosene from Narainganj, even exported some to it.⁵

In 1885-86 for the first time a cargo of Russian oil⁶ was imported, and in the next year the cheapness of this oil enable it to capture the market at Chittagong⁷ despite a brief revival of the American trade. Then from the opening of the twentieth century, the market came to be dominated by

1 River Borne Traffic 1884-85, 99.

2 Ibid.

3 B. Dasgupta, 17.

4 River Borne Traffic 1884-85, 99.

5 River Borne Traffic 1890-91, 99.

6 Russian supplies were nearer to hand than American, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal to oil tankers in 1892. Production costs were lower, and kerosene could be sold cheaply as there was little internal Russian consumption.

7 B. Dasgupta, 14.

imports from Burma, where the opening up of major European-managed oil-fields had followed the conquest of Upper Burma in 1886. At Chittagong imports from Burma from 1901 onwards took never less than 94 per cent of the market, and in many years as much as 98 per cent. Oil thus disappears from the foreign trade tables of Chittagong and appears instead under the heading of internal coastal trade. "The trade in oil from abroad fell off by 32.7 per cent, and is now trifling", the Collector of Customs recorded in 1906-07, "the fall being specially in kerosene oil, as the supply is now received from Burma".¹

The shift was in part the result of the low output costs in Burma and the low transport costs to Chittagong,² in part the result of the tariff protection which Burmese oil enjoyed while Burma was part of India, and in part the result of agreement between the major oil firms.³ As Dasgupta relates, from 1897 there had been a vigorous price war between the major international firms for the control of the markets in India, South-east Asia and China, which was finally settled in 1905 by the division of the eastern market between the Burmah Oil and Asiatic Oil Companies. The agreement which was drawn up recognized the "superior geographical claim" of Burmah Oil in eastern India, and stipulated that the Burmah Oil Company should be allowed to market a maximum of 100,000 cases per week (or 195,000 tons per year) of kerosene in that area.⁴

1 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, 4.

2 B. Dasgupta, 21.

3 Ibid., 17.

4 Ibid., 21-22.

In terms of quantity imports were growing sharply and fairly consistently throughout the period, and was the result of greater consumption brought about by the introduction of cheap German lamps specially designed for service with mineral oil.¹ Chittagong figures rose during the period from 1 million gallons in 1898-99, to 3 million in 1902-03, to 6 million in 1907-08,² and 8½ million gallons in 1911-12.³ The other aspect to be noted is the establishment of a factory for making kerosene tins in the port - which explains the growth in tin imports in the period.

Both salt and kerosene were re-exported to Chittagong's hinterland, local consumption being only modest. Salt was sent by coasting boats to Narainganj, Noakhali and Tippera and by railway to other parts of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The salt, stored at Chittagong in private and public salt golas, was despatched under bond⁴ to bonded warehouses of which there were twenty-eight in Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1906-07.⁵ Most of these were on river sites⁶ and presumably fed by river steamers or boats, but in 1906-07 when salt began to be carried from Chittagong to Assam by rail a private warehouse was licensed at Balaganj in Assam to Messrs. Turner Morrison and Company.⁷

1 Watt, 812.

2 Admin.Rept. 1907-08, Beng.Proc.Mne. Dept.1909, March 1-9.

3 Admin.Rept. 1911-12, Beng.Proc.Mne. Dept.1912, Sept.26-30.

4 Rules and Notification Under the Sea Customs Act 1878 now in force at the Ports in Bengal with Appendix and Index corrected up to 31st July 1912-13. Transhipment of salt at Chittagong.

5 Admin.E.B.A. 1906-07, 64.

6 Comm.Chitt.Div. to Govt.of E.B.A. 31 Jan.1906, E.B.A. Proc.P.W.D. June 1906, Aug.16.

7 Admin.E.B.A. 1906-07, 63.

Kerosene, too, was sent inland both by river and rail,¹ by the former route to Narainganj for distribution in the Dacca Block, and by rail to the Tippera, Surma Valley and Upper and Lower Assam Blocks. Since on average only about 6 per cent went by river, it is clear that the area west of the Meghna continued to be in the marketing area of Calcutta rather than of Chittagong.²

In the coasting trade from Chittagong to other parts of India and Burma, excluding Calcutta, raw or roughly cured tobacco was perhaps the largest item, small quantities moving sporadically from Chittagong to Burma,³ but much larger quantities in normal years moving in the opposite direction - as much as 130,000 lb. in the peak year of 1912.⁴ From Bombay there was a miscellany of minor items, such as fishmaws, cotton seed, betel nut and metals, and from Madras some refined sugar and ghee.⁵ The trade to and from other ports of Eastern Bengal was far more important than any of these areas except Burma, however. Among these ports Narainganj and Barisal were much the most important, though statistics appear under a variety of forms: for example, Narainganj was treated as

1 Trade by R.R.E.B.A. 1910-11, Tables V and VI.

2 See Table appended on Chittagong's trade with its hinterland by all routes, 1910-11.

3 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07 II, Table 9, 43; and Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 II, Table 9, 51.

4 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07 II, Table 7, 23; and Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 II, Table 7, 27.

5 Ibid.

Distribution of Foreign Trade of Chittagong by countries according to value.

The following table shows how the trade of this port with foreign countries was distributed

	Imports.							Exports.							Percentage which the total of each country bears to the whole.		
	1904-05.	1905-06.	1906-07.	1907-08.	1908-09.	1909-10.	1910-11.	1904-05.	1905-06.	1906-07.	1907-08.	1908-09.	1909-10.	1910-11.	1905-09	1906-07.	
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	
British Possessions—																	
United Kingdom	21,92,590	24,30,431	33,08,157	2,31,42,311	2,48,07,870	3,07,08,656	85.7	70.3									
Ceylon	18,153	75	26	10,79,825	2,26,878	2,417	.7	.0									
Aden	1,25,065	2,23,905	1,23,537	20,350	...	...	.7	.0						
Maldives	15,782	...	...	14,851	...	...	.0	.3				
Strait Settlement	4,929	6,152	8,957	...	...	...	.0	.0					
Hongkong	...	7,212	...	73,530	45,000	...	.0	.0							
Mauritius	...	582	...	...	...	...	.0	.0				
Cape Colony	...	500	...	1,26,590	2,52,623	...	.0	.0							
Trinidad	...	...	...	...	360	...	.0	.0			
New Zealand	...	...	...	2,418	2,595	855	.01	.0						
Australia	45,423	1,13,155	1,10,398	...	...	913	.4	.3							
Total	23,91,912	27,51,932	35,56,075	2,44,59,875	2,53,65,416	3,07,12,741	85.6	79.8									
Foreign Countries—																	
Germany	1,55,133	51,157	1,22,486	7,65,575	8,43,145	12,54,726	2.9	3.2									
France	41	993	556	7,88,973	16,250	19,48,208	.1	4.5									
Belgium	62,039	1,29,741	1,64,733	21,500	8,750	...	.4	.4							
Holland	4,743	395	11,365	...	...	...	.009	.0					
Austria	...	192	2,735	...	...	...	.006	.0					
Russia	...	...	...	...	17,600	...	.1	.05			
Japan	...	2,000	7,632	...	...	...	.08	.0					
China (Amoy)	...	8,594	...	...	...	...	.0	.0				
Sumatra	78,866	...	...	...	...	...	.0	.0			
Rangoon	100	...	...	6,34,553	16,000	...	.1	.0					
Portuguese East Africa (Delagoa Bay)	60	...	...	6,20,704	25,00,838	51,06,869	.79	11.9							
United States of America	...	...	...	27,94,005	34,03,083	83,09,803	11.4	20.6						
Total	3,00,975	2,26,012	3,09,507	27,94,005	34,03,083	83,09,803	11.4	20.6									
Grand Total	26,92,917	30,07,944	38,65,582	2,71,04,880	2,87,68,509	3,90,22,544	99.9	99.9									

DISTRIBUTION OF FOREIGN TRADE OF CHITTAGONG BY COUNTRIES
ACCORDING TO VALUE

The following table shows how the trade of this port with foreign countries was distributed

	Import.			Export.			Percentage which the total of each country bears to the whole.	
	1909-1910.	1910-1911.	1911-1912.	1909-1910	1910-1911.	1911-1912.	1910-1911.	1911-1912.
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.		
British possessions—								
United Kingdom ...	44,52,311	44,74,160	49,58,737	3,60,70,249	3,69,96,668	4,40,93,689	82·7	81·96
Ceylon ...	481	20,101	30	86,974	8,300	1,50,482	...	·25
Agca ...	2,01,778	79,847	1,42,420	...	...	...	0·2	·24
Swethenham (Federated Malay States).	...	...	...	...	100	...	...	...
Straits Settlements ...	6,087	8,707	53,197	...	...	600	...	·09
Mauritius ...	1	...	...	...	...	11,000	...	·02
New Zealand ...	...	...	...	1,225	...	1,470	...	...
Australia ...	3,184	93,925	3,31,897	948	1,378	1,565	0·2	·56
Maldives ...	64	...	...	...	...	...	...	..
Total ...	46,63,908	46,76,740	64,86,284	3,81,69,396	3,70,06,396	4,42,68,706	83·1	83·12
Foreign countries—								
Sweden ...	...	...	8,436	...	...	...	...	·01
Portugal ...	...	...	...	...	12,500	...	·2	...
Germany ...	1,28,661	74,074	2,51,014	30,28,934	44,15,710	48,97,405	8·9	8·60
France ...	6,288	6,250	6,440	9,53,685	13,84,877	26,14,729	2·7	4·38
Belgium ...	1,82,079	86,218	39,807	1,09,150	67,000	1,24,208	0·3	·27
Holland ...	2,74,139	1,69,971	4,18,369	...	39,500	...	0·4	·70
Austria ...	...	144	164	...	...	...	...	...
Japan ...	7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Java ...	1,68,046	1,18,573	1,60,739	...	...	...	0·2	·27
Spain ...	62,305	54,786	84,622	...	...	...	0·1	·14
United States of America.	841	655	...	16,93,849	20,57,799	14,96,875	4·3	2·60
Russia ...	...	...	...	98,760	...	...	...	...
Norway (Christiania)...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Egypt ...	...	...	...	...	...	3,194	...	·01
Italy ...	1,122	1,510	1,683	...	...	...	...	...
Port Said ...	74,481	...	...	...	387	...	...	...
Total ...	9,01,969	6,12,181	9,70,174	62,84,369	79,77,773	91,35,409	17·0	16·88
GRAND TOTAL ...	55,65,875	61,87,921	64,66,465	4,34,43,755	4,49,84,169	5,33,94,115	100·1	100·00

a port for the collection of statistical information until May 1906,¹ but thereafter only as port for coasting trade, while Barisal was not recognized as a port until the last year of this period.²

Three features stand out in the overall picture of the trade of the port of Chittagong in our period. One was the continued dominance of Great Britain in the export and, to a lesser degree, the import trades, the pattern being one of exports of foodstuffs and raw materials to Britain and the import of machine-made manufactures. The second was the overall expansion of Indian trade in the period, in which Chittagong shared. The third was the success of Chittagong in proportionally enlarging her share of the total trade, most notably on the import side, though of course even in 1912 Chittagong still ranked as a very minor port in comparison with the giants Calcutta and Bombay, as the following table³ makes clear.

	Imports		Exports	
	1901-02 per cent	1911-12 per cent	1901-02 per cent	1911-12 per cent
Calcutta	40.1	37.5	43.2	37.7
Bombay	34.7	35.6	30.5	27.7
Karachi	7.9	9.5	7.1	10.8
Rangoon	7.4	8.3	6.5	8.9
Madras	7.4	6.7	3.6	3.1
Tuticorin	.7	.8	1.7	2.3
Chittagong	.1	.5	1.2	2.3

1 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, 9.

2 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 13.

3 M.M.P. 1911-12, 285.

Of Chittagong's total foreign trade at the beginning of the period under study, that is in 1892-93, less than five per cent by value consisted of imports - indeed the town, district and wider hinterland of Chittagong depended almost totally for their import needs on Calcutta. Whereas a substantial foreign export trade from Chittagong dated back to the mid-1870's,¹ the import trade was of "a comparatively recent date".² With the opening up by rail of the Assam Valley as an effective hinterland to the port, and the construction of port facilities capable of handling ocean-going vessels, however, the growth of imports developed well. The movement of materials for the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway gave an early boost and by the end of the period, in 1912, the percentage of imports in the total trade Chittagong handled had risen to 13 per cent. At the same time, while all-India export and import figures (bullion excluded) had grown from 1700 million rupees in 1892-3,³ to 3661 million in 1911-12,⁴ those for Chittagong had risen from 9 million rupees in 1892-3 to 60 million rupees in 1911-12. The growth of India's trade as a whole has been attributed to the 'opening-up' of inland areas by the transport revolution initiated by the railway and the appearance of the steamship, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.⁵

1 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 2.

2 Admin.Beng. 1891-92, 118.

3 Review of the Trade of India, 1892-93, 1.

4 East India (Trade) Review of the Trade of India 1911-12, Accounts and Papers 1912-13, LXII, 975.

5 V. Anstey, The Trade of the Indian Ocean, 5.

The growth of Chittagong can be seen as very specially dependent on these two factors.

The development of trade through Chittagong port closely mirrored that of India as a whole in one other aspect, as will already have been noted in the detailed analysis of trade in particular commodities. It was dominated by the relationship with Great Britain. Between 75 and 81 per cent of the export trade of Chittagong was with Great Britain. Until 1906-07 America occupied second place as a recipient of goods exported from Chittagong - in that year the percentages were Great Britain 79.3 per cent: America 11.9 per cent: France 4.6 per cent: and Germany 3.2 per cent. Thereafter Germany came to take second place. Thus in 1911-12, while Great Britain's share had risen almost to 82 per cent, Germany took 8.6 per cent, France 4.2 per cent,¹ and the United States 2.5 per cent. The ^{commodity} pattern of the export trade to foreign countries at the beginning, middle and end of our period was as follows:

	1895-6	1905-6	1911-2
	Rs	Rs	Rs
Jute	7,141,842	12,517,862	24,882,101
Rice	588,589	589,270	166,170
Tea	63,140	15,578,512	27,778,604
Tobacco	749	19	-
Other articles	1,939	82,836	567,240
TOTAL	7,796,259 ²	28,768,499 ³	53,394,115 ⁴

1 See Table, Foreign Trade of Chittagong by Countries.

2 River Borne Traffic 1895-96, Appendix G, 268.

3 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1906-7, 4.

4 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, 6.

Just as in the export sector, so Chittagong's import trade was dominated by the United Kingdom. In 1905-06 the Commissioner of the Chittagong Division wrote, "Imports from the United Kingdom represented about 80 per cent of the total import trade of Chittagong during the year, imports from other European countries about 7 per cent and imports from Australia about 3 per cent of the whole. The remainder is divided between America, Africa and other countries in Asia".¹

There were three main reasons for this British dominance; the one was Britain's early lead, not yet fully overtaken, in many factory-produced consumer goods - cotton or woollen textiles for example - the second was that many imports of capital goods were made under government contract, and as S.B. Saul notes, "tenders were only invited from British firms",² and the third was the close interlocking of British business interests in the Presidency towns, commercial, banking and transport.³ The few partial exceptions he pointed out, were Belgium, France and Germany.⁴ Belgium by the mid-'90's was the largest exporter of steel to India. France supplied about £600,000 worth of silks, apparel and wines. Germany's main exports were railway materials and cheap woollen goods. Germany's seeming break-through in these fields, Saul argues, was a very minor one, "German manufacturers entering the market only for such orders when British suppliers were so busy as to be forced to quote long delivery

1 Admin. E.B.A. 1905-06, 150.

2 Saul, 198.

3 V. Anstey, The Trade of the Indian Ocean, 10.

4 Saul, 198.

dates".¹ Thus it is found that though railway materials for the construction of the Assam Bengal Railway and the jetties were almost exclusively imported from the United Kingdom, imports were at times also made from Belgium, Germany and Austria-Hungary. The 'topping-up' nature of such imports is apparent from the figures themselves - Rs.194,000 on railway locomotives and engine parts from Germany in 1903-04,²; materials worth only some Rs.10,000 and Rs.6,000 from Belgium in 1908-09 and 1909-10,³ and in that last year some Rs.228,000 worth of rails and railway fishplates from Austria-Hungary.⁴ As Lehmann has shown, the British locomotive manufacturers made sure that even the modest German sales of 1903-04 were not repeated, by imposing their own locomotive designs, with India Office backing, on the Government of India.⁵

Notwithstanding the quite promising performance of Chittagong port in the twenty years here studied, the expectations of those who originally championed its development, or of those who used its potential as an argument for the partition of Bengal, or indeed of the government of that new province, were not really fulfilled. It had ranked seventh among Indian ports at the turn of the century, and at the end of our period, in 1912 still did so, though on the export side it shared sixth place with Tuticorin. It certainly had not shown the same dynamism as Karachi,

1 Saul, 200.

2 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07, I, Table XVI, 36.

3 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12, I, Table XIV, 38.

4 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1910-11, I, Table XVI, 38.

5 F.Lehmann, 'Great Britain and the supply of railway locomotives of India: A Case Study of Economic Imperialism', Indian Economic and Social History Review II, 4, 1965, 297-305.

though as Feldman's study of Karachi and its Chamber of Commerce shows, that port was in many ways an interesting parallel to Chittagong - overshadowed by an established major rival at Bombay, the seat of the Presidency, dependent on railway construction to tap the potential of its hinterland, and, as the Chamber thought, shortsightedly starved of capital at every point. It is perhaps worthwhile therefore briefly to review the main reasons for Chittagong's slower growth.

The most obvious reason for Chittagong's relatively poor performance was that it had to share much of its hinterland with Calcutta. As Apjohn points out, "the trade of the eastern districts of Bengal for a long time centred in Chittagong",¹ but from the early eighteenth century and more quickly after Plassey, trade was diverted to Hooghly, until the whole of Bengal became the hinterland of Calcutta. Apart from the Assam Bengal Railway, a late arrival on the scene, the whole communication system of the Presidency converged upon Calcutta - railways, river steamer lines and roads.² The Assam Bengal Railway from its birth found itself in competition with the Eastern Bengal Railway and with river steamer companies and coastal shipping lines with already existing and close ties with Calcutta, whose vested interest it was to limit the effective competition of the newcomer. Their success in preventing the establishment of a bridge across the Meghna which would have opened the

1 Report by O'Conner and Apjohn, 2 Dec.1893: Beng.Proc.Mne.1894, Feb.23-48.

2 Karachi, too, saw its hinterland in Rajasthan, in the Doab and in the Punjab threatened by the growth of the rail system running northwards from Bombay, but its own rail links to the Punjab at least were established at much the same time as those of Bombay.

rich rice and jute growing areas of Bakarganj, Faridpur, Dacca and Mymensingh to the Assam Bengal Railway was a case in point.

Another example of the same process of stifling competition can be seen in the case of steamer services from the United Kingdom to Chittagong. As has already been seen, the Assam Bengal Railway Company in order to establish the export trade of the port of Chittagong, had arranged in 1901 for the Clan Line to visit Chittagong. At that time, however, no corresponding attempt was made to promote Chittagong's import trade, although the Clan Line from time to time, as cargo offered, had sent steamers direct from Glasgow and Liverpool to Chittagong.¹ The arrangement was clearly inadequate, and so as the third jetty neared completion, both the Port Commissioners and the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce began to exert pressure on the railway for the improvement of the situation. In their Annual Report for 1906, the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce expressed the following view: "The foreign import figures emphasize Chittagong's principle need at present, which is regular direct communication from London. Until this desideratum is arrived at, the large hinterland of which Chittagong is a natural port, must continue to supply its requirement from the distant market of Calcutta, and Chittagong foreign trade will show progress in the export direction only".² The Commissioner of Chittagong Division had also stressed the point in a letter of 31 January 1906 to the Government of Bengal, in which he wrote; "The great need is

1 Managing Director A.B. Rly. to Agent A.B. Rly. 19 July 1907, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1907, May 32.

2 Ordinary Meeting Post.Comms. 14 Sept. 1907, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1907, May 32.

for the development of general imports direct from England.....an arrangement with another line of ocean-going steamers should include a provision for regular and direct sailing from England (preferably London)".¹

Under this pressure the Assam Bengal Railway Company entered into an agreement with the Clan Line for the through-booking of goods from Europe to stations on their railway lines, with effect from 1 July 1908.² They further came to an understanding with the Clan Line by which that line agreed, for a period of two years, to maintain throughout the year a regular two-monthly service (as the minimum) by way of the Suez Canal and Bombay between the West Coast ports of the United Kingdom and Chittagong.³ The Port Commissioners, however, were not satisfied by these arrangements. They maintained the view, which they had earlier voiced, that an arrangement with another shipping line should also be made by the railway. They wrote: "The Port of Chittagong has become very nearly the monopoly of the Clan Line. Not only is the Clan jetty berth preferentially reserved for Clan vessels, but many other Clan steamers come here which are berthed at other jetty berths. This would not be objectionable if they would bring imports frequently".⁴ The Port Commissioners went on:

1 From the Comm.Chitt.Division to the Govt. of Beng. 31 Jan.1906, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1906, Aug 16.

2 Through Booking of Goods by Clan Line from Europe to Assam Beng., Assam Bengal Railway. Index to Official Meeting 1908.

3 From the Managing Director, A.B. Rly. to Agent A.B. Rly. 19 July 1907, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1908, May 32.

4 Chmn. Port Trust to Govt. of E.B.A. 26 September 1907, E.B.A. Proc P.W.D. Mne. 1907, May 32.

"With three full-sized jetties, it would be possible to secure the admission on similar preferential terms of another company which would bring imports more regularly than the Clan Line now contemplate doing". With this the Assam Bengal Railway Company did not agree. "Until at least one more jetty has been added to the very limited berthing accommodation at Chittagong", they wrote, it would not be possible for them to do more than what they already had done.¹ The Port Commissioners replied: "The Railway Company are not justified in postponing the consideration of the question on the admission of another line on preferential terms as to berthing until the fourth jetty is completed",² and accused the Railway Company of sacrificing the interests of the port for their own interest and convenience. The Chairman of the Commissioners wrote: "It may appear at first sight that the Assam Bengal Railway Company should know their own business best, but it has to be remembered that this Company are scarcely working on commercial lines. The interest on the capital is guaranteed by Government, and there is, it is understood, no immediate probability of the profits earned being sufficient to cover that interest. In the circumstances, the Assam Bengal Railway Company are inclined to take matters leisurely, and do not seem as much alive to the necessity of the development of the traffic as they would if the interest on the capital were not guaranteed. It is a comfortable arrangement for them to keep Chittagong practically a port for the Clan Line only, but this is not altogether in the true interests of the development of the trade of the Province".³

1 Managing Director A.B. Rly. to Agent A.B. Rly., 19 July 1907, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1907, May 32.

2 Chmn. Port Trust to Govt. of E.B.A., 26 September 1907, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1907, May 32.

3 Chmn. Port. Comms. to Govt. E.B.A., 26 September 1907, E.B.A. Proc. P.W.D. Mne. 1907, May 32.

Whether the reluctance on the part of the Assam Bengal Railway to make arrangements for another steamship line to use the port, whose jetties they controlled, was due to the existence of an undisclosed understanding with the Clan Line, assuring them of a monopoly is not known. It does not seem unlikely, however. Part of the published agreement entered into with the Clan Line for a regular two monthly sailing from the UK to Chittagong had been a guarantee by the Railway Company that "during its continuance the Clan Line will have the carriage of all railway stores despatched from West Coast ports at fixed rates".¹ There is, moreover, an instructive later chapter to the story of the Port Commissioners' attempts to secure regular visits by other shipping lines. The Commissioners persisted in their pressure upon the Railway Company after their rebuff in 1906, and on 5 August 1909 an agreement on the same terms as those enjoyed by the Clan Line was made by the Assam Bengal Railway with the British India Steam Navigation Company² whereby "that Company which has hitherto carried Chittagong cargo from London by transshipment from Calcutta", agreed to "give direct delivery at Chittagong"³ sailing every six weeks outwards from Middlesborough and London to Chittagong via Port Said, Port Sudan, Suaken, Malabar Coast ports and Madras.⁴ The Port Commissioners seemd to have won a notable victory. But the history of the shipping lines, as George Blake has set

- 1 Managing Director A.B.Rly. to Agent A.B.Rly. 19 July 1907, E.B.A. Proc.P.W.D. Mne. 1907, May 32.
- 2 Messrs. Bullock Brothers and Company to Port Officer Chittagong, 1 Feb.1909, O.M.P.C. 1909, 366.
- 3 Messrs. Cayzer Irvine and Company Ltd., to A.B.Rly., 29 Dec.1908, O.M.P.C. 1909, 366.
- 4 Messrs. Bullock Brothers and Company to Port Officer Chittagong, 1 Feb.1909, O.M.P.C. 1909, 366.

out in his B.I. Centenary 1856-1956, was more often of agreements to share out the market under control arrangements than of vigorous competition. Part of the 1909 agreement thus laid down that the B.I.S.N.C. would not ship cargo out of Chittagong,¹ thus respecting the established interest of the Clan Line in the export trade of the port. When the new line began its operations, it was found that not enough freight was available at the listed ports, and the B.I.S.N.C. therefore extended their route to take in Zanzibar and other East African ports.² As a consequence, goods shipped from England by that line took over two and a half months to arrive at Chittagong.³ Since Chittagong firms could not use British India to ship return cargoes outwards, the new service proved something of a failure. The Collector of Customs summed up, "the advent of the new steamship service has not, as was expected, benefited the trade of Chittagong". He went on, "It would be interesting to know the compact arrived at between the Clan Line and the newcomers, which induced the latter not to make a bid for a share in the foreign export trade of the port".⁴

It should be noted that Clan Line not only prevented the effective operation of the steamship lines at the port, but had driven a hard bargain before it would itself serve the port. The port authorities to secure regular Clan sailings had been obliged to allow much higher

1 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1909-10, 2.

2 Ibid., 2.

3 Ibid.

4 Maritime Trade E.B.A. 1909-10, 2.

freight rates on goods imported or exported from Chittagong than were current at Calcutta. The rates charged by the Clan Line appear in 1908 to have been "2s. 6d. a ton above current rates at Calcutta for exports and 10 per cent above for imports".¹ The regular call of Clan Line ships at Chittagong had thus only been secured at the cost of blunting the competitive edge of the port. In 1908 the Port Commissioners pointed out that "in view of the improved facilities being provided at Chittagong, especially as regards warehouses, accommodation and discharge", "the rate of freight should be the same for both inward and outward cargo at Chittagong as at Calcutta to or from the United Kingdom, Europe and America, for steamers enjoying a monopoly of accommodation at the jetties".² The Clan Line defended the continuance of the higher rate on the ground that Calcutta provided full cargoes and Chittagong did not. But to this the Port Commissioners made the obvious rejoinder,³ that it was the high rate charged at Chittagong which was upsetting the balance of freight availability at the two ports. The Assam Bengal Railway supporting the Port Commissioners, related that since "regular sailings between Chittagong and the United Kingdom have been instituted, the difficulty of obtaining full or, at all events, paying cargoes for that port must be greatly aggravated by any discrimination in favour of Calcutta, and that, in their opinion, if the rates, as between the two ports, were placed on a footing of equality, there would be such an increase in the volume of traffic to and from Chittagong as would, in any event, more than compensate for the reduction in the Chittagong rate".⁴

1 Ordinary Meeting Port Comms. 4 September 1908, O.M.P.C. 1908, 313.

2 Ibid.

3 Secretary A.B. Rly. to Agent A.B. Rly., 24 January 1909, O.M.P.C. 1909, 388.

4 Ibid.

The logic of the argument seemed to have had the desired effect, and it is found that in 1910 Messrs. James Finlay and Company Ltd., intimated that the Clan Line owners had decided to adopt the Calcutta tariff for Chittagong, "for all cargo with the exception of iron and steel joists which at present to Calcutta are at exceptionally low rates". The offer was less generous than might be thought, for as the Agent, the Assam Bengal Railway pointed out, "if the intention of the Clan Line owners is to exempt all classes of iron from the reduction in freight, then the concession loses much of its value as a very large proportion of the imports of Chittagong from Great Britain consists of articles manufactured from iron".²

Nevertheless, the reduction was a step forward in promoting the trade of the port, perhaps induced by the bright future which then seemed probable. But this bright prospect was short-lived, and gradually faded away when a second dredger was not procured to dredge the river Karnaphuli and make it, as Curzon had promised, fit for larger vessels.³ Instead, by 1912, as the Indian Tea Association in their meeting of the General Committee pointed out, "There was no prospect at present of any other line going to Chittagong. One reason for this was believed to be that only light draught vessels such as the Clan Line boats could berth at Chittagong and that several of the Conference Lines would have to build special vessels if they wished to compete with the Clan Line there".⁴

1 Messrs. James Finlay and Co.Ltd., Agent Clan Line to Port Commns., 8 June 1910, O.M.P.C. 1910, 557.

2 Agent A.B. Rly. to Board, 6 Sept. 1910, O.M.P.C. 1910.

3 Address at Chittagong by the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, 14 Feb. 1904, P.P. 1906, LXXXI, 845.

4 Meeting of the General Committee Indian Tea Association, 27 Feb. 1912, Statesman, 15 March 1912.

This was due to the fact that, "the only two months in which the depths on the bars at high water neap tides exceeded 24 ft. 2 ins. were July and August".¹

Thus Chittagong Port remained a monopoly of the Clan Line and with large steamers not being in a position to come up to the jetties, the trade of the port stagnated. The highest trade figure was reached in 1913-14 when its export turnover was valued at Rs.48,486,941,² and its import at Rs.13,928,864.³ Thereafter, under wartime conditions, which made any improvement of the port impossible, the turnover of the port fell away very sharply indeed.⁴

The poor performances of the foreign import trade is linked with another aspect of the history of the port and of the railway to which its success was closely tied. The commercial interest of the Assam Bengal Railway was independent of the origin or the destination of the goods which it carried. What was important to the railway was the availability of freight, and in sufficiently large and regular supply, to make both up and down traffic profitable. To this extent the interest of the railway and that of the port as a would-be ocean terminal were not necessarily coterminous.

The railway in their effort to develop a down trade from Assam and Eastern Bengal to Chittagong and so to make operations profitable in both directions were quite happy to see the goods shipped on to Calcutta,

1 Proceeding No.6, 1912-13 of the Indian Tea Association, 3 May 1912, O.M.P.C. 1912, 801.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1913-14 I, Table IVA, 19.

3 Ibid., Table IIIA, 17.

4 In 1914-15 the value of its exports dropped to Rs.33,406,135 and in 1917-18 to Rs.22,983,348. In the same years its imports dropped first to Rs.9,540,385 and then to Rs.4,070,988. Sea Borne Trade Beng.1914-15 I, Tables IIIA, IVA, 18-20. Sea Borne Trade Beng.1917-18 I, Tables IIIA, IVA, 15-16.

especially if they could also control the movement of the return cargo from there. The commercial logic of their operations as a railway thus led them to make persistent efforts to promote the coastal trade to Calcutta, though this relegated Chittagong to the position of a feeder port. Thus in 1905-06, they entered into an arrangement with the B.I.S.N. Company and with the Asiatic Steam Navigation Company to develop the coasting trade to Calcutta,¹ which did in consequence receive a considerable boost. As the Chittagong District Gazetteer noted, "The coasting trade of Chittagong with Bengal - which was mainly with Calcutta - after falling off continuously with the opening of the Assam Bengal Railway.....increased.. in 1905-06".² The main revival was due to the export of raw jute brought down to Chittagong by the railway and thence shipped to Calcutta. After a trial of several years, the contract was ended. The Managing Agents, Messrs. Turner, Morrison and Company, explained the failure: "In their desire to increase the traffic on their system, and attract additional cargo to and from Calcutta and stations on their line the Railway some years ago approached us.....we lent our support and assistance, which resulted in a working arrangement for a time. After giving it a thorough trial, however, we found our share of the earnings so small that it would not pay us to continue, as we were better off without it, and in course of time after trying certain modifications the scheme lapsed".³ (The date on which the scheme was terminated is not known, but the coasting trade figures suggest that it may have been in 1908-09.) Despite this set-back, however, the Assam Bengal Railway proceeded to negotiate an agreement with a newly-formed steamer company, that of Andrew Yule

1 Memorandum regarding coasting trade jetties at Chittagong by J.L.Brown, Manager Messrs.Bullock and Co., 2 Aug.1905, Beng.Proc.Mne.1912, Apr.48.

2 East Bengal District Gazetteer, Chittagong 1908, 124.

3 Messrs. Turner, Morrison and Co. to Govt. of East Bengal, 18 Feb. 1911, Beng.Proc.Mne. 1912, Apr. 32.

and Company, under which the latter agreed to ship coal purchased by the railway from Calcutta to Chittagong and at the same time to carry backwards and forwards any other cargo which the railway could control.¹ The trade figures suggest that this scheme did work, for a few years at least.

But the final point that needs to be made in seeking for an explanation of Chittagongport's rather modest performance, even after the partition of Bengal, is that her lack of development merely reflected the lack of development of the province which formed her hinterland. Commenting on the industrial state of Eastern Bengal and Assam, G.N.Gupta wrote: "And even for India, as far as industrial progress is concerned, this province is perhaps one of the least advanced of all the larger provinces. With the exception of the factories for the manufacture of tea, and the oil and the coal factories at Digboi and Margharita, there are no large centralized industries in the provinces. There are no cotton weaving mills worthy of the name, no cotton-spinning mills, there are no jute manufacturing mills, no wool or paper mills, glass factories or pottery works. There are no large industrial centres like Bombay, Madras, Cawnpur or Calcutta".² The reason for the industrial backwardness was that European capitalists were strongly entrenched at Calcutta and saw little need to encourage rivals in Eastern Bengal. Those Indian inhabitants of the new province who had capital were landlords, many of them absentees who "preferred to live, work and invest in industrial and trading activities in Calcutta".³

1 Messrs. Turner and Morrison and Co. to Govt. of East Bengal, 18 Feb. 1911, Beng.Proc.Mne. 1912, Apr.32. See also Admin.E.B.A.1910-11, 36.

2 G.N. Gupta, 102.

3 Q.K. Ahmed, The Economy of East Pakistan at Partition, 31.

The paradoxical-seeming situation thus obtained that while 83 per cent of the jute grown in India was grown in Eastern Bengal and Assam, not one of the thirty-seven Bengal mills was found in the new province. There were eighteen European and two Indian firms baling raw jute for the Calcutta mills at Narainganj¹ - but why, it was asked, was there no mill at Narainganj. "There are several reasons", Gupta was told, "which make the establishment of jute mills at a place situated as Narainganj impracticable. The chief obstacle is the fact that it is absolutely essential for the satisfactory conduct of a jute mill, for the conductors to be in constant and immediate touch with the market. The market for gunnies is concentrated at Calcutta and the mill-owners at Narainganj would thus be handicapped from the very start. Another obstacle is the question of labour. Even a moderate-sized jute mill employs about 4,000 hands. The whole of this labour would have to be imported if mills were established at Narainganj.....Further as stated above, that there is no market for manufactured jute in or near Narainganj, it would be necessary to transport all manufactured jute to Calcutta for sale, and as the shortage occurring in the process of manufacture is estimated at only 5 per cent, the saving in freight for the consignment of manufactured as opposed to raw jute would be inconsiderable, even if the actual running of mills here were possible. And as an offset to whatever small saving might be made in this way shall be placed the great cost of import of coal and mill stores from Calcutta, with the additional disadvantage arising from the absence from Narainganj of large engineering firms capable at a moment's notice of carrying out extensive repairs and alterations of machinery".² But, as Gupta argued, not all the points made were valid for Narainganj,

1 G.N. Gupta, 63.

2 Ibid.

and still fewer for Chittagong. Thus it might be true that because there was little weight loss in the course of manufacture, the difference in freight of raw and manufactured jute in transit from East Bengal and Calcutta would not count for much, but that is to ignore the fact that jute passing through the mills at Calcutta had thereafter to be sent down river for export. If these latter charges were included, then the cost advantage of having the mills and export houses at Chittagong or Chandpur rather than at Calcutta, would be very considerable. Nor, since much of the Calcutta work force was imported labour, did it seem likely to be difficult to attract labour to healthier East Bengal towns.¹ What was really needed then, was either private entrepreneurial initiative - which seemed unlikely² - or the backing of the government.

Before the creation of Eastern Bengal and Assam, the whole eastern region had never received the undivided or serious attention of any government. Certainly there had been no planning for economic development there until the prospect of partition had made it politically desirable to propose it. Within a year or less of its creation, however, the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government had ordered a survey of the industries of the province, and by 1909 had taken steps to improve its industrial position by the creation of a Department of Industries. The object of the Department was to start pioneering factories so as to introduce improved processes in sugar and hand-loom weaving factories; to demonstrate the use of small engines in factories, such as rice mills; to introduce industries new to the locality, for example lac, and to improve the organization of home industries, especially weaving.³

1 G.N. Gupta, 64.

2 N. Ahmad, 217. See also G.N. Gupta, 101.

3 Bengal District Administration Committee Report 1913-14, 184.

All these ventures were to be managed on commercial lines. The manufacture of sugar, leather and vegetable oil was to be investigated with a view to the establishment of small factories. The Dacca Tanning Company (which was defunct) was to be helped financially and used as a training and demonstration centre; and the Rangpur Tobacco factory (started by a Joint Stock Company) was to be helped and encouraged.¹ The Secretary of State in a despatch of 19 January 1912, approved generally of the proposals.² But by that date the annulment of the partition was already in preparation, and after its announcement in April 1912, the Home Government wrote to say that the proposal would need to be recast, "in view of the annulment of the Partition".³ But with that annulment the initiative for industrial change was lost. The industries of the region remained either stillborn or weakly: raw materials such as jute, sugar, leather and cotton continued, therefore, to flow towards the mills and factories of Calcutta, and Chittagong port stagnated with the hinterland it should have served.

1 Bengal District Administration Committee Report 1913-14, 184.
See also G.N. Gupta and N. Ahmad.

2 Ibid.

3 Bengal District Administration Committee Report, 1913-14, 184.

TABLE GIVING PARTICULARS OF BUOYS AND LANDMARKS

No. Name	Date of Erection	Position	Purpose of Erection	Peculiarity	Material	Colour	H. W. S. T. above summit ft.	Remarks
1 Chittagong Kutubdia Lighthouse	1845-46	West shore of island	Landfall	Visible all round	Brick	White & red bands	136	Revolving white flashing every minute
2 Norman's Point Light	1st May 1891	One & a half miles south of Norman's Point. South-ern shore	For vessels making & anchoring off the Port	Light on a small brick tower-5th. order dioptric occulting	Do.	White	*see footnote	occulding observed 4 secs. every half minute
3 Iron mast	1892	On Patunga Point	Port boundary mark, river entrance	A rigged mast with a triangle at the mast head	Iron	Do.	105	Above ground
4 Joaldia flag-staff	1845	Joaldia Hill	Signal station	Lower mast, top & topgallant mast with a yard across	Do. & wood pole for flag	Oxide of iron dark red flag pole white	114	Do. top of hill
5 Ditto semaphore	1880	Ditto	To signal rise & fall of water	Wire guyed	Wood	Black	51½	From base to summit
6 Joaldia Tide gauge	May 1869	Off Joaldia Hill	To show rise & fall of water	Pile with cleats	Iron	Red & white sections		
7 Budulpore mark	February 1883	North of flag-staff on Joaldia Hills	River navigation	Pillar with a lantern on top	Brick	White	30	Above top of hill

*Norman's Point Light. Height of lighthouse from plinth level to top of vane-42 ft 11 ins. Height of lighthouse from level of earth plate to top of vane 44 ft 11 ins. Height of lighthouse from mean sea level to top of vane - 54 ft.

No. Name	Date of Erection	Position	Purpose of Erection	Peculiarity	Material	Colour	Height of summit above H. W. S. T.	Remarks
8	Subjurna mark August 1889	North bank, Seeljurna creek flat	Ditto	Mast & Disc	Iron	Do	40	Above ground
9	Mark	On Jooldia Hills off Coorram Khally		White stripe with white cask & a black ball				
10	Coorram Khally mark March 1883	Below Jooldia Hills at Coorram Khally	River navigation	Triangle on pale	Wood	White	14	Above river bank
11	Langee Khally mark May 1869	South of Langee Khally	Ditto	A tripod	Do	Do.	28	Ditto
12	Noakhali mark March 1883	at Noakhali	Ditto	Tripod & pole with cross & ball	Do	Do	50	Above ground
13	Flat tree do	On hills of Noakhali	Ditto	A flat single tree	Natural			A flat tree on the top of Jooldia Range to the northward
14	Polemark 1891	On river bank	River navigation	Pole with cross pieces	Wood	White	15	A crossing mark 1

1 Table giving Particulars of Buoys & Landmarks on the Coasts and in the River & Harbours of Bengal, also of the Floating Light vessels, Hooghly River approaches 1899

Water on Inner and Outer Bar 1897 to 1914: Commenced Dredging August 1907

Inner Bar

Month	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912
	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in	ft in
January	...	10 3	...	10 3	10 9	...	9 9	10 3	10 9	10 9	11 6	14 0	13 0	12 6	11 3	13 0
February	10 3	9 9	9 3	10 3	...	...	9 9	10 3	10 9	...	...	13 6	13 0	12 8	11 3	13 6
March	10 3	...	...	10 9	...	...	10 3	10 3	10 9	11 0	12 0	14 0	12 0	13 9	11 3	13 3
April	...	9 9	...	...	...	11 3	10 3	...	10 6	11 0	11 3	14 0	...	12 9	11 0	13 3
May	...	...	...	10 9	10 3	11 9	10 3	10 9	10 9	10 9	10 9	14 0	12 8	13 0	11 0	13 0
June	10 0	...	9 3	...	...	11 6	...	9 3	11 0	10 9	10 9	...	13 0	11 6	10 3	11 0
July	...	9 3	9 3	10 3	...	...	9 9	9 3	...	11 3	10 0	9 0	12 9	9 9	10 9	10 0
August	10 6	9 3	...	9 9	10 3	...	9 9	9 3	9 9	10 9	9 9	10 9	9 0	10 0	11 3	10 6
September	10 6	8 9	9 3	...	9 9	9 6	9 3	9 9	10 3	...	10 3	11 0	9 0	10 3	11 0	11 0
October	10 6	8 6	9 9	...	10 0	9 3	10 3	10 9	...	10 9	12 0	11 4	12 0	11 3	11 4	10 6
November	...	8 6	9 9	10 3	9 9	9 3	10 9	10 3	12 3	10 9	12 0	12 9	12 6	11 0	12 6	11 9
December	...	...	...	10 9	9 9	9 3	10 3	10 3	...	10 9	12 0	13 0	12 6	...	13 6	12 0
Average	10 5	9 3	9 5	10 4	10 1	10 2	10 0	10 0	10 9	10 9	11 1	12 6	11 1	11 8	11 4	12 0

Outer Bar

	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912																		
	ft	in	ft	in	ft	in	ft	in	ft	in	ft	in	ft	in	ft	in																		
January	...	10	6	...	12	3	10	6	...	11	9	12	9	13	3	13	3	15	0	15	0	12	6	13	0	12	0	11	6					
February	8	9	10	6	10	3	12	0	...	11	9	13	3	12	9	...	12	0	12	0	12	6	13	0	12	6	13	0	12	0	12	0		
March	10	9	...	...	12	0	...	...	13	3	11	0	12	3	12	3	14	6	12	0	12	0	12	0	12	0	12	3	11	9			
April	...	9	9	...	...	...	11	9	...	13	0	11	9	12	3	16	3	13	0	...	12	0	12	0	...	12	0	12	6	11	3		
May	...	...	...	12	3	9	9	13	0	13	0	11	3	12	9	13	3	11	9	13	3	13	3	11	9	11	0	13	0	12	6	11	0
June	9	3	...	10	3	...	...	...	...	13	3	13	3	13	3	13	9	...	13	3	13	3	13	9	...	12	3	11	6	12	6	11	0
July	...	9	9	10	9	11	3	11	3	12	3	12	3	12	3	12	0	...	12	9	12	3	12	0	12	0	11	9	11	0	11	0
August	...	10	3	...	10	3	10	3	12	0	...	...	12	3	9	3	11	3	...	9	3	13	3	11	9	11	0	12	9	11	8	11	0
September	11	9	9	9	9	3	9	3	11	9	11	9	11	3	10	3	...	12	0	...	12	0	10	6	10	0	10	0	11	0	10	0	10	0
October	11	9	8	3	10	3	...	...	10	9	11	9	12	3	12	3	...	10	9	12	3	12	0	11	4	11	6	11	0	10	0	10	6
November	...	10	3	11	3	10	3	11	9	11	9	12	3	11	9	14	3	13	3	13	3	13	0	11	9	12	6	11	6	11	0	11	6	
December	...	...	...	10	9	12	3	12	3	11	9	12	3	12	3	...	13	3	15	0	13	3	15	0	12	0	13	0	...	11	0	12	0
Average	10	5	9	10	10	0	11	4	10	8	12	3	11	7	12	2	12	6	12	6	12	9	14	4	12	1	11	10	11	11	8	11	2	

Admin Rept. 1913-14. Beng. Proc. Mne Dept. 1914, December. 41.

Quantities of Jute (free of duty) exported from the
Port of Chittagong, 1892-1912 (cwt.)

	1892-93 ¹	1893-94 ²	1894-95 ³
To United Kingdom	797,668	615,168	537,405
Spain: Barcelona	60,875	-	-
USA: New York	92,450	-	55,482
Boston	-	-	61,868
Egypt: Port Said	-	60,068	-
Germany: Hamburg	-	-	93,136
	950,993	675,236	747,891
	1895-96 ⁴	1896-97 ⁵	1897-98 ⁶
United Kingdom	669,346	278,022	572,539
Germany: Hamburg	33,993	48,804	64,393
USA: New York	199,218	78,743	-
Egypt: Port Said	-	232,164	-
France: Dunkirk	-	-	95,343
	902,557	637,733	732,275

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1892-93 I, Table XXIII.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1893-94 I, Table XXIII.

3 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1894-95 I, Table XXIII.

4 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1895-96 I, Table XXIII.

5 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1896-97 I, Table XXIII.

6 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1897-98 I, Table XXIII.

Jute: Countries to which exported	1898-1899 ¹	1899-1900 ²		
To United Kingdom	521,914	299,290		
Germany: Hamburg	105,157	44,154		
Egypt: Port Said	-	85,286		
USA: New York	-	45,204		
	<u>627,071</u>	<u>473,934</u>		
			1901-02 ³	1902-03 ⁴
United Kingdom	760,379	504,247	969,636	
France: Boulogne	43,143	-	-	
USA: New York	106,864	92,850	128,661	
Boston	65,475	35,336	25,239	
France: Dunkirk	-	97,807	6,250	
Germany: Bremen	-	-	893	
Hamburg	-	-	41,568	
	<u>975,861</u>	<u>730,240</u>	<u>1,172,247</u>	
				1904-05
United Kingdom	834,185	897,926	1,049,590	
Russia: Southern Ports	-	1,786	-	
Germany: Free Ports	83,036	77,433	75,720	
Belgium	2,500	893	-	
France	80,728	1,786	111,518	
USA	77,486	323,184	345,809	
	<u>1,077,935</u>	<u>1,303,028</u>	<u>1,582,637</u>	

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1898-99 I, Table XXIII.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1899-1900 I, Table XXIII.

3 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1901-02 I, Table XXIII.

4 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1902-03 I, Table XXIII.

5 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1903-04 I, Table XXIII.

6 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07 I, Table XVII.

Jute: Countries to which exported	1907-08	1908-09	1909-10 ¹
To United Kingdom	829,812	1,182,491	806,823
Germany	150,580	201,918	202,264
Holland	-	3,896	1,071
Belgium	12,643	3,178	4,017
France	115,964	176,801	14,879
Spain	-	49,032	-
Russia	-	-	4,465
USA	381,122	361,072	135,117
	<u>1,490,121</u>	<u>1,978,388</u>	<u>1,168,636</u>

	1910-11	1911-12 ²
United Kingdom	567,788	876,916
Germany: Free Ports	255,272	239,584
Holland	893	-
Belgium	4,465	7,142
France	67,546	162,148
Spain	-	-
Russia	-	-
USA	145,286	113,660
	<u>1,041,250</u>	<u>1,405,450</u>

1 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 I, Table XVII (3)

2 Ibid.

Quantity of Tea exported from the Port of Chittagong, 1892-1912 (lb.)

	1892-93 ¹	1893-94 ²	1894-95 ³
To United Kingdom	87,858	453,392	118,495
Mauritius	100	-	-
South America			
Montevideo	500	-	-
New South Wales	6,280	900	-
South Australia	3,735	-	2,445
Victoria	4,895	6,430	6,868
Egypt	-	35	-
Maldives (including Minicoy)	-	-	40
	103,368	460,807	127,848

	1895-96 ⁴	1896-97 ⁵	1897-98 ⁶
To United Kingdom	119,466	68,275	204,618
New South Wales	600	1,215	-
Victoria	2,580	3,150	3,384
Maldives (except Minicoy)	-	40	-
	122,646	72,810	208,002

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng.1892-93 I, Table XXIII.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng.1893-94 I, Table XXIII.

3 Sea Borne Trade Beng.1894-95 I, Table XXIII.

4 Sea Borne Trade Beng.1895-96 I, Table XXIII.

5 Sea Borne Trade Beng.1896-97 I, Table XXIII

6 Sea Borne Trade Beng.1897-98 I, Table XXIII

Tea: Countries to which exported	1898-99 ¹	1899-1900 ²	1901-02 ³
To United Kingdom	85,683	110,941	14,789,009
New South Wales	810	-	405
Victoria	7,075	8,415	4,945
New Zealand	1,080	1,104	-
Tasmania	-	-	412
Turkey in Europe	-	570	-
USA: San Francisco	-	1,465	-
West Indies:Grenada	-	-	500
	94,648	122,495	14,795,271
	1902-03	1903-04 Black tea	1903-04 ⁴ Green tea
United Kingdom	19,993,446	26,082,462	2,68,243
Victoria	3,715	6,754	270
New Zealand	1,170	2,082	-
Germany: Hamburg	-	-	80
	19,998,331	26,091,378	2,268,513

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1898-99 I, Table XXIII.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1899-1900 I, Table XXIII.

3 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1901-02 I, Table XXIII.

4 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07 I, Table XVII (3).

Black tea	1904-05	1905-06	1906-07 ¹
British Empire:			
United Kingdom	37,490,963	40,246,207	41,336,072
Victoria	4,770	5,160	1,920
New Zealand	-	-	2,280
Ceylon	-	-	2,500
Foreign countries	50		
	<u>37,495,783</u>	<u>40,251,367</u>	<u>41,342,772</u>

Green tea	1904-05	1905-06	1906-07
United Kingdom	1,110,007	1,283,543	698,837
Other countries	-	960	-
	<u>1,110,007</u>	<u>1,284,503</u>	<u>698,837</u>

Black tea	1907-09	1908-09	1909-10
British Empire:			
United Kingdom	42,391,827	45,567,322	51,617,569
Ceylon	-		-
Straits Settlements	-	20	-
Fed. Malay States	38	-	-
Victoria	2,630	3,570	1,920
New Zealand	-	2,250	2,450
Foreign countries:			
Germany: Free ports			250
Egypt	-	-	-
Uruguay	-	150	-
	<u>42,394,495</u>	<u>45,573,312</u>	<u>51,622,189</u>

Green tea	1907-08	1908-09	1909-10 ²
British Empire: UK	530,148	556,920	226,954
USA		1,440	
	<u>530,148</u>	<u>558,360</u>	<u>226,954</u>

1 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07 I, Table XVII (3).

2 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 I, Table XVII (3)

Waste	1907-09	1908-09	1909-10
United Kingdom	-	6,491	57,701

Black tea	1910-11	1911-12
British Empire:		
United Kingdom	52,218,132	54,356,363
Ceylon	-	175
Straits Settlements	-	-
Fed. Malay States	-	-
Victoria	1,888	2,504
New Zealand	-	2,240
Foreign Countries:		
Germany: Free Ports	-	-
Egypt	-	200
Uruguay	-	-
	52,283,020	55,555,705

Green Tea	1910-11	1911-12
United Kingdom	881,490	1,194,223
USA	30,350	-
	911,840	1,194,223

Waste	1910-11	1911-12
United Kingdom	64,914	46,624

1 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 I, Table XVIII (3)

Figures showing the export of rice from the port of Chittagong to Foreign Countries, 1892-1912 (cwt.)

Rice: Countries to which exported	1892-93 ¹	1893-94 ²	1894-95 ³	1895-96 ⁴
To United Kingdom	-	-	10,018	7,287
Eastern Coast of Africa	-	-	-	-
Mauritius	59,568	77,301	90,740	44,887
Reunion	8,839	-	-	-
West Indies	80,565	20,625	140,212	73,479
Ceylon	22,734	-	15,685	6,136
Other Foreign Countries	615	-	4,275	1,465
	172,321	97,926	260,930	133,254
	1896-97 ⁵	1997-98 ⁶	1898-99 ⁷	1899-1900 ⁸
To United Kingdom	-	-	-	3,104
Eastern Coast of Africa	-	-	1,029	-
Mauritius	-	-	30,305	-
Reunion	-	-	-	53,488
West Indies	20,375	11,643	28,847	26,927
Ceylon	748	28,340	3,189	234,262
Other Foreign Countries	1,625	-	43,901	21,590
	22,748	39,983	107,271	339,371

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1892-93 I, Table XXIII.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1893-94 I, Table XXIII.

3 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1894-95 I, Table XXIII.

4 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1895-96 I, Table XXIII.

5 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1896-97 I, Table XXIII.

6 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1897-98 I, Table XXIII.

7 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1898-99 I, Table XXIII.

8 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1899-1900 I, Table XXIII.

Rice: Countries to which exported	1901-02	1902-03 ¹	1903-04
To United Kingdom	8,544	24,983	59,185
Eastern Coast of Africa			
Mauritius, including	5,864	51,749	111,500
Seychelles			
Reunion	-	85,747	113,553
Mombasa, Zanzibar and Pemba	-	-	1,352
West Indies:			
Trinidad	25,094	37,112	17,446
Cuba	-	-	15,005
Aden	-	-	3,5322
Ceylon	64,797	24,444	165,874
Maldives	-	-	6,197
Arabia - other states	1,492	-	-
	105,796	224,035	493,644

	1904-05	1905-06 ²
To United Kingdom	54,818	5,999
Mauritius, including		
Seychelles	15,196	10,105
Reunion	140,395	1,616
West Indies:		
Trinidad	26,798	58,598
Cuba	-	-
Aden	4,180	-
Ceylon	229,578	43,657
Maldives	2,439	-
	474,104	119,975

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1901-02 I, Table XXIII.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1906-07 I, Table XVII (3).

Rice: Countries to which exported	1906-07 ¹	1907-08	1908-09
British Empire To United Kingdom	-	26	461
Ceylon		7,880	10,361
Mauritius Dependencies	-	-	5,729
Foreign Countries:			
Egypt	-	-	-
USA	79		10
	79	7,906	16,561
	1909-10	1910-11	1911-12 ²
British Empire To United Kingdom	939	752	2,124
Ceylon	10,588	1,134	22,102
Mauritius and Dependencies	-	-	1,621
Foreign Countries:			
Egypt	-	63	216
USA	-	-	-
	11,527	1,949	26,063

1 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1906-07 I, Table XVII (3)

2 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. 1911-12 I, Table XVII (2)

Quantities of Salt (subject to duty) imported into the Port
of Chittagong, 1892-1912 (tons)

Exporting Country	1892-93 ¹	1893-94 ²	1894-95 ³
United Kingdom	12,859	13,301	10,142
Germany: Hamburg	1,346	-	-
	14,205	13,301	10,142
	1895-96 ⁴	1896-97	1897-98
United Kingdom	13,564	1,988	22,217
Germany: Hamburg	-	-	1,924
	13,564	1,988	24,141

1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1892-93 I, Table XXII.

2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1893-94 I, Table XXII.

3 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1894-95 I, Table XXII.

4 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1895-96 I, Table XXII.

Exporting Country	1898-99 ¹	1899-1900 ²	1901-02 ³
United Kingdom	12,198	6,243	8,981
Germany: Hamburg	-	2,594	1,284
	12,198	8,837	10,265
	1902-03 ⁴	1903-04 ⁵	1904-05
British Empire:			
United Kingdom	6,850	2,837	19,083
Aden	4,243	3,714	9,188
Foreign Countries:			
Germany: Hamburg	5,679	6,994	
Free Ports	-	-	7,717
	16,772	13,545	25,988
	1905-06	1906-07 ⁶	
British Empire:			
United Kingdom	2,986	6,526	
Aden	16,454	9,437	
Foreign Countries:			
Germany: Free Ports	4,395	6,228	
	23,835	22,191	

- 1 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1898-99 I, Table XXII.
- 2 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1899-1900 I, Table XXII.
- 3 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1901-02 I, Table XXII.
- 4 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1902-03 I, Table XXII.
- 5 Sea Borne Trade Beng. 1903-04 I, Table XXII.
- 6 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A. I, Table XVI.

Exporting Country	1907-08 .	1908-09	1909-10
British Empire:			
United Kingdom	14,089	1,853	7,609
Aden	16,636	21,154	16,275
Foreign Countries:			
Germany	572	1,971	2,716
Spain	8,000	9,680	5,044
Egypt (Port Said)	-	-	6,537
	<u>39,297</u>	<u>34,658</u>	<u>38,181</u>
	<u>1910-11</u>	<u>1911-12¹</u>	
British Empire:			
United Kingdom	8,890	7,668	
Aden	5,867	10,125	
Foreign Countries:			
Germany	3,598	4,555	
Spain	5,858	6,209	
Egypt (Port Said)	1,616	-	
	<u>25,829</u>	<u>28,557</u>	

1 Sea Borne Trade E.B.A 1911-12 I, Table XVI (1)

TABLE VII.—Quantity (in maunds) of articles imported into the Chillagong Trade Block by River, Rail, and Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911.

Articles.	By Boat.	By inland steamer.	By Rail.	By sea coasting.	Total Indian Trade.	By sea (Foreign).	Total Trade by all Routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Rs.
Animals—								
(1) Horned cattle other than sheep and goats.	72	6	9	...	87	...	87	3,450
(2) Horses ponies and mules ...	...	...	4	14	18	...	18	3,924
(3) Sheep and goats ...	1,295	9	224	...	1,533	...	1,533	8,459
(4) Other kinds ...	24,502	...	...	19	24,521	11	24,532	11,540
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	
Apparel, including drapery, haberdashery, millinery, uniforms, accoutrements, boots and shoes.	...	176	1,456	...	1,632	...	1,632	4,17,921
Chemicals excepting saltpetre ...	...	1,222	1,700	...	2,922	...	2,922	1,01,280
Coal and coke—								
(1) For Railway purposes ...	250	...	60,838	478,376	539,464	10,993	550,462	1,77,225
(2) For other purposes ...	461	...	3,915	...	4,376	...	4,376	2,461
Cotton—								
Raw ...	167,032	58	41,243	56,486	264,819	...	264,819	23,54,100
Manufactured—								
(1) Twist and yarn, foreign ...	95	2,317	2,546	4	4,962	9	4,971	3,34,133
(2) Ditto, Indian ...	61	1,552	3,380	7	4,590	...	4,590	1,35,517
(3) Piece-goods, foreign ...	...	8,645	9,040	...	18,594	...	18,594	22,15,939
(4) Ditto, Indian ...	54	370	3,664	...	4,208	...	4,208	2,72,003
(5) Others ...	...	121	97	...	218	...	218	1,17,355
Drugs—								
(2) Non-intoxicating—								
(a) Medicinal preparation ...	1	605	654	...	1,270	...	1,270	3,63,618
(b) Others ...	27	379	2,241	...	2,647	...	2,647	29,117
Dyes and tans—								
(2) Cutch ...	...	746	113	542	1,401	...	1,401	24,950
(3) Indigo ...	...	6	1	...	7	...	7	893
(4) Myrobalans ...	...	210	2	...	212	...	212	244
(5) Tanning barks ...	...	...	1,235	...	1,235	...	1,235	2,208
(6) Turmeric ...	7	436	349	9,505	4,333	...	4,333	2,32,070
(7) Others ...	...	463	20	102	621	...	621	12,006
Fodder—								
(1) Hay, straw and grass ...	2,364	1,347	2,055	...	5,666	...	5,666	3,847
(2) Oil-cake ...	4,169	79	2,650	3,952	10,800	...	10,800	13,731
Fruits and vegetables, fresh ...	20,481	5,035	20,463	...	45,981	...	45,981	3,45,043
Grain and pulse—								
(1) Gram and pulse ...	2,312	19,599	30,697	26,263	78,873	...	78,873	2,53,556
(2) Jowar and bajra ...	...	16	...	...	16	...	16	41
(3) Rice in the husk ...	152,723	109	239	23,195	176,268	...	176,268	3,50,719
(4) Rice not in the husk ...	21,768	75	27,192	457,248	506,281	...	5,06,281	4,46,325
(5) Wheat ...	...	91	1	75	167	...	167	613

* The trade by sea in this article is not recorded in maunds. The value is included in the total value.

TABLE VII.—Quantity (in maunds) of articles imported into the Chittagong Trade Bloc River, Rail, and Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911—continued.

Articles.	By Boat.	By inland steamer.	By Rail.	By sea (coasting).	Total Indian Trade.	By sea (Foreign).	Total Trade by Routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Grain and Pulse—concl'd.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Rs.
(6) Wheat flour ... ..	...	9,376	1,435	36,142	46,953	...	46,953	1,75
(7) Others	1,018	255	36	...	1,309	...	1,309	12
Hemp and other fibres (excluding jute).	317	...	19,939	...*	20,247	...*	20,247	97
Hides and skins—								
(1) Hides of cattle—								
(a) Raw	20	2	338	113	473	...	473	18
(b) Dressed or tanned	2,840	...	...	...	2,840	...	2,840	1,64
(2) Skins of sheep and other animals—								
(a) Raw ... ..	...	...	5	...	5	...	5	...
(b) Dressed or tanned	205	...	...	...	205	453	660	18
Horns	23	4	41	...	68	...	68	...
Jute—								
(1) Raw	328	...	1,685,455	35	1,685,818	...	1,685,818	1,04,12
(2) Gunny bags and cloths	1,216	467	4,901	...*	6,584	...*	6,584	1,13
Lao ... ..	...	15	...	...	15	...	15	...
Leather—								
(2) Wrought, excepting boots and shoes.	...	6	40	...*	55	...*	55	8
Liquors—								
(1) Ale and beer ... ..	...	49	374	7	430	9	430	20
(2) Wines and spirits, of all kinds including country spirit.	...	106	493	43	722	566	1,288	93
Metals—								
(1) Brass, unwrought	103	77	...	180	160	39,123	39,303	68
(2) Brass, manufactured	36	1,920	677	56	2,689	...	2,689	1,43,8
(3) Copper, unwrought... ..	34	4	...	20	58	...	58	3,0
(4) „ manufactured	2	92	189	2	285	3	289	19
(5) Iron and steel—								
(a) Unwrought (rust, slag, pig and old for remanufacture).	10	410	10,797	398	11,615	24	11,630	59
(b) Wrought—								
(i) Bars, sheets and girders and other commercial forms of iron and steel.	53	2,925	6,472	10,921	20,176	48,388	68,564	21,69,3
(ii) Machinery and mill work	10	57	2,469	...*	2,536	...*	2,536	4,80,1
(iii) Other manufacture, including hardware and cutlery.	27	5,048	8,342	...*	13,417	...*	13,417	7,15,0
(7) Others	686	607	1,040	19,722	22,055	10,218	32,273	2,73,2

* The trade by sea in this article is not recorded in maunds. The value is included in the total value.

TABLE VII.—Quantity (in maunds) of articles imported into the Chittagong Trade Block by River, Rail and by Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911—continued.

Articles.	By Boat.	By inland steamer.	By Rail.	By sea (coasting).	Total Indian Trade.	By sea (Foreign).	Total Trade by all Routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Rs.
Mineral substances—								
(1) Chalk and lime	1,411	650	40,717	2,958	54,936	...	54,936	17,861
(2) Marble and stone	17,248	35	3,34,997	1,503	353,788	...	353,788	12,265
(3) Others ... ..	...	...	15	...	15	...	15	45
Oils—								
(1) Castor ... ..	...	157	31	154	342	...	342	5,519
(2) Coconut ... ..	...	761	178	3,570	4,309	...	4,309	1,14,733
(3) Kerosene ... ..	...	732	509	676,375	677,696	...	677,696	30,70,898
(4) Rape and mustard... ..	368	4,792	2,467	2,572	10,109	...	10,109	1,50,878
(5) Others	1,503	1,151	2,264	8,049	12,970	454	13,434	1,10,453
Oil seeds—								
(2) Ground nuts ... ..	...	305	...	10,276	10,541	...	10,541	4,612
(3) Linseed... ..	...	3	9	...	12	...	12	92
(4) Poppy ... ..	...	151	...	...	151	...	151	1,129
(5) Rape and mustard	3,267	403	10,025	169	22,963	...	22,963	1,80,835
(6) Sesamum (till or jinjili)	18,842	...	13,629	...	32,471	...	32,471	2,61,070
(7) Others	292	6	148	2,093	2,589	...	2,589	14,192
Opium ... ..	...	...	729	...	729	...	729	2,15,280
Paper and paste board ... ..	...	1,019	531	...	1,850	...	1,850	43,354
Provisions—								
(1) Dried fruits and nuts	22,731	615	1,6359	103	20,813	74	20,887	4,17,034
(2) Ghee	9	2,060	272	2,487	4,876	...	4,826	2,17,082
(3) Others	22,109	8,735	100,896	6,372	133,022	1,786	134,808	11,76,676
Railway plant and rolling stock—								
(1) Carriages and trucks and parts thereof.	...	19	5	...	18	...	18	3,67,953
(2) Locomotive Engines and tenders and parts thereof.	...	...	520	...	520	...	520	2,04,073
(3) Materials—								
(a) Sleepers and keys of steel and cast iron.	...	...	4,464	...	4,464	22,344	26,808	1,03,139
(b) Steel rails and fish-plates...	...	...	3,805	...	3,805	...	3,805	14,614
(c) Others ... ..	...	...	26,598	...	26,598	5,707	31,807	1,62,971
Salt ... ..	...	738	639	1,039	2,663	419,447	422,113	2,15,093
Saltpetre and other saline substances—								
(1) Saltpetre ... ..	...	223	37	...	260	...	260	1,833
(2) Other saline substances ... ..	...	618	179	3,234	4,231	...	4,231	12,932
Silk—								
Raw—								
(1) Foreign ... ..	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
(2) Indian ... ..	...	4	221	...	26	...	26	4,210

TABLE VII.—Quantity (in maunds) of articles imported into the Chittagong Trade Block by²⁹⁷
River, Rail, and by Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911—concluded.

Articles.	By Boat.	By inland steamer.	By Rail.	By sea (coasting)	Total Indian Trade.	By sea (Foreign)	Total Trade by all Routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	5	6	7	8
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Rs.
Piece-goods—								
(1) Foreign ...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1,150
(2) Indian ...	...	...	4½	...	...	...	4½	3,240
Spices—								
(1) Betelnuts ...	17,090	948	3,179	14,139	35,950	434	36,390	2,75,975
(2) Cardamoms ...	...	48	...	5	53	...	53	5,720
(3) Chillies ...	8,575	2,225	2,110	304	13,574	...	13,574	1,59,183
(4) Ginger ...	599	6	3	...	608	...	608	2,519
(5) Pepper ...	...	925	88	9,698	10,709	49	10,758	26,953
(6) Others ...	118	1,524	1,381	85	3,108	...	3,108	39,567
Sugar—								
(1) Unrefined—								
(a) Gur, rab, jaggery, etc. ...	20,971	5,214	29,144	...	55,329	...	55,329	3,70,597
(b) Sugar ...	247	4,633	9,050	17,796	31,726	...	31,726	1,66,946
(2) Refined or crystallised, including sugarcandy. ...	...	6,716	10,779	31,352	48,847	16,338	65,185	5,14,797
Tea—								
(1) Foreign ...	2	...	...	1	3	1	4	142
(2) Indian ...	9,088	110	653,521	11	662,730	...	662,730	2,25,32,063
Tobacco—								
(1) Unmanufactured ...	2,917	1,850	15,666	1,596	22,029	...	22,029	1,80,163
(2) Manufactured—								
(a) Cigars ...	...	230	4	303	530	173	703	19,816
(b) Other sorts ...	235	275	311	21	842	59	901	29,551
Wood—								
(1) Timber, unwrought ...	118,427	42	2,760	...	121,229	...	121,229	3,40,361
(2) Manufactured ...	1,596	511	8,552	...	10,659	...	10,659	8,26,251
Wool—								
Raw ...	40	...	...	...	40	...	40	1,033
Manufactured—								
(1) Carpets and rugs ...	...	...	2	...	2	...	2	191
(2) Piece-goods, Foreign ...	4	1	...	...	5	...	5	3,175
(3) Ditto, Indian... ...	...	...	19	...	19	...	19	17,766
(4) Other sorts of manufacture ...	...	61	39	...	100	...	100	17,743
All other articles of merchandise ...	118,891	10,513	132,460	...	261,873	...	261,873	13,60,367
Treasure—	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	
(1) Gold coin and bullion ...	...	...	3,275	2,634	6,009	...	6,009	3,85,049
(2) Silver coin (Government rupees) ...	...	4,680	143,830	...	153,260	...	153,260	4,02,307

* The Trade by sea in this article is not recorded in maunds. The value is included in the total value.

TABLE VIII.—Quantity (in maunds) of articles exported from the Chittagong Trade Block by 298
River, Rail and Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911.

Articles.	By Boat.	By inland steamer.	By Rail.	By sea (coasting).	Total Indian Trade.	By Sea (Foreign).	Total Trade by all Routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	No.	Rs.
Animals—								
(1) Horned cattle other than sheep and goats.	156	4	80	...	...	...	100	7,600
(2) Horses, ponies and mules ...	147	...	1	9	157	...	157	20,500
(3) Sheep and goats ...	369	14	...	...	...	...	383	2,105
(4) Other kinds ...	393	1	...	45,234	45,628	...	45,628	25,141
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	
Apparel, including drapery, haberdashery, millinery, uniforms, accoutrements, boots and shoes.	394	72	161	...	627	...	627	1,42,750
Chemicals, excepting saltpetre ...	678	30	1,028	...	1,745	...	1,745	5,375
Coal and coke—								
(1) For Railway purposes ...	43	15	165,903	...	165,961	...	165,961	51,863
(2) For other purposes ...	8,475	2	28,110	...	36,587	544	37,131	12,814
Cotton—								
Raw ...	354	31,422	110	92,740	124,626	...	124,626	17,98,509
Manufactured—								
(1) Twist and yarn, Foreign ...	1,272	40	214	389	1,914	...	1,914	1,32,637
(2) Ditto, Indian ...	87	...	261	9	357	...	357	14,218
(3) Piece-goods, Foreign ...	2,724	12	270	...	3,006	...	3,006	2,95,772
(4) Ditto, Indian ...	1,230	...	1,141	...	2,377	...	2,377	1,61,824
(5) Others ...	...	1	116	...	117	...	117	7,139
Drugs—								
(1) Intoxicating other than opium ...	...	...	18	...	18	...	18	540
(2) Non-intoxicating—								
(a) Medicinal preparations ...	8	42	304	...	354	...	354	107,430
(b) Others ...	295	120	6	...	421	...	421	4,631
Dyes and tans—								
(2) Cutch ...	90	...	463	14	567	...	567	8,428
(4) Myrobalans ...	1	...	...	...	1	...	1	1
(5) Tanning barks ...	71	...	19	...	90	...	90	1,2
(6) Tannorio ...	92	1	52	...	145	...	145	1,957
(7) Others ...	...	1	2	...	3	...	3	55
Fodder—								
(1) Hay, straw and grass ...	1,921	...	552	...	2,473	...	2,473	1,938
(2) Oil-cake... ...	954	...	...	...	954	...	954	1,671
Fruits and vegetables, fresh ...	4,384	110	316	...	4,810	...	4,810	88,910
Grain and pulse—								
(1) Gram and pulse ...	5,168	85	8,809	4,399	13,461	...	13,461	29,378
(2) Jowar and bajra ...	...	...	2	...	2	...	2	5
(3) Rice in the husk ...	24,054	97	4,432	1,750	30,413	...	30,413	61,119
(4) Rice not in the husk ...	98,492	1,172	60,068	1,482	161,214	294	161,508	6,03,411

* The trade by sea in this article is not recorded in maunds. The value is included in the total value.

TABLE VIII.—Quantity (in maunds) of articles exported from the Chittagong Trade Block by 299 River, Rail and Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911—continued.

Articles.	By Boat.	By inland steamer.	By Rail.	By sea (coasting).	Total Indian Trade.	By Sea (Foreign).	Total Trade by all Routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Rs.
Grain and pulse—concd.—								
(5) Wheat	83	19	2	...	117	...	117	409
(6) Ditto flour	1,959	145	402	83	2,679	...	2,679	13,823
(7) Others	2,324	52	...	...	2,376	...	2,376	23,512
Hemp and other fibres (excluding jute)	97	...	43	...	145	...	145	2,45,714
Hides and skins—								
(1) Hides of cattle—								
(a) Raw ... ..	...	5,521	4,650	2,043	12,214	...	12,214	5,00,745
(b) Dressed or tanned ...	13	...	...	...	13	...	13	741
2. Skins of sheep and other animals—								
(a) Raw ... ..	...	843	67	183	1,093	...	1,093	68,766
(b) Dressed or tanned ...	...	...	...	3	3	...	3	300
Horns ... ..	...	91	31	233	355	...	355	2,557
Jute—								
(1) Raw	4	...	336	69,322	69,662	1,457,750	1,527,412	1,86,79,576
(2) Gunny bags	24	119	4,169	...	4,311	...	4,311	60,974
Lac ... ..	...	...	54	...	54	...	54	1,593
Liquors—								
(1) Ale and beer ... ..	...	22	143	...	165	...	165	5,353
(2) Wines and spirits of all kinds, including country spirit.	13	...	595	9	617	...	617	31,197
(3) All other sorts, including toddy and fermented liquor other than ale and beer.	...	30	...	...	30	...	30	241
Metals—								
(1) Brass, unwrought	115	222	...	14	351	...	351	15,522
(2) „ manufactured	93	10	1,173	...	1,275	...	1,27	77,462
(3) Copper, unwrought	53	236	...	...	279	...	279	15,412
(4) Ditto, manufactured	121	24	...	1	145	...	146	10,827
(5) Iron and steel—								
(a) Unwrought (cast, slag, pig and old for remanufacture).	10	...	...	1,590	1,600	...	1,600	1,489
(b) Wrought—								
(i) Bars, sheets and girders and other commercial forms of iron and steel.	12,349	733	126,955	12	141,229	...	1,41,229	9,67,717
(ii) Machinery and mill work ...	112	...	6,479	...	8,591	...	8,591	6,45,359
(iii) Other manufactures, including hardware and cutlery.	273	350	39,593	...	40,218	...	40,218	15,77,312
(7) Others... ..	35	...	11,691	1,093	13,469	...	13,469	1,34,919
Mineral substances—								
(1) Chalk and lime	4,533	75	3,981	531	9,202	...	9,202	3,270
(2) Marble and stone	14,560	109	295	5	14,969	...	14,969	663
(3) Others ... ..	...	...	15	...	15	...	15	...

* The trade by sea in this article is not recorded in maunds. The value is included in the total value.

TABLE VIII.—Quantity (in maunds) of articles exported from the Chittagong Trade Block by River, Rail and Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911—continued.

Articles.	By Boat.	By inland steamer.	By Rail.	By Sea (coasting).	Total Indian Trade.	By Sea (Foreign).	Total Trade by all routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Rs.
Oils—								
(1) Castor ... ..	...	1	...	...	1	...	1	13
(2) Coconut	1,533	2	179	7	2,021	...	2,021	44,030
(3) Kerosine	41,565	93	611,544	298	653,500	...	653,500	18,44,067
(4) Rape and mustard	4,813	360	1,080	23	6,275	...	6,275	9,78,590
(5) Others	745	683	1,533	147	3,358	...	3,358	89,483
Oil-seeds—								
(1) Ground nuts	21	...	...	1	23	...	23	30
(2) Rape and mustard	2,002	...	163	376	2,541	...	2,541	23,144
(3) Sesamum (<i>til</i> or <i>jinjili</i>)	44	...	2,173	53,566	55,783	...	55,783	3,99,869
(4) Others	12	91	76	18,250	18,429	...	18,429	59,691
Paper and paste board	60	162	361	...	523	...	523	4,844
Provision—								
(1) Dried fruits and nuts	11,153	14	14	347	11,501	...	11,501	1,55,674
(2) Ghee	1,011	11	69	50	1,141	...	1,141	50,507
(3) Others	7,789	397	4,431	36,616	49,233	1	49,234	6,93,678
Railway plant and rolling stock—								
(1) Carriage, and trucks and parts thereof ... ..	...	...	8,030	...	8,030	...	8,030	1,05,633
(2) Locomotive engines and tenders and parts thereof ... ..	...	...	3,041	...	3,041	...	3,041	83,051
(3) Materials—								
(a) Sleepers and keys of steel and cast iron ... ..	...	...	59,266	...	59,266	...	59,266	1,49,479
(b) Steel rails and fish plates ... ..	...	...	16,795	...	16,795	...	16,795	57,523
(c) Others ... ..	...	...	147,339	...	147,339	...	147,339	5,85,436
Salt	100,100	21	491,672	1,797	593,590	...	593,590	10,13,653
Saltpetre and other saline substances—								
(1) Saltpetre	193	...	267	...	460	...	460	3,349
(2) Other saline substances	123	...	13	113	256	...	256	1,189
Silk—								
Raw—								
(1) Indian	3	...	...	...	3	...	3	480
Piece-goods—								
(1) Foreign	26	5	...	...	31	...	31	9,910
(2) Indian	1	1	...	...	2	...	2	1,440
Spices—								
(1) Betelnuts	16,744	48	681	53,262	71,173	...	71,173	8,14,138
(2) Cardamoms	4	...	...	...	4	...	4	467
(3) Chillies	1,263	237	1,881	1,689	3,081	...	3,081	64,753
(4) Ginger	3	...	2	...	5	...	5	19
(5) Pepper	335	...	31	1	367	...	367	7,980
(6) Others	766	142	221	1	1,130	...	1,130	14,122

* The trade by sea in this article is not recorded in maunds. The value is included in the total value.

TABLE VIII—Quantity (in mounds) of articles exported from the Chittagong Trade Block by River Rail, and Sea (coasting and Foreign) in 1910-1911—concluded.

Articles.	By boat.	By inland steamer.	By rail.	By sea (coasting).	Total Indian Trade.	By sea (Foreign).	Total Trade by all Routes.	
							Quantity.	Value.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Mds.	Rs.
Sugar—								
(1) Unrefined—								
(a) Gur, rag, jaggery, molasses and other crude saccharine produce.	23,403	23	233	...	23,714	...	23,714	1,57,833
(b) Sugar	2,632	65	1,375	373	4,045	...	4,045	35,015
(2) Refined or crystallized, including sugar candy.	12,191	9	923	114	13,240	...	13,240	1,17,911
Tea—								
Indian	0	...	433	1,150	1,579	604,615	603,194	2,70,46,918
Tobacco—								
(1) Unmanufactured	4,723	19	373	245	5,356	...	5,356	45,763
(2) Manufactured—								
(a) Cigars ... ..	...	...	3	21	...	...	24	25,493
(b) Other sorts	705	...	2	49	755	...	755	24,335
Wood—								
(1) Timber, unwrought	40,341	...	33,052	...	73,393	...	73,393	1,23,400
(2) Manufactured	3,126	573	60,817	...	67,512	...	67,512	1,041,313
Wool—								
Manufactured—								
(1) Piece-goods, foreign	24	9	...	...	42	...	42	22,575
(2) Ditto, Indian	11	...	...	...	11	...	11	10,332
(3) Other sorts of manufactures ... ..	...	42	65	...	107	...	107	11,619
All other articles of merchandise	43,106	2,383	1,04,655	...	150,234	...	150,234	12,92,923

Treasure—	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	Oz.	1 Oz.
Silver bullion ... ..	...	...	1,074,510	...	1,074,510	...	1,074,510	28,20,587

* The trade by sea in this article is not recorded in mounds. The value is included in the total value.

Navigable rivers, khals and canals in the Province of Bengal

Division	S.R.	District	Navigable Channels		Length of Navigable Channels in miles			
			Permanent (all the year round)	Temporary (only during rains)	Total	Perma- nent	Temp- orary	Total
Rajshahi	1	Rajshahi	9	11	20	216	253	469
	2	Dinajpur	2	5	7	78	212	290
	3	Rangpur	4	2	6	305	105	410
	4	Bogra	10	14	24	253	210	463
	5	Pabna	8	11	19	202	141	343
			TOTAL	33	43	76	1,054	921	1,975
Dacca	1	Dacca	32	42	74	374	319	693
	2	Mymensingh	18	12	30	1,203	458	1,661
	3	Faridpur	6	7	13	178	62	240
	4	Bakargani	61	Nil	61	782	Nil	782
			TOTAL	117	61	178	2,537	839	3,376
Chittagong	1	Chittagong	9	4	13	228	17	245
	2	Tippera	8	12	20	485	392	877
	3	Noakhali	3	12	15	71	442	314
			TOTAL	20	28	48	785	651	1,436

Assam Beng. Rly (3' 3 " gauge) - Progress in Openings¹

Sections of railways	Date of Opening	Miles	Total	Grand Total	Remarks	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
<u>Main Line -</u>						
Chitt. Port to Chittagong.	3.11.1895	1.73				
Chittagong to Feni.....	1.7.95	55.90			*Of this 3 miles between Kathichara & Damchara were reconstructed in 1915.	
Feni to Comilla.....	1.7.95	35.10				
Comilla to Akhaura.....	1.1.96	19.41				
Akhaura to Karaiganj....	4.12.96	114.00				
Karanganj to Badapur....	4.12.96	12.00				
Badarpur to Damchara...	23.4.99	*18.53				
Damchara to Lumding...	1.12.03	+100.29				
Lumding to Nazira.....	1.1.01	141.87				
Nazira to Lakwa.....	15.11.01	10.71				+Of this, 7½ miles, between Damchara & Langting were reconstructed in 1915-18 & 1916-17
Lakwa to Bhajo.....	1.2.03	12.72				
Bhajo to Tinsukia.....	1.3.03	<u>41.53</u>	573.79			
<u>Branches -</u>						
<u>Naokhali Branch -</u>						
Laksam to Noakhali.....	15.5.03	<u>30.46</u>	30.46			
<u>Chandpur Branch -</u>						
Laksam to Chandpur....	1.7.95	<u>31.62</u>	31.62			
<u>Tangi Branch-</u>						
Akhaura to Ashuganj on the left bank of Meghna ..	1.4.10	19.05				
Ashuganj junction Wagon ferry.....	1.4.15	0.80				
Bhairab Bazar to Danlot						
Kandi.....	1.9.16	2.25				
Danlot Kandi to Tangi....	1.7.14	<u>39.07</u>	61.17			
<u>Sylhet Branch -</u>						
Kulaura to Fenchuganj						
Ghat.....	16.4.12	15.10				
Fenchuganj Ghat to Kusiya.....	1.7.16	0.95				
Kusiya to Sylhet.....	1.4.15	<u>15.14</u>	31.19			
<u>Silchar Branch -</u>						
Badarpur to Katakha....	13.6.98	6.27				
Katakhal to Silchar.....	8.11.98	<u>12.35</u>	18.62			
<u>Gauhati Branch -</u>						
Gauhati Ghat to Gauheti..	1.1.97	1.32				
Gauheti to Jamunamukh..	1.1.97	74.11				
Jamunamukh to Lanka ...	2.1.99	19.11				
Lanka to Lumding (temporary station)	1.3.99	15.55				
Lumding (temporary station) to Lumding.....	20.2.00	<u>3.44</u>	113.53			
<u>Dikhow Extension</u>						
Sibsagar Road to Belhubar.....	9.2.13	<u>6.74</u>	6.74			
<u>Naginimara extension-</u>						
Bihubar to Naginimara...	1.9.17	<u>2.29</u>	2.29			
Grand Total				869.4		

1. Railway Dept. Govt. of India Rly. Board. Hist. of India Rlys constructed and in Progress corrected up to 31 March 1918.

Name	Age Years	Where & when built or received	Wood or iron	Con- dition	Remarks
Port Officers gig.	13	1879 Chittagong	Teakwood cop- per fastened, metalled bottom	Good	In commission
Port ballam dues boat	4	1889 Chittagong	Teakwood cop- per fastened, metal sheathed	Do	"
Pilot cutter jolly boat No. I.	7	1885 Calcutta	Teakwood & metalled bottom	Do	"
Pilot cutter jolly boat No. II.	7	1885 Calcutta	Teakwood met- alled bottom	Do	Painted, caulked, new row lock plates given
Port Comm's S. L. Active	9	1884 Calcutta dockyard	Iron	Do	Has been docked & thoroughly overhauled in July 1892. In commission
Water-boat formerly Pilot cutter Spy	18	1875	Teakwood, iron fastened sheat- hed metal	Very fair cond- ition	In commission
Pilot cutter Pilot	18	1875	Teakwood, iron fastened metal	Very fair	"
Heave-up boat No. I.	Not known	1881	Iron	Fair	"
Heave-up boat No. II	3	1891	Iron	Good	"
Heave-up boat tender	12	1880 Chittagong	Teakwood met- alled bottom	Bad	Has been repaired from time to time is still serviceable
Harbour master's boat gig	Not known	1884 England	Teakwood, cop- per fastened, metal sheathed	Bad	Has received extensive repairs; is serviceable
Water-boat's jolly boat	13	1880	Teakwood, cop- per fastened, metal sheathed teakwood	Do	Has had extensive re- pairs, the ribs knees & top-side planking all broken is still service- able now under repair
Old jolly boat	18	1875 Calcutta	Teakwood	Unser- vice- able	Condemnd, will be sold
Harbour Masters hawser-boat	1	1892 Calcutta	Teakwood, cop- per fastened metal sheathed	Good	Received in March last now in commission Intended for the harbour master's use instead of a gig
S. L. Active jolly boat	about 6 years	1892 Calcutta	Teakwood, cop- per fastened, sheathed metal	Do	Bought locally, is used as tender to the launch Active
S. T. Gekko	one year	1892 Falmouth	Steel	Do ¹	Arrived from England on the 29 June & was taken over by the Port Comms on 3 July 1892
New gig	not known	1894	Teakwood	Do	

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*The call marks are those of the India Office Library and Records, unless preceded by B.L. - British Library

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- C. India Office Records: Private Papers
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