JHSR Journal of Historical Studies and ResearchISSN:2583-0198
Volume 5, Number 1 (January - April,2025),PP.138-150.
Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal
Website:www.jhsr.in
Email:jhsr.editor@gmail.com

The Adi Tribe and their Resistance War of 1911-1912 Against British Intervention in Arunachal Pradesh

Kento Tamuk[1]

[1]Ph.D. Research Scholar
Department of History
Rajiv Gandhi University
Arunachal Pradesh,India
Email: tamukkento2@gmail.com

Abstract:*Most of the tribal communities all over India encountered some form of colonial expansion in their regions. They resisted such colonial intrusions. Arunachal Pradesh is a tribal state inhabited by different tribal communities. In spite of being located in the remote northeastern part of India, the people of Arunachal Pradesh have taken an active part in the anti-colonial resistance movements. In this context, the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh fought many wars against the British to defend their territory from the invading colonial state. In light of the recent efforts to study and document the history of tribal resistance movements as an integral part of India's freedom struggle, this article studies the resistance war fought by the Adis against the British during 1911-1912. It examines various aspects of the war focusing on the cause and course, leadership and organisation, war technology, tactics and symbols employed by the Adis.*
Keywords*: Adi Tribe, Arunachal Pradesh, Tribal Resistance Movements, Tribal Warfare etc.*

Date of Submission: 25.01.2025 **Date of Acceptance: 30.01.25**

Introduction

The tribal communities of India were engaged in probably far more resistance against British colonial rule than any other community in India. However, the history of many of the tribal resistance against British remain excluded in the annals of India's struggle for independence. Least known is the resistance offered by the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh against British intervention in their area. In spite of being located in the remote Northeastern part of India, the people of Arunachal Pradesh have a rich history of anti-colonial resistance movements.

The Adi Tribe and their Resistance War of 1911-1912 Against British Intervention in Arunachal Pradesh

It is important to note that the tribal resistance against British intervention among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh were to an extent different from tribal movements elsewhere outside Northeast India. In the Northeast tribals unlike middle India tribals everywhere except Tripura are in overwhelming majority and have never faced any threat of the kind to their identity that inspired millenarian movements elsewhere in the country. Their institutions are relatively intact. They remain in possession of their land and forest. Therefore, there were no agrarian or forest based movement of the type that occur in middle India. Thus, tribal movements in this region have been essentially political and secular in nature which needs be noted in any attempt to comprehend their significance.

It is also essential to define the tribal movements against the British in Arunachal Pradesh as 'resistance movements', as they were acts of resistance to colonialism during the period of its incipience in their area. Resistance here signifies a variety of everyday practices where interventions/aggressions by an authority using force are resisted by adopting either violent or non-violent means. It chronicles a series of continues events. This is in contrast to a rebellion where the oppressed turn into aggressors as a mean to end it. It seeks to overthrow established authority. Robert Rotberg and Ali Mazrui in their edited work on Africa have appropriately distinguished the term resistance and rebellion. According to them: 'A resistance is an opposition to external hegemony and occupation prior to the time when an alien power has imposed upon a conquered country a new administrative framework requiring obedience to alien values... whereas, a rebellion is the militant expression of discontent at a later stage or it is the culmination of the resistance movement'.[1]

The Adis are one of the major tribe in the Arunachal Pradesh. They inhabit the central part of Arunachal Pradesh in the valleys and hills around river *Siang*, known as Brahmaputra in Assam. This area touches Tibet on the north, and has roughly speaking, Assam on the south, the Dibang valley and Lower Dibang valley districts of Arunachal Pradesh in the east. For a period extending over fifty-four years, the Adi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh resisted and fought against the British intervention in their hills until their defeat and general submission in 1912. Different groups of the Adis fought against the British at different point of time. The first war of resistance took place in 1858, the second in 1859, the third in 1894, and the fourth in 1911-1912. Taken together they constitute a connected history of resistance against the British intrusion into their territory.

The reason why there could not be a single, common war against the British was because of the socio-political set up of the Adis during that time. The Adis were divided into many groups. Each of these group inhabited a specific area under which a number of villages were established. These villages were independent of each other, each with their own village council called *Kebang* under a headman/chief. Thus, although the different groups of the Adis were related to each other, the connection between them was very loose due to lack of common leadership, communication and the remoteness of villages from one another.[2] There were numerous inter-clan and inter-group feuds in the society which embittered their relations and compelled them to remain prepared for warfare.[3]

However, it would be a mistake to say that the Adis in general were not united against the British. Different groups fought against the British in their respective area for a common cause to maintain their independence. These wars were marked by the formation of new group and village alliances to fight their common external enemy, i.e., the British. Villages of different groups formed alliances to fight the British. Within a group, numerous villages and clans came together to join the fight despite their inter-village or inter-clan feuds.

Roots of the Adi Resistance Wars

The roots of the resistance wars of the Adis lay in the economic and political dismemberment of the tribe caused by the British intervention in their hills. In order to understand the issues at stake it in necessary to recapitulate the pre-existing economic and political situation in the Adi hills. The Adis were freedom loving and independent people. Living in hilly area lying between the Tibetan state and the Ahoms, they maintained the calculated distance and autonomy from any of these colonising state forces. This independence was reflected in their political and economic lives in the pre-colonial period.

The British were not the first state power which the Adis had encountered. Before coming into contact with the British, the Adis had their own share of experiences in dealing with neighbouring state polities and the plains people. The Adis used to trade with their Tibetan neighbours as well as the plains people of Assam in order to supplement their primitive economy. Besides trade, they occasionally came down and looted the villages lying in the plains and wielded notional sovereignty over the people known as Miris and Beehas and the territory in the plains adjacent to their hills. The Ahom State as mentioned earlier made certain political arrangement under which they acknowledge this claims of the Adis. It was precisely this political arrangement which the British refused to recognize when they came into contact with Adis. They refused to acknowledge that the foothills adjacent to the hills belonged to the Adis.

The loss of their sovereign rights over the Miris and Beehas subjects and over the foothills was detrimental to their economic and political lives. The Miris and the Beehas were for a long time the subjects of the Adis, and they paid conciliatory offerings to the latter. The Miris earlier acted as the go-in between in the Adi trade with plains. In cropping season the forced labour of the Miris were heavily relied upon in order to cater to the pressing need of more labour. Thus, the plains of Assam and especially the forced labour and the exactions from the Miris were serving as the economic lifeline for the survival of the Adis in the lofty hill ranges. Any meddling into the existing state of co-existence and economic interdependences was likely to cause severe economic deprivation for the tribes. Thus, when the Miris and Beehas after the British annexation of Assam began to settle in the areas under British jurisdiction, it caused severe financial loss to the Adis. The Adis on various occasion demanded from the British the restoration of the Miris and Beehas to their original habitat in the vicinity of their Adi masters, but the British authority either refused or failed to do so.

In the initial phase of the reaction the Adis struck their individual targets through various raids into the villages of the Beehas who had stopped paying their dues to the Adis. How do we understand this raids? Sajal Nag has argued that raids were an inextricable part of the tribal mode of production.[4] According to Nag, the plains at the foothills provided the tribes with their natural outlets. At peace times the tribes would come down from the hills to barter their forest, agricultural and handicraft products for salt, iron and so on which were not available in their hills. At other times the same plain was also the happy hunting ground for procurement of labour, slave and even technology. By colonial parameters these were acts and expressions of barbarism, savagery and low civilization but for the tribes these were components of their modes of living. Seen in this context it was the economic necessity of the Adis which compelled them to occasionally conduct raids on the plains.

In the 19th century, it was the same economic loss due to the moving away of the Miris and Beehas and the stoppage of conciliatory payments, which necessitated the Adis to conduct raids in the plains in pursuit of their runaway subjects. Through these raids the Adis wanted to teach a lesson to their refractory subjects. Jangkhomang Guite has rightly argued that raids were an expression of hill politics and essentially represents the authority in the hills.[5] The first raid occurred in 1848, in which the Galo Adis carried off ten of the Beahas (gold washers) as captive for their defiance and non-payment of dues. In 1858 the Minyong Adis of the Kebang village attacked the Beheahs village at Sengajan only six miles from Dibrugarh to the north of the Brahmaputra river in which twenty-one persons were killed and six were wounded. Again in 1861 the Minyong Adis attacked on the Bordhun Bhuyan, a Beehas village, on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, just 15 miles away from Dibrugarh. Each of these raids were followed by counter raids of the British by sending punitive expeditions into the Adi hills with objective to restore the captives and punish the offending villages. The Adis in retaliation fought bravely against the British in order to maintain their independence and their sovereign rights.

The British claims over the lands at the foot of the hills north of Brahmaputra was the most important factor for Adi discontent against the British as earlier these foothills belonged to them. All evidence indicate that they enjoyed effective power in this tract before the British annexed Assam. Consequently, British expansion in the Brahmaputra valley directly clashed with the Adis' interests in this tract. Given the lack of colonial control over people and space of the frontier, control over the foothills could immensely assist the colonial state in this regard. The foothills were rich with valuable timbers, rubber, lac etc. and the low lying areas were also identified as fertile areas for commercial cultivation of opium and tea. As such the British were bent upon exploiting the resource potential of the area without any regard to the Adi claims. The British undertook a series of policy and measures to assert their claim upon the foothills such as the Agreement of 1862, the Inner line Regulation, establishment of military guard posts along the foothills and roads into the hills. All these measures clashed with the interests of the tribe which created further disruptions in the lives of the Adis.

When in the 1860s the Adis entered into agreement with the British, the latter demanded that the Adis must recognize that British territory extended up to the foot of the hills. The Adis at

first strongly resisted this demand and claimed all the land from the Brahmaputra to the foot of the hills as their own. According to major Bivar, the officer who negotiated with the Adis, it was only after patient persuasion that they accepted the British demand.[6] However, from oral narratives on the progress of the Agreement, we come to know that the Adis signed the agreements just for the time being and to saturate the situation. They did not sign the engagements with a good will and deliberately produced false signatures for the names of the Adi signatories furnished in the documents were false and improper. It is said that these false names were quite well known within their own communities.[7] In any case, the Adis did not considered the treaty to be binding on them nor abide by the agreements made. They persisted on their old claim to the land.

The substitution of the rights of Adis by *posa*[8] had its own problem, as different groups of the Adis from time to time complained about the inadequacy of the amount paid to them and demanded the increase of it as such. The Inner Line Regulation of 1873, by demarcating a boundary line in the Adi frontier led to further disputes over the foothills. The line imposed restrictions upon their free movement in the plains, which was once their own land. Besides this, the setting up of military guard posts near their hills was also resented by the Adis. For instance, in 1866, the Minyongs demanded the abandonment of the military post of Pobamukh.[9] Added to these problems was the old demands of the restoration of their Mishing slaves.

The demands made by the Padam Adis to the Assistant Political Officer, J.F. Needham, when he visited their villages, sums up the grievances of the Adis. They complained:

> We hope he (Needham) would redress all our grievances, but had not redressed any. We told him we were pushed for the cultivable land, and so wished to cross the Sikang (Dibang), but he refused to let us do so. We begged to return our slaves, as they cost us a lot of money and we cannot do without them, but he refused to do so, and latterly he has insulted us by offering us about on-fourth of what they actually cost us as ransom money. We have told him our posa is too small, but he refused to increase it.[10]

They further said:

> The Miluns (white-men) are slighting us considering that we are inferior men in comparison to them. We must show that we are equal to them and not even afraid of Maharani (Queen Victoria).[11]

Thus from 1860s onwards, the British interventions in the foothills led to further discontent among the Adis. The attack this time was not on their lost Beehas or Miri subjects, but upon the British establishments and their officials.

The Abor Massacre of 1911

The war of 1911-1912 was a fall out of the massacre of Neol Williamson, Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, along with his party, at Komsing village and Dr. Gregerson along with his

few sick coolies at Pangi village on 31st March 1911, while they on a tour to the Adi villages in upper course of Siang river. Neol Williamson in his tour of 1911 was accompanied by Dr. Gregorson, 34 Nepali coolies, his personal interpreter, 10 miris, 2 orderlies and 3 servants. Out of these only three servants managed to escape to report the news of the massacre.[12] The killings of the touring party took place at three separate locations (1) the murder of Neol Williamson, his troops and servants at Komsing village on 31st March, 1911 (2) the cutting of the letter carriers near Rengging village on 29th March (3) the murder of Dr. Gregorson and the sick coolies at Sissen village on 30th March.

In the colonial accounts, the incident is seen to have been done in a spirit of most wanton aggression, entirely unpremeditated. Thus, in the official report and colonial writings the reason for the massacre traced in the events and actions of the tour itself. A.W. Bentinck, Deputy Commissioner of the Dibrugarh who visited the area during Abor expedition (1912) writes that on the arrival of the party on 20th March, some ration and a case of liquor was stolen by the Abor carriers whom Williamson threatened to punish on his return. This created a commotion amongst the villagers who in their council determined on murdering the Political Officer.[13] In the official reports this incident at Rottung (village) was the decisive cause for the murder of Williamson. While they were in a state of anxiety, it is reported by the Secret Department that while on his way back, the Miri letter carrier is said to have boasted at Rottung that the letters he carried contained orders to send up sepoys and guns to punish the villagers of Rottung and Kebang.[14] In A. Hamilton's opinion the motive for the outrage had its sole origin in the loquacity of the Miri letter carrier who gave false interpretation of the colours of the three envelopes.[15] This alarmed the villagers so much that next day they followed the four man and killed them all on the way to Pasighat town. The villagers of Rottung, Kebang and Babuk then crossed the Dihang and finding Dr. Gregorson and some coolies at Sissen killed them on the spot on 30th March. They then followed Williamson who had already left Sissen. At Komsing, Williamson while on his way to the house of the headman of Komsing village was suddenly attacked and killed by Matmur Jamoh and his accomplices on 31st March 1911, and the rest of the Adis who crossed from Rottung and Kebang attacked the coolies at the same time.

The events of the murder mentioned above, i.e., the colonial version is almost as same as narrated in the Adi version. However, the Adi version of the story gives a different cause for the murder of Williamson. In the Adi version the murder appears to be a pre-planned conscious act of Matmur Jamoh along with his accomplice. To understand the course of events, it is necessary go back to the event of the year 1908, when Neol Williamson made a brief tour of the Pasi, Minyong and some Galo villages around Pasighat. On his way to Ledum, Williamson halted at Yagrung village. As per the ritual started after 1862 Agreements, Matmur Jamoh, the chief/headman of the village received him and presented him with a hen as a mark of mutual respect. Williamson is said to have refused and ask him to keep away, as Matmur had some kind of white-skin disease. When Matmur insisted and followed the British Officer, he (Williamson) is said to have hurled unparliamentary language and struck Matmur with his walking stick for following them. This incident between Matmur

and Neol Williamson as per oral history was the reason for the murder of Neol Williamson. Matmur is said to have sworn to avenge the humiliation meted out to him by murdering Williamson. During Williamson's second visit to area, no attempt of murder was made. After three years in 1911, Matmur successfully gathered the people and incited them to commit the murder.[16]

Course of the Resistance War of 1912

The murder of 1911 was much publicized and talked about in newspapers of both London and Calcutta as the infamous 'Abor massacre'. From the newspapers reports, it is evident that the murder was seen as a treacherous act committed by a savage tribe in the distant Abor frontier. The British forces who joined the Abor Expeditionary Force fought it in the name of the Queen. The British force with a total strength of approximately 8,500 of all ranks[17], under the command of General Bower, gathered at Kobo Camp, near Dibrugarh, on 6th October 1911. The Expedition was divided into two Columns viz., (i) the Main Column under the Command of Major-General Bower himself, which set out from Kobo on 22nd October 1911 (2) the Ledum Column, a subsidiary Column under Colonel Fisher, which left Kobo on 20th October 1911.

Meanwhile, on the Adi side, the war saw the coming together of the Minyong group of villages namely, Kebang, Ledum, Rengging, Rottung, Kallek, Sissen, Babuk and Yemsing; Riu, Pangi and the Galo group of villages namey, Sido, Kakki, Korang, to resist the advance of the British forces. Few weeks before the British column left Kobo, the Kebang Adis also came down to propose to the Pasi Adis of Balek group of villages to join them on a given date in the fight against the British forces.[18] The Pasi Adis are said to have approved the proposal but at the same time expressed fear in case the Balek stockade was destroyed, upon which the Kebang Adis declared them as cowards and withdrew back to their villages. The Padam group of Adis did not join the Kebang Adis, having been defeated in the 1864 war, they denounced any connection with the murder or the war.[19] The Adis of the northern and central zone Bokar, Shimong, Karko and so on did not join the war, as these areas largely remained unreached and unaffected by the British interventions. Kebang which remained the bastion of Adi resistance since 1858, stopped all attempts of the British to advance beyond their area, which was the only path to reach the northern zone and the villages of central zone beyond Kebang. This was one among many reason why subjugating Kebang was so important for the British. The occupation of Kebang by allowing the British to tour the land beyond Kebang would not only facilitate their trade route interests to Tibet and China but also help them in fixing the boundary of their India empire in the Northeast frontier. It was not without reason that the British used to call the Kebang village as 'Terror of Abor Territory' or 'Abor Citadel'.

The war was fought at two fronts, The Ledum column, which was reached Ledum on 23rd October without much opposition and three days later it occupied Miising village and on 5th November it captured the Doshing stockade. The main clash happened at Korang village,

however the British forces were successful in capturing and burning Korang. The main column advanced towards Rottung via Pasighat and facing a steep opposition from the Adis at *Egar Yabgo*, where a large stockade was maintained. The stockade was captured and the column marched next day to Rottung which was found deserted. From there the British located a large stockade on the right bank of Siang river at the *Kekar Monying* (black rock) 8 miles from Kebang, a precipitous rock about 500 yards along which runs the route to Kebang. the Adis considered this as this position impregnable and regarded it as the chief gate of their country. The stockade was captured after several days of fighting on 4th December. From there the British marched on to Kebang which was also found deserted. The village was burnt and destroyed by the British force, and with the fall of Kebang the war practically ended. The headmen of all the leading Minyong villages surrendered to the British.

The Padams had already deputed peace envoy to British authority at Sadiya and Pasighat, the Galos surrendered and the Pasis submitted; with the general submission of the Adis the next task was the arrest of the actual participants of the murder of Neol Williamson. The British on inquiry found out that Matmur Jamoh, the headman of Yagrung village was responsible for the Murder. Immediately a detachment was sent to arrest Matmur, but he has already escaped to hiding in the hills, the place is popularly now known *Matmur Diitung.* In response the British arrested the wife and son of Matmur and threatened to arrest all the Jamoh clan if he did not surrender. The British is said to have tortured the family of Matmur day after day by hanging them on the branches of jack-fruit tree by the neck and pulling them down when they about to run out of breath. As result, one of his clan member met Matmur and passed on the news to him. In this situation Matmur had no alternative but to surrender to the British. Other accomplices of Matmur were also arrested; the murder of Williamson was tried under Frontier Regulation Act of 1880 and that of Dr. Gregorson was court martialled. Matmur Jamoh was sent to Cellular Jail in Port Blair in the Andamans for life imprisonment. And with this the long history of Adi resistance against the British was over. Hereafter we no longer hear of any armed resistance against the British. The British succeeded in subjugation the Adis and establishment their control over the hills.

Leadership and Organisation

Every village of the Adis were independent and self-governing units. Every village had their own traditional institution of *Kebang*, i.e., village council (not to be confused with the Kebang village) to govern their social, political and economic lives. It was these village councils which played the central role in planning, organizing, mobilizing and shaping the spirit of unity, courage and discipline among the Adi men during the war. As soon as information is received about the impending attack on a village, or whenever enemy makes any advance towards a village, the villagers immediately convene an emergency war meeting of *Kebang*. The Kebang makes careful assessment of all the defensive measures like construction of stone chutes, stockades making and fixing of panjis, etc. If necessary women

and children were also evacuated to safer places. Information is also sent to the allied or friendly villages for help. Besides, they prepare for action and train all the able bodied men, particularly youngmen of the village for attacking on the enemy's flank. In the *Kebang*, leadership was usually taken was by the headmen/ chief of the village, but the decision was reached through a consensus of the whole villagers.

The war was organised was on an egalitarian line- connected, organised and sustained by a village dynamic and alliance- not on a central leadership. When the news of expedition in 1911 against Kebang village was received, all the headmen of the neighbouring villages of Yemsing, Pongging, Riga, Rengging, Yekshi, Sissen, Komsing, Riu, and Pangi assembled in a war council at Kebang village.[20] The Adis normally resorted to war council only when they were preparing for a major war. This council, like the council in times of peace, was democratic in nature, where all the headmen came together on equal footing and freely deliberated and decided on issues. The headmen of these neighboring villages at once declared that they would support Kebang village. Since many of the villages fought together, each village member saw each village head as their leader. In this way many leaders emerged in the 1912 War, and they all fought in their respective areas and occasionally helped each other when needed. They were not bound together by a single leader and a common central command. They all fought together for the village and their territory based on a common agreement and vow taken at their traditional war council.

The Adi forces during the Anglo-Abor war of 1911 were scattered across the hills in small groups, yet they were connected to each other through their village central commands. Each of these village, under the command of the village headmen/chief, was in turn connected to each other by an inter-village alliance network forged during the *Kebang*. Thus for instance, all the men of Kebang village who fought in different areas in the War of 1911-12 were first connected to their particular village, and in turn, connected to Rottung, Sissen men through the inter-village alliance network. The organizing principle across the hills was therefore the village/clan alliance network and relationship.

Thus, the Adi wars were community enterprise. The fact that these wars do not conform to what is called the 'pyramid notion of war and movement', where there is one leader at the top and one central command under his control, does not mean it lack leadership. As discussed above, there were not one, but many leaders. Again, we cannot read these resistance along the notion of 20th century political movements, in which what is organized is equated to having 'a conscious leadership, some well-defined aim, a programme objectives and means of achieving them'. The Adi wars did not lack organization, they were organised along a well-connected network of village network and alliance.

War Technology, Tactics and Symbols

In the pre-colonial times, inter-tribal and inter-village feuds occurred every now and then among the Adis. In this way the Adis were accustomed to defence mechanism particularly guerilla warfare suited to safeguard the sudden attack of enemies. This psychology was

manifested during the war against British interventions in their territory. The British officially planned the destruction of defence technology because they were regarded as a symbol of resistance to colonialism. Thus, there are only few remaining material remains of the defence technology used in the war.

The defence technology is evident from making and placing of stockades, panjies, bow and arrow traps, stone chutes (booby traps), and the selection of sites for establishing a village. Every Adi village was established on a strategic location in the hills with only one approach to each village. The approaches to the villages were often up through tortuous narrow covered ways or lanes, with high banks on either sides, sometimes through a steep ravine or the bed of an old torrent. A. Hamilton has rightly stated that they selected '….very inaccessible places for their villages. Surrounded with bamboo palisades of protected by a stockade of tree trunks, with all approaches carefully panjeed and flanked by stone chutes the village present very formidable position to an attacking party'.[21] The village stood on an open ground but immediately behind it was a patch of forest for safe retreat, in case of danger.

The placing of stone walls and stockades was the principal element of fortification of the village. They were constructed by inserting stout tree trunks into the ground and lying them with cane. Further the end of each post was sharpened to a point and the height of the structure was also made sufficiently difficult to be crossed. The bamboo stockades were temporary affairs and mainly used for fortifications. Sometimes big stone pieces (boulders) were also used for the making of stockades. These stockades usually encircled a village except where the ground made it unnecessary.

The panjies were spikes of bamboo or other hard wood of eight-ten inches, sharpened to a needle-like point and hardened by fire, impregnated to be fatal at one end and the other was inserted in the ground amongst the grass at an angle that just could catch the feet of any unobservant walker. They laid in thousands of numbers all around the village or were concealed under leaves about the paths leading to it, where it was imperceptible to the eager invader. As the attackers were unknown of the positioning of the planting of panjies, it could easily penetrate a soft boot or gaiter and were disastrous to a barefooted coolie or tribal militia. Sometimes, similar pieces of bamboo placed horizontally, some two or three feet from the ground were also employed for the same.

As a protective measure, a number of bows and arrows (which is called *koma* by Adi) traps were fixed near the path followed by the enemy. Poisoned arrows fixed on bows were placed ties by means of bamboo or cane rope, the end of which were so placed in the foot-track that a slight touch would immediately release the arrows and hit the object. Sometimes these were fixed in hundreds at different angles.

The stone chutes or 'booby traps' were also a part and parcel of the fortification. They were built of strong bamboo poles arranged horizontally to serve as a platform over which were piled up a large number of boulders, which were placed on the hill-slopes and above the approach to a village. One end of the platform rested on the ground and the other end was suspended by bamboo or cane ropes which could easily be cut to release the mass of boulders down the hill side on the advancing enemy. The chutes were kept concealed and were placed

in such a way that that the enemy while advancing often unknowingly released the ropes. All possible way to the villages were thus protected with stone chutes.

This elaborate village defence technology had some sort of advancements during the period of British aggressions to the area. The system of double row of stockades with earth and stone in between was introduced to meet the use of firearms by the British. Another development was in the placing of these stockades. Earlier it was a 'defence perimeter' of a village, later on it became necessary for the safety of the villages, minimum loss of the defenders of the village as well as the villagers and making the evacuation of the village safer and easier. The stockades were sometimes placed even 'two miles' away from the village. The length and height of the stockades depended on the situation. The most elaborate of this was the war rampart of boulders called *Bongal Yabgo* built during the 1894 war to fight and prevent the British advance (which is still in existence). The stockades consisted of a series of eight numbers of stone ramparts, the total length of which is said to be more than 6 miles during the war. Further advancement to the defence technology could be in the combined use of stockades and stone chutes and muskets during the 1911-12 war.

Further innovation during the British period was, in order to protect themselves from guns, plantains and big trees were felled and their trunks were used for reinforcing the stone wall. Outside the walls trees were also felled and were thrown in disorderly way all over the foot tracks leading to the stockade and the village to impede the advance of the attackers. Sometimes ditches were around the villages.

The war tactics of the Adis was defensive, waiting for their enemy in their hill stockades and fortresses, harassing them on the way and targeting the British officers leading the march. In this type of attack, the attackers moved in two batches with their weapons and enough food for a few days, and concealed themselves on the path frequented by their enemies, one batch in the upper side, the other in the lower side. When the enemy approached, the batch in the upper side allowed them to proceed, but when they come closer to the other batch it suddenly fell on them. As enemy started to run back, they were confronted by the other batch. This method of battle by ambushing is called *magbi* by the Adis. This tactic was effective against the British forces who were not beatable by any offensive war. The difficult in dealing with such tactics and their demoralising effects on the British troops in evident from various field diaries. Thus, while the tactic saved casualties on both sides, the guerilla tactic shows it efficacy in dealing with a powerful enemy. In the War of 1911, beside attacking the sepoys, they also resorted to attacking unprotected parties of road-makers, surveyors or signallers, as well as cutting the communication lines of telephone and telegraph cables.

The war weapons of the Adis consisted of bamboo shield, helmets, cross bows, ordinary bows and arrows with iron tips poisoned with aconite, very long spears, daggers, and the strong, straight cutting swords (*Yoksa*). It is with these weapon that they fought the British. Though these arms were not modern arms of precision, in the hands of Adi expert they were extraordinarily serviceable.

The use of traditional method of conveying messages through symbols across the hills as well to the British are also significant. The Adis employed various symbols to convey different

messages: a stone signify the gravity of any matter; a chili means anger, a piece of coal or burnt clay implies extreme urgency; a piece of burnt wood indicates incendiarism if the opportunity should occur; an unsharpened *dhao* (usual adi sword) reveals the intention of the send an unsharpened and a piece of aconite carries the warning that the sender's feelings are very much upset; anything pretty such as a white flower or a piece of white cotton denotes good will. Messages were usually sent in diminutive case baskets, which were placed at a point which the allies or enemy would find it.[22]

During the course of the 1911-1912 War, the Adis also used various symbols to convey their message to the British. For instance, on the way to Pongging village, the British force found unoccupied miniature stockade in which there was two broken arrows and a gateway made of a bough of particular tree, The broken arrows showed that the village did not desire war, while the leaves on the bough of the tree indicated peace. Similarly, when the any village was expecting attack, the placing of dismembered pig across the path by which the enemy must come was to show that the invaders will be cut to pieces if they give the chance. In order to convey their desire to end hostility usually a broken pieces of an arrow and a broken sword was sent in cane baskets.

Conclusion

What all these discussion goes on to show is that the Adis knew what they were doing and what they wanted. In other words, their wars against the British intervention was a conscious political act to maintain their independence. As long as this independence and their sovereign rights were not disturbed, they were a hospitable and friendly people. It is a well-documented fact that the Adis had friendly relations with the British till 1847. They did not directly despise the British or attack them upfront. For instance, in the first contact in 1825, Bredford was received by the Pasi Adis at Pasighat in a friendly manner. It was the British intervention one after another over their independence and their sovereign rights over the Miris and Beehas, and land in the foothill which led to their hostility.

Notes and References

[1] Rotberg, Robert, Ali, Mazrui, *Protest and Power in Black Africa,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1970, p.17.

[2] Nyori, Tai, *History and Culture of the Adis*, New Delhi: Omsons Publications, 1993, p.165.

[3] Feuds occurred when one clan or village violated the traditional boundary of another, trespassing into the territory of another village for the purpose of trade without paying the middleman's fee also led to feuds.

[4] Nag, Sajal, *Raiders of the Blue Mountains: Understanding Tribal Raids in Northeast India*, Kolkata: IHS, 2018.

[5] Guite, Jangkhomang, 'Colonialism and Its Unruly? - The Colonial State and Kuki Raids in Nineteenth Century Northeast India', *Modern South Asian Studies*, 48(05), September, 2013, pp.1188-1232.

[6] *Major Bivar to Assam*, *No. 146*, 27 November 1862, P.P.C., August 1863, No. 27.
[7] 'Verbal Report from Akep Osik, Padi Village (1980)', in N.N. Osik, *British Relations with the Adis, 1825-1947*, Guwahati: Omsons Publications, 1992.
[8] *Posa* was a kind of settlement or deal between tribes and Ahom kings and later British Government.
[9] JBP, June 1866, Nos. 119-121, cited in M.L. Bose, *History of Arunachal Pradesh*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company,1997, p.78.
[10] FEA, 1894, October, 117 in Nos. 96-1651, quoted from H.K. Barpujari, *Problem of Hill Tribes of North East India, Vol. III*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1981, p.132.
[11] Ibid.
[12] *Official Account of the Abor Expedition, 1911-12*, Shimla: Government Central Branch Press, 1913, p.13. (hereafter *Official Account of the Abor Expedition*….,)
[13] Reid, Robert, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam*, Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1997, p.218.
[14] Op. cit., *Official Account of the Abor Expedition*…., p.15.
[15] Hamilton, A., *In Abor Jungles*, London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912, p.55. (hereafter *Hamilton*, *A*.…1912)
[16] *Personal Interview held with Opang Darang, Kebang village*, 2018.
[17] Atchinson, C.U., *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Vol. XII*, Calcutta: Central Publication Branch (GOI), 1931, p.165.
[18] Op. cit., *Hamilton, A….1912,* p.219.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p.110.
[21] Ibid., p.90.
[22] Ibid., p.319.