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From Frontier to Boundary: Emergence of Borderline between Bengal and Orissa in Colonial Times

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Abstract: This study will discuss the transformation of frontiers into demarcated boundary in Colonial Bengal and Orissa. Historically, there was no fixed boundary between Bengal and Orissa, resulting in fluid political and military frontiers that persisted through the medieval and Mughal periods. From the Medieval times, Midnapur frequently oscillated between the jurisdictions of Bengal and Orissa, subject to reconfigurations based on changing political power. In the 18th century, the rise of 'Maratha swarajya' and the East India Company's zamindari redefined the frontier, centering on the Subarnarekha River and incorporating a wide perimeter in southwestern Midnapur and Northern Orissa. Through a series of negotiation, warfare and legal administrative frameworks the borderlands of these two regions were redefined. By examining the historical processes, this study highlights how the frontiers shifted to defined borderlines in Colonial Bengal.

Keywords: Frontier, Boundary, Bengal, Orissa, Midnapur, Maratha, East India Company.

Introduction: My area of discussion is the south-western frontier of Bengal, particularly the south-western part of the frontier district of Midnapur in colonial Bengal, as well as Balasore and Mayurbhanj in Northern Orissa. There was no fixed boundary between Bengal and Orissa since medieval times, resulting in a wide range of political and military frontiers. These frontiers existed even during the Mughal period.[i] Suba Bengal was surrounded by semi-independent zamindars and rajas, among whom only the Peshkas attempted to establish sovereignty. During the time of the Ganga kings of Orissa, the frontier extended from Balasore to Tamluk and Mandaran in the east. Mughal supremacy over Orissa was established during Akbar's time, extending Mughal sovereignty westward from Mandaran.[ii] In Akbar's administration, entire Midnapur was included in Orissa under Sarkar Jaleswar.[iii]

The 'semi-autonomous' rajas and zamindars of the south-west frontier region of Bengal, such as the Rajas of Bishnupur, Chandrakona, Pachet, Birbhum, Susang, and the 'Jungle Mahal' of Midnapur, were subject to the Mughals by paying a nominal tribute or peshkash.[iv] On the other hand, Mughal sovereignty was established

directly over Cuttack, Puri, and Balasore, known as the 'Mughalbandi' areas. However, Balasore was subject to local semi-independent zamindars, including those of Mayurbhanj to the north. During the reign of Shahjahan, Midnapur was re-incorporated into Bengal. Thus, Midnapur was repeatedly reconstituted between Bengal and Orissa. This political history changed again in the eighteenth century. The establishment of 'Maratha swarajya' and the 'Company's zamindari' led to a realignment of the political boundaries between Bengal and Orissa, creating a broad frontier region centered on the Subarnarekha River, with its perimeter in southwestern Midnapur and Northern Orissa. James Rennell's 'Map of Bengal' and Company documents provide a good understanding of this newly created frontier.

This political frontier, referred to as the 'Inner frontier,' was abolished after the English East India Company conquered Orissa by ousting the Marathas in 1803 AD. As a result, pre-modern frontiers became demarcation lines, which is a significant issue in modern state formation. The modern boundary between Bengal and Orissa was established, with the Subarnarekha River serving as a rough boundary.

1. The Treaty of 1751 and the Emergence of an Improvised frontier in the Borderlands of Bengal and Orissa

We know that the process of establishing a boundary between two sovereign powers through treaty is a modern concept of state-making. First followed in Europe and later noticed in the political history of India in the eighteenth century. It would not be wrong to say that the treaty between Nawab Alivardi Khan of Bengal and the Marathas in 1751 AD was the first example of such a treaty in India. According to this treaty, the new frontier was developed between Bengal and Orissa. A new frontier naturally emerges through the breaking down of the old frontier and the new frontier and its rings are formed.

According to this treaty, Alivardi Khan agreed to pay 12 lakh rupees annually for the Chauth of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa.[v] But the Nawab was forced to appoint the Afghan leader Mir Habib-ullah, an ally of the Marathas, as Naib Nazim or deputy governor, even though there was no mention of giving Orissa. Although he was referred to as a servant of Alivardi in the terms of the treaty, he submitted to the Marathas and was appointed ruler of Orissa. But since in this treaty the Nawab promised to give chauth of Orissa along with Bengal and Bihar, it can be undoubtedly said that Orissa was still under Alivardi's sovereignty on paper. Jadunath Sarkar said, "It is a mistake to say that Alivardi ceded Orissa to the Marathas".[vi] According to him the terms of this treaty meant that Mughal Orissa was divided into two parts. The Nawab had full administrative control over Midnapur and Jaleswar, two of the most important frontier fort town in northern Mughal Orissa. On the other hand, the sparsely populated areas of southern Orissa, Balasore, Cuttack and Puri (the 'Mughalbandi' areas) ruled by conscription but paid their revenue to the Marathas. Jadunath Sarkar thus said-'…it became one vast jagir for them without any change in its territorial sovereignty'.[vii] Although, the Marathas did not claim any rights over Orissa at that time, but "In reality Orissa had been ceded to the Bhonsles of Nagpur in full sovereignty, and Mir Habibullah was their Governor"[viii]. According to John Beames the Marathas held the province of Orissa for the security of Chauth.[ix] Hence no boundary between

Bengal and Orissa was mentioned in this treaty, which was very significant. Mir Habib was indeed appointed as an employee of Nawab but he was 'pro-Maratha'. According to Stewart Gordon the boundary between Bengal and Orissa was established by this treaty.[x] But the problem is territorial limit or demarcation of boundary between Mir Habib and Alivardi Khan was not specified. Since the Nawab had given the chauth of Orissa along with Bengal and Bihar, Mir Habib was mentioned as an employee appointed by the Nawab. The contemporary texts Siyar-ul-Mutakherin and Riyas-us-Salatin mention the Sonamukhiya and Subarnarekha rivers as the boundary of Mir Habib and Alivardi Khan.

Establishing a river as a border offers significant military value.[xi] On one hand, it can delay enemy attacks, while on the other hand, military outposts can be established to create a defensive system. Nawab Alivardi Khan reorganized the administrative and military system of Jaleswar and Sadar Midnapur after the conclusion of the treaty. Even though Balasore was still under the Nawab, it was frequently attacked by the Marathas. So the Subarnarekha river was used as a defense against future attacks of the Marathas. As the Marathas used to enter Midnapur and Bengal through the Badshahi road, the forts of Jaleswar and Midnapur were used as frontier forts as before. Raja Ram Sing was appointed by Nawab as a foujdar of Midnapur.[xii] The southern part of Orissa was under Mir Habib's control. Thus, fiscal right transformed into Maratha sovereignty over ‘Mughalbandi’ Orissa, comprising tributary states or chiefdoms. Jadunath Sarkar thus said- “The Frontier of Bengal Was fixed at and including the river Subarnarekha near Jaleswar, and the Marathas bound themselves not to cross it again.”[xiii]

Mir Habib, an ally of the Marathas, was appointed governor of Orissa but was treated as a servant of Alivardi Khan under the terms of the treaty. But a group of Maratha army was kept in Cuttack. After the death of Mir Habib, his is nephew Mirza Saleh[xiv] received the investiture as a governor of Orissa both from Alivardi and from Maratha chief Raghuji.[xv] He also received Khilat from the Nawab of Bengal. But his loyalty was to the Marathas. A portion of northern Orissa was directly under the Nawab and ‘Mughalbandi Orissa’ was ruled by Mir Habib. It is clear that, after the treaty, Mir Habib was not in control. The Marathas gradually succeeded in bringing ‘Mughalbandi’ Orissa under control and incorporating it into the ‘Maratha Swarajya’.

Within a decade of this treaty, a complex situation arose due to weakness among the Nawab's successors, internal crisis in the court of Murshidabad, the Battle of Palassey and the transfer of real power from the hands of the Nawab. After Mir Habib's death in 1752 AD, a Maratha employee of the Nagpur court was appointed Alivardi Khan's new deputy. He was appointed as a new servant and acted as a follower of the Marathas in all respects. This situation enabled the Marathas to establish political sovereignty over southern Orissa with revenue rights.[xvi] The Marathas established overall authority over the whole of Orissa except Midnapur and Jaleswar in northern Orissa, and became a part of the Maratha Empire. This change in the political condition of Orissa can be understood from a letter of the Select Committee of Calcutta dated 11th December 1761 A.D- “It is about twelve years since the Nawab of Bengal gave the Marathas an assignment upon the Katak province for receiving an annual stipulated sum on account of the chauth. The Marathas,

under pretence of collecting their share, usurped by degrees the entire possession of the province, and not contended with that, still continued to harass the neighboring parts of Bengal, and more particularly the provinces of Medinipur and Bardwan, which now belong to Company."[xvii]

Now the question is whether Subarnarekha river formed the real boundary between Maratha controlled Orissa and Nawab ruled Bengal? The answer is no. The Subarnarekha River was not the actual boundary between the Marathas and Nawab of Bengal, as the Maratha occupied territory to the north east of the river in parganas Bhograi, Kamarda, Pataspur and Shahbandar and several villages in the Gopiballabhpur Thana.[xviii] In a recent discussion A.T. Embree says-"The Subarnarekha river provided a definite demarcation between two jurisdiction, but the Nawab was given tax rights lands south of the river in Raja's territory, while some of the Raja's tributary chieftains collected taxes from the Nawabs side of the river."[xix] Chakla Jaleswar was spread on both sides of the Subarnarekha river. As a result overlapping jurisdictional status was created. At the same time, the Marathas established dominance over the Parganas like Pataspur, Kamarda, Sahabandar, Kismat Lapu etc. belonging to Midnapur and Jaleswar to the south-east of the river Subarnarekha. The south of the Jaleswar area became 'Maratha Mahal'. According to John Beams, the entire province was handed over to the Marathas in 1755 AD. He said-"In 1755 the whole province was finally and conclusively made over to the Marathas at the request of the zemindars of Midnapore and Burdwan in exchange of for 4lakhs of the "Chauth", the remainder to be paid from Bengal."[xx] Defeat at the hands of the company at the Battle of Palassey revealed the Nawab's weakness. In this opportunity the Marathas saw a legitimate claim on Midnapur and Jaleswar in northern Orissa. So these two regions started trying to acquire. At the same time, after 1758, the cessation of payment of Chauth led to a resumption of military operations which hit Midnapur and Burdwan.

As a result, a new frontier was emerged between Balasore and Jaleswar-Midnapur in Mughal Orissa centered on the Subarnarekha river and its surrounding areas. A new division took place between Nawabi Bengal and Maratha controlled Orissa. In other words, due to the control of some parts of North Orissa by Nawab and Mir Habib, Subarnarekha river appeared as frontier line. This frontier can be referred to as David N. Gellner's 'Pre modern frontier', because 'they are fuzzy and contested'.[xxi] There was no clear line between the two regions. The Marathas collected chauth from Bengal and established sovereignty in Orissa. They occasionally entered into the Nawab's territory by crossing the Subarnarekha river. As a result, an undefined and uncontrolled boundary emerged between the Marathas and the Nawabs, which can be referred as a frontier region. This geo-political development likely had far-reaching implications for governance, trade, and relations between the respective regions and powers involved.

The three chaklas granted to the English East India Company in 1760 were located in the border region of Bengal, namely Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong[xxii]. Nawab Mir Qashim took the company's military assistance in those regions, especially in the south-west, to prevent Maratha invasions and suppress the rebel zamindars. So the said three chaklas were granted to the Company for the expenses of the army. Burdwan and Midnapur were located on the 'south-west frontier' and Chittagong on the 'south-east'. Chittagong was

separated from Burma by the territory of the Arakan Raj, which formed the frontier between Bengal and Burma. On the other hand Orissa was separated from the administrative control of Bengal due to Maratha possession, Midnapur and Burdwan emerged as the south-western frontier of Bengal.

ii. Company's attempt to settle the boundary line

In 1765, despite gaining revenue rights, the English East India Company did not fully control Orissa. Consequently, they attempted to negotiate with the Marathas, even trying to buy Orissa, as its acquisition would strengthen the Company's political and economic influence by connecting Bengal with Madras presidency. On the other hand Janoji made several attempts to secure the arrears of chauth through the Company's Governor.

On the other hand, the Mayurbhanj Raja and the Marathas conducted continuous military campaigns and raids, claiming sovereignty over the territories north of the Subarnarekha river, including the villages near Jaleswar. Consequently, due to the failure to acquire Orissa and the claims of Mayurbhanj and the Marathas, the English East India Company found it necessary to concentrate on the border issues.

In the second half of the 18th century, defining the boundary between Company-ruled Bengal and Maratha-ruled Orissa created a complex situation. According to Bhabani Charan Roy–'one of the most vexing problems in the second half of the eighteenth century'.[xxiii] Not only overlapping jurisdictional possessions, but some zamindars collected revenue from both Maratha and Company territories and included their zamindari over the parganas on both sides as before. So there were multiple layers of complexity, firstly, the question of fixing territorial limits between the Company and the Marathas. Secondly, the position of Mayurbhanja Raja on the western frontier was complex in nature, he was a tributary state under the Marathas on the one hand and a zamindar under the Company on the other. Thirdly, the local zamindars created additional complications. As the regions of northern Orissa was divided between the Company and the Marathas due to the occupation of Jaleswar. So the parganas of the local zamindars were transferred to both regions. Hence, the determining the boundaries of the zamindari parganas was complex. Fourthly, the zamindars in the jungle areas of north-west Midnapur had rebelled against the company's authority, so expanding the company's territory in the west was a difficult and challenging task.

According to David Luden-"Empires creates boundaries for territorial control."[xxiv] In the modern state system in Europe each sovereign territory was defined by boundaries. The British East India Company began to apply this idea in India. With realizing that Orissa was not possible, the Company focused on resolving the border dispute. Moreover, at the beginning of the Company rule, determining and fixing the boundary between Bengal-Orissa became the primary and main issue. It was essential to establish a link between Fort William in Bengal and St. George in Madras. In earlier times or at that time the company did not have any maps which would help to understanding the layout of the area occupied by the company. Hence there was a significant focus on creating maps through surveys of the acquired territories. Ensuring security in the border areas also became very important. Therefore, the EIC determined to establish

Subarnarekha river was as a definite boundary through mutual understanding. Although, the Subarnarekha river was depicted in Rennell's map as the boundary, but it was not true. The company's board of directors was seriously involved to define the extent of territorial sovereignty.

The first effort was made during Vansittart's time.[xxv] The parganas of Pataspur and Belorachor wanted to exchange each other. Potaspur was more profitable and advantageous to the company compared to Belorichor and the financial condition was quite good. Additionally, this arrangement would have made it possible to establish the Subarnarekha River as the boundary. Vansittart wrote in his letter-"We should gain some advantage by the bargain in point of value, and it would besides render our territories on this side more compact and save as a number of disputes."[xxvi] The entire Orissa became more important to the Company than Vansittart's plan to exchange the parganas. Verelest therefore decided to suspend the process of exchange of parganas. He expressed his opinion that if Cuttack possible to acquire then Pataspur pargana could be placed under the jurisdiction of the Resident of Midnapur. At the end, due to the reluctance of the Marathas, the process of exchange of parganas ended in failure.

So the Company's local administrators, i.e. the Residents, expressed their opinions in favor of delimitation in some way and urged the officials in Kolkata to act on this matter. Meanwhile the official's of Madras and Fort William were determined to acquiring Orissa from the Marathas. As a result, the issue of boundary delimitation and border disputes persisted.

The second attempt to define the boundary was made by the company's administration of in the 1780s. There were three reasons for the decision to establish a boundary at this time. First, the EIC failed to obtain Orissa. After long diplomatic negotiations, it realized that acquiring was not possible. As a result, demarcation of boundaries had to be considered for peace and stability. Second, the Raja of Mayurbhanj's military campaigns caused problems for the Company. His claims over Company's occupied areas and the increase in disturbances and violence from both sides of the border challenged the Company's sovereignty. This ongoing instability harmed agriculture and trade, prompting the Company to consider this decision. Third, in 1782 the treaty of Salbai established an alliance between the Marathas and the Company. This created a new equation in the context of all-India politics. In particular, the Marathas joined with the Company against Tipu Sultan in South India. This had an impact on resolving the border and frontier issues between Bengal and Orissa. Significantly, in the 1780s, while the Marathas abandoned their claims for chauth, the Company also relinquished its claim to Orissa which was granted by the Mughal Emperor. Particularly, from 1782 onward, there was an emphasis on determining territorial boundaries between the two sovereign authorities. Efforts to resolve border issues and delineate boundaries through diplomatic dialogue were resumed.

The company wanted-"to avoid the clashing of the jurisdiction of the 2 governments over the same individuals and in particular as far as regarded Raja Damoodar Bhunge the Zemindar of Mohurbunge".[xxvii] The company continuously moved forward to resolve this dispute. The Preparer of Reports to the Revenue Department was directed to report on the two frontiers-

"...to ascertain the site & produce of the lands appertaining to the Marrattas on this or the Eastern side of the Soobenreeca River, and inlike manner the site and produce of the lands belonging to this Government on the other side, and to deliver in a comparative state of them; that the Board might proceed on such ground to negotiate an Exchange of such lands with the Cuttuck Government."[xxviii]

This would assist the company to set a definite boundary. J.C. Price said-

"If the Mahrattas could be prevailed upon to cede their lands, by which an uninterrupted line of demarkation (demarcation) would be produced, the police in the south-west of the district would receive more improvement than it was possible to attain by any internal regulation of Government or by any exertions of the Magistrate."[xxix]

A comparative discussion shows that the Maratha controlled parganas were more productive than the Company parganas. This attempt of the company also failed due to the reluctance of the Marathas.

The Company's official's in Kolkata (Calcutta) decided to resolve overlapping jurisdiction and cross border disputes. The company proposed to make the interchange of territory to the Marathas. Hence, in 1782, they initiated an attempt to establish the Subarnarekha River as the boundary between the Company and the Marathas, directing the Preparer of Report to the Revenue Department to conduct an investigation for this purpose.[xxx] This investigation shows that the revenue of the Maratha parganas east of the east of the Subarnarekha was much higher than that of the parganas west of the Company. The Company's attempt and efforts was failed due to the reluctance of the Marathas. The Marathas were unwilling to relinquish control over economically and politically important territories.

Next in 1788, Forster was sent to the court of Nagpur by Cornwallis.[xxxi] He proposed to the Raja that the exchanging villages along the Subarnarekha River could prevent 'constant conflict between the two authorities'.[xxxii] So, the River would form the boundary line between these two. Disturbances cannot be controlled only by employing security guards on mutual understanding, 'but a line can be drawn to prevent any in future'.[xxxiii] After conducting a thorough inquiry, Bhawani Pandit reported that "the villages have remained in their current situation for the past 40 years."[xxxiv] As a result, the Raja of Nagpur did not agree to this proposal. He replied not needed any change or alteration.[xxxv]

In 1799, Colebrook made the final effort to settle the frontier question between the Company's territory and the Raja's on behalf of the Company.[xxxvi] The Company's administrators instructed Colebrooke to adopt a policy of mutual understanding. To permanently counter the ongoing Maratha depredations in Company territories and resolve the issues, the Magistrate of Midnapur proposed defining a boundary. He advised the Raja of Berar to establish a clear and contiguous boundary between the Company and the Marathas. This was intended to create a definite and recognized border, facilitating better governance and reducing conflicts in the region.[xxxvii] If the Raja of Berar agreed to the proposal for the exchange of territories, orders would be issued according to the Governor-General's instructions for appointing officers from both sides to oversee the process. However, if the Raja rejected the proposal, a warning was given that the Company might resort

to a military expedition into Maratha territory to address the Maratha depredations. Thus, the situation was managed with both diplomatic and military strategies to ensure the security and stability of the Company's territories. Through this mission the colonial strategy was to using negotiation backed by the threat of military action to secure territorial stability.

Colebrooke tried to convince the king to demarcate by presenting a map made by Rennell.[xxxviii] However, the Company's administrators realized the complexity or difficulty in exchanging parganas or land between them, as the value of the Company pargana's west of the Subarnarekha river was much lower than the parganas of Maratha-occupied southern Midnapur.[xxxix] The parganas on both sides differed in total revenue, which would have been disadvantageous to the Marathas in accepting this proposal. However, the Maratha king rejected the proposal. The Company continued diplomatic and strategic efforts until the end of the eighteenth century to determine the boundaries. The primary approach was to prioritize mutual understanding and, if necessary, demonstrate military power. However, this extended effort ultimately failed. Eventually, the Company's authority over the entire region of Orissa was established through the defeat of the Marathas. As a result, the political and military borders were dissolved, leading to a consolidation of control by the Company.

However, these efforts were failed. Over the next one and half decades, the English East India Company did not prioritize resolving the border and boundary issues between Midnapur and Cuttack. They believed that if Orissa came under their control, the border issues would resolve themselves. Earlier Clive and Verelst tried to acquire Orissa through negotiation with the Marathas. But the Marathas never agreed to transfer Orissa or at the end each saw that it was useless to press its demands on the other. Meanwhile, the Mayurbhanj Raja and the Marathas conducted military campaigns and raids, claiming sovereignty over territories north of the Subarnarekha river, including villages near Jaleswar. Faced with the failure to acquire Orissa and the territorial claims of Mayurbhanj and the Marathas, the Company found it necessary to address border issues in the region.

iii. **Redefining Territories and Boundary making in the 19th century**

The frontier witnessed a series of conflicts and negotiations as the English East India Company and the Marathas vied for dominance. Military skirmishes, diplomatic strategy and negotiations characterize the interaction between the two powers, delineating the frontier in the process. The boundary between Bengal and Orissa was porous, subject to periodic changes and adjustments in response to changing political conditions. In the census of 1901, the boundaries of Orissa were mentioned as-"To the north and south there is no well-defined boundary separating Orissa from Bengal on the one side and from Madras on the other, and formerly the Province included part of the present district of Midnapore in Bengal and Ganjam in Madras."[xl] That is, the boundary between Bengal and Orissa had not yet been clearly delineated. For a long time the parganas between Balasore and Midnapur were divided and re-division. From 1805-21 AD the administrative activities of Balasore were managed from Cuttack and in 1821 a Joint Magistrate was appointed at Balasore.[xli]

During the Mughal period, the local administration was based on parganas. In the colonial period, the administrative structure shifted from parganas to a system based on thanas. This new division based on Thanas instead of Parganas, which reshuffled the layout of the regions. The formation of this new division was established by the Regulation XXII of 1813.[xlii] By this act the magistrates were directed to divide each district into police or thanas, reorganizing thanas comprising an area of 10 kos's or 20 square miles.

After the Company's annexation of Orissa in 1803 AD, the administrative system underwent several changes. The areas between Balasore and Midnapur have sometimes been joined and sometimes alienated and re-divided. W.W. Hunter wrote- "on the north (of Orissa), a perplexing series of transfers and re-transfers of fiscal divisions has gone on between Balasore and Midnapore, Particularly in 1837, 1858, 1865 and 1868. Some have been transferred backwards and forwards as many as three times; and the collector reports that 'constant sifting of jurisdiction has made these fiscal divisions very lawless and difficult to manage."[xliii] After the conquest of Orissa, a tension was often observed between the company administrators stationed at Balasore and Midnapur. It was proposed by J. Melvill[xliv] in 1805 AD and E. Impey[xlv], Magistrate of Cuttack in 1816 AD. Areas between Balasore and Jaleswar will be included in Balasore or Midnapur. That is, what will be the boundary between Midnapur and Balasore.

After the English Company conquered Orissa from the Marathas in 1803 AD, the boundary issues resumed. Will Subarnarekha River be in use as the boundary between Balasore and Midnapur? Or need restructuring. The question of new division started to arise mainly for administrative, revenue collection and creation of new police stations. In 1805, Commissioner of Cuttack, J. Melvill proposed to make Foorzah/ Furja River as the boundary between Bengal and Orissa instead of Subarnarekha River.[xlvi] The Furja River used to flow north of Balasore. Rennell referred to it as the 'Sone' River and it is now known as the Sono River. The distance between the Subarnarekha and the Furza river was about 30 miles and the soil being barren, cultivation was not very extensive, with an annual revenue of less than 25 thousand rupees.[xlvii]

Melvill's main reason for determining the Furza river boundary was distance. The distance from Sadar Midnapur to Furza river is about 80 miles and from Cuttack a little more than 100 miles.[xlviii] Therefore, for administrative convenience, Furja river proposed to make the boundary between Sadar Midnapur and Cuttack.

Melvill's proposal to change the boundary was accepted by Henry Strachey, the Magistrate of Midnapur, but opposed by the then Magistrate of Cuttack, R. Ker.[xlix] Because Chakla Balasore has to be divided into several parts. The northern part was dependent on Midnapur while the southern parganas were dependent on Balasore. According to Melvill's proposed boundary changes, each pargana would be divided into two separate districts, which will increase the administrative cost. Local landlords opposed annexation into Midnapur. Mr. Ker highlighted the plight of local zamindars and their grievances. So R. Ker strongly opposed the proposal to demarcate the river Balasore as well as the river Furja. For administrative and zamindars convenience, the Subarnarekha river was demanded to be demarcated as the boundary. Ultimately, during the time of Mr. Kear, Jaleswar came under the jurisdiction of Midnapur.

A significant decision regarding the demarcation of the boundary between Midnapur and Cuttack was made during the time of Colvin, the Joint Magistrate of Balasore. In 1816 he proposed to make the Subarnarekha river as the actual boundary. Thus, at that time several parganas and villages west of Subarna rekha were under the administrative control from Midnapur. Colvin said in his proposal-"It is, I believe generally supposed, that the Soobenricka River devides the District of Midnapore from that of Cuttack, but this is not the case, and it appearing to me advisable that a transfer to Cuttack of all the villages at present belonging to Midnapore on this side of the river and that the river should be made the Boundary"[l]. 19-20 villages belonging to Thana Kudurian, Fatehabad and Maheshpur police stations in the north-west were under the jurisdiction of Midnapur Magistrate. More than 200 villages were included in Thana Kudurian, including Bellorichor Pargana and Garh Kanpur. Again, some villages of Basta police station were administered under Midnapur and some villages of Maheshpur police station were under Basta i.e. Cuttack Magistrate.[li] He therefore proposed to bring the villages and parganahs west of the Subarnarekha under the Faujdar of Balasore for administrative convenience. Thana Rani Sarai was abolished and the new thana Ramchandrapur was proposed to be formed and the villages under pargana Belorichor, Garh Kanpur were included in thana Kudurian and the villages of Maheshpur thana were brought under thana Basta. Hodgson, the then Magistrate of Midnapur, agreed to the proposal and placed the Subarnarekha river within the Midnapur district. He said-"The Soobunreeka river should considered as belonging to the Midnapore District this being determined on the transfer taking place will prevent any disputes here after as to the boundary"[lii]. Ultimately the Governor General's Council accepted Colvin's proposal to make the Subarnarekha the boundary. All areas west of the Subarnarekha were decided to be separated from Midnapur and transferred under the Cuttack District and were to be administered under the Joint Magistrate of Balasore.[liii] It was decided to form a 'Subordinate Police Chouke' at Ramchandrapur by creating Kudurian and Chitrapal Police Stations and abolishing Rani Sarai Police Station.

The boundary between Balasore and Midnapur was fixed in 1870 AD. Jaleswar and surrounding areas were incorporated into Balasore.[liv] In 1886 the regions of Bhograi, Kamarda and Sahabandar were included within Balasore. As a result, the boundary between Bengal and Orissa was established and the formation of the modern administrative boundaries of the two provinces was possible.

iv. Conclusion

In the 1760s a fundamental change in the political sphere came through the Diwani. British power penetrated Indian politics through the Company. But it was in 1765 AD that the Mughal emperor gave the Diwani of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa i.e. Al-Tamgha Jagir. We know that the Mughal provincial governance system had two different civil and Nizamati powers. After the Company received revenue powers, it found that while Bengal and Bihar were under jurisdiction, the revenue remained unpaid in the border areas of Orissa and South-West Bengal. At the same time, although a Nawab was appointed to manage the administration, the authority of the Mughal Emperor was replaced by the Company. Consequently, the Nawab would manage the administration of the border regions or Orissa, but the authority was held by the

Company. However, the improvised frontier of Bengal and Orissa were not under the control or jurisdiction of the Nawab, so the company had to face problems in collecting the revenue.

Unlike traditional frontiers delineated by natural boundaries, the frontier between Bengal and Orissa was marked by improvisation and adaptation to the evolving political landscape. As the English East India Company consolidated its control over Bengal, extending its influence westward, it encountered resistance from the Marathas in Orissa. This resistance led to the emergence of an improvised frontier, a zone of contestation where territorial control was fluid and subject to shifting power dynamics. According to Lattimore, 'the inner frontier as it is conventionally indicated on a map always proves, when studied on the ground, to be a zone rather than a line.'[lv] Although Subarnarekha river was developed as frontier line, but its characteristics were zonal.

According to the terms of the 1751 treaty, from 1760 to 1803 AD, fragmented sovereignty was established between the Company and the Marathas. This facilitated the formation of a complex Frontier Zone in southern Midnapur and northern Orissa. The governance centered on the Company and the Marathas, generally dividing the 'Southern Frontier' into two parts, the Eastern Frontier and the Western Frontier. The Maratha territories in the southern part of Jaleswar and Midnapur constituted the Eastern Frontier, while the Western Frontier encompassed a vast area including Fatehabad, Belorichor, and Nayabasan extending north from Jaleswar. Midnapur Sadar was the Company's and Balasore was the Maratha's headquarter.

The Company faced a difficult challenge in establishing control and sovereignty over these territories south from Sadar Midnapur. Although the Company and the Marathas had settled on the delimitation of boundaries, demarcation could not be achieved. The Company failed to enforce its claim on Orissa and insisted on demarcation between the two territories. Although that attempt began in the 1780s, it was not possible before 1803. As a result, the boundaries evolved from linear limits to zonal or regional boundaries.

It is natural that changes in the political and administrative spheres on the one hand, and development as a border region on the other will have an impact on the region. Frontier theorists and historians have discussed how long-term frontier conditions affect a region. The region's political deadlock, lack of sovereignty, and disordered conditions affected the local population, society and its culture. The establishment of the Company's sovereignty and political control over Orissa resulted in the disappearance of the 'Political frontier and emerged a definite jurisdictional line between two divisions. In generally, this division also separates two groups of people, the Bengali and the Oriya. After a numerous jurisdictional changes, the river Subarnarekha was informally recognized as the line of separation, although, it was not followed accurately.

Notes and References

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[vi] Sarkar Jadunath. 1964. Fall of the Mughal Empire, Vol-I, Orient Longman Ltd. p.104.

[vii] Ibid.

[viii] R.D Banerjee. 1931. History of Orissa, Vol.II, R. Chatterjee, Calcutta, p.117.

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[xii] Earlier Narayan Singh served as a commander of the body of spies under Alivardi Khan. Raja Ram Sing was succeded by his brother Narain sing. Seid Gholam Hossein Khan, The Seir Mutaqherin, Vol-II. Delhi, p.113.

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[xxiv] David Luden, The Process of Empire, ed. By Peter Fibiger Bang and C.A. Bayly, Tributary Empire in Global History, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, p.147.

[xxv] W.K. Firminger, ed. Midnapore District Record (Henceforth M.D.R.) Vol.I, No.188. Letter from G. Vansittart to Harry Verelst, 5th May 1767, In this letter the Pargana of Belorichour was mentioned to the south of the Surbornrekha river and its geographical location was to the west of the river.

[xxvi] M.D.R. Vol.I, No.188, Letter from G. Vansittart to Harry Verelst, 5th May 1767.

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[li]In 1804, Mr. Ker was appointed as Collector and Magistrate of Northern Division of Cuttack. At Ker's settlement the administrative area of Cuttack extended to Basta, as Jaleswar was still governed under the magistrate of Midnapur.

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