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Spaces of Protection, Regimes of Exception: Anthropologists, Administrators and the Framing of the Late Colonial Discourse on Tribal Regions (1920-1950)

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ABSTRACT

In the decades leading to Indian independence, a number of anthropological works by figures like J.H. Hutton, J.P. Mills, Verrier Elwin, William Archer, Christopher von Furer-Haimendorf and, Wilfrid Vernon Grigson etc. were published at regular intervals from 1920s onwards. Taken together, there is a remarkable unity in the ideas of this 'knot of men'[2] whose writings played a crucial role in articulation of ideas and strategies designed for the protection of tribal communities in future India. These individuals were definitely not the founding fathers of this 'tradition' and their arguments built upon a much earlier lineage of similar anthropologically minded administrators. However, given that this period was also the twilight of the British Indian empire, their contributions were extremely significant. Without analyzing them, it is almost impossible to theorize the 'bridge' which connects the late colonial to the post-colonial period as far as the discourse on the Indian tribal population is concerned.

This paper attempts to retrace the intellectual trajectories of the late-colonial discourse on the constitutional protection to be provided to the tribal population in British India. My paper is divided into three sections. The first section discusses some key ideas in British anthropology and the shaping influence they had on scholar-administrators working with tribal communities in India. The second section analyzes the ideas of John Henry Hutton and the manner in which he appropriated 'Diffusionist' ideas on culture-contact to argue for territorial protection for tribals in Assam and British India. The third section contrasts the ideas of Wilfrid Vernon Grigson with those of Hutton, outlining the similarities and differences between the two.

Key Words: Tribal, segregation, anthropology, culture, ethnography, exclusion.

Section I

FROM MELANESIA TO THE NAGA HILLS: BRITISH ANTHROPOLOGY AND IDEAS OF CULTURE-CONTACT

For a critical understanding of the late colonial debate on the appropriate administrative arrangements for the tribal populations of India, let me begin by foregrounding the ideas of

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John Henry Hutton. My evidence suggests that Hutton became the linchpin of the British policy of territorial segregation of areas predominantly inhabited by tribal communities leading to the passage of the Order-in-Council declaring large parts of British India as either excluded or partially excluded areas under the Government of India Act 1935.

John Henry Hutton was born in England in 1885 and took his B.A. degree from Worcester College, Oxford University in 1908. In 1909, he entered the Indian Civil Service in the Eastern Bengal and Assam cadre. In the initial years of his service, he was posted at Dacca, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Mymensingh and Bakarganj. In 1912, he was sent to the Naga Hills and served there with distinction till 1929.[3]

Hutton arrived in Assam at a very interesting 'anthropological moment'.[4] Surrounded by colleagues, seniors and missionaries who were part-administrators and part-scholars writing detailed anthropological works, the young Hutton was smitten by the newly emerging discipline of social anthropology and eventually took his M.A. in the subject from the University of Oxford in 1919.

Hutton's first anthropological endeavour was his account of the AngamiNagas which he completed in the year 1915. Simultaneously, from 1915-1920, he was also preparing a monograph on the SemaNagas. Following the publication of both these books, Hutton's star witnessed a meteoric rise. Positions and accolades quickly followed: in 1922, Hutton was made the Honorary Director of Ethnography for Assam, a position he continued to hold until 1929 when he was made the Census Commissioner; in 1923, his *alma mater*, Oxford University conferred a D.Sc. making him Dr. Hutton.

However, historical personalities are products of their times and in order to fully appreciate the positions Hutton later took in the Indian constitutional discourse on the tribal population it is imperative to understand the intellectual milieu which shaped his ideas. In this paper, I seek to reconstruct how a set of influential ideas in British anthropological discourse had a shaping influence on the constitutional debate on the scheduling of predominantly tribal areas in the last three decades of the British Empire.

The turn of the nineteenth century in British anthropology saw the rise to prominence of the Diffusionist school of thought. Diffusion referred to 'the spread of cultural attributes from one culture to another through contact between different cultural groups'.[5] Though the idea took root in the pre-Darwin era, after the publication of *The Origin of Species*, Diffusionism stood in stark contrast to Evolutionism, both of which were concerned with the origins of human culture.

An important advocate of Diffusionism in British anthropology was Dr. W.H.R. Rivers who authored a widely recognized book on *The Todas* (1906). In 1908, Rivers proceeded to Melanesia and conducted extensive fieldwork which went into his widely acclaimed two volume work, *The History of Melanesian Society* (1914). However, for our interests, the work which was to have tremendous influence on the minds of frontier administrators like

J.H. Hutton and J.P. Mills appeared in a book edited by Rivers titled *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia* (1922). In this collection, members of the Melanesian Mission run by Rivers contributed their analysis of the decline in population of several Pacific islands after their isolation was broken by European contacts. Rivers' own article was titled 'The Psychological Factor': in it, he argued that the 'discouragement and destruction of native institutions' was the chief cause of the depopulation of primitive communities of the Melanesian Islands. Rivers wrote,

> The point I wish to emphasize is that through this unintelligent and undiscriminating action towards native institutions, the people are deprived of all that gives interest to their lives. I have now to suggest that this loss of interest forms one of the reasons, if it be not the most potent of all the reasons, to which the native decadence is due…It is the loss of interest in life underlying the more obvious causes which gives them their potency for evil, and allows them to work such ravages upon life and health.[6]

As we shall see, this argument about the 'loss of interest in life' was to become the core argument of the group of anthropologists and administrators from Hutton to Elwin, the latter coining the famous phrase 'loss of nerve'.

It is likely that it was while completing his Masters in Anthropology at Oxford that Hutton encountered Rivers' ideas on culture-contact. True, the above work by Rivers was not yet published but the roots of his aforementioned ideas were available in the 1911 Presidential Address to Section H (Anthropology) of the British Association of Advancement of Science ('The Ethnological Analysis of Culture'). Two other articles by Rivers on the same theme (which were cited by Balfour, Hutton and Mills) were published in 1917[7] and 1920[8] respectively.

It was also at Oxford that Hutton encountered the legendary Henry Balfour, curator of the Pitt Rivers Museum. Subsequently, in 1921, Balfour had contributed a foreword to Hutton's book on the SemaNagas. In July 1922, at Hutton's invitation, Balfour spent three months in the Naga Hills travelling on foot through numerous villages.

In 1922, when Rivers died at the age of 58, Balfour was chosen to succeed him as the President of the Folklore Society. In March 1923, Balfour delivered his Presidential Address on the subject of 'The Welfare of Primitive Peoples'.[9] In his speech, while acknowledging his predecessor's contribution to the discipline of anthropology, Balfour stated that Rivers' work had shown that 'the past history of the effects of the contact of indigenous savage populations with exotic civilized invaders, is not reassuring and gives little grounds for complacency'.[10] The two main themes that Balfour juggled with through the course of his address were 'culture' and 'environment'. He sought to establish that the 'primitive outlook' was fundamentally different from the 'civilized' one. Consequently, the administrators who were responsible for the well-being of the primitive communities had to tread cautiously while trying to reform their traditional lifestyles. 'Tampering with or suppressing certain

special practices and observances' without understanding the relationship between culture and environment was bound to have 'serious consequences'.[11]

In a strongly worded plea for caution on governmental actions upon native people, Balfour said,

> The inter-relationship and interdependence of the various important elements in that culture should be ascertained *before* and not *after* governmental prohibitions are imposed and time-honoured practices are abolished.
>
> …
>
> A higher culture may be introduced to the backward races provided that the assimilative process is gradual one spread over a prolonged period of time. Civilization is like arsenic- an admirable tonic if administered in small successive doses, which can act cumulatively with beneficial results. But, as with arsenic, an *overdose* of civilization is likely to have disastrous effect. Being incapable of assimilation in large doses it usually induces a state, to put it mildly, of mental indigestion, which may easily lead to worse conditions.[12]

Echoing Rivers' arguments on Melanesia, Balfour created an island imagery of culture-contact wherein a 'higher' culture in its bid to 'civilize' a long geographically isolated 'lower' one resulted in a 'lack of interest…in life' among members of the latter. The inevitable result was 'depopulation' and to avert it, the remedy was *gradual* change; an *evolution* was desirable to a *revolution*. This articulation was to have a shaping influence on the protectionist school of thought in India. Hutton, in particular, was greatly influenced by Balfour's formulation of civilization as 'arsenic' to be administered in measured doses. Hutton utilized a substitute word 'drug' in some of his public statements in years to come.

Elsewhere in his lecture, Balfour referred to his recent trip to the Naga Hills which he had undertaken with Hutton and Mills and noted that the 'indigenous culture of the Naga Hills is undergoing inevitable changes under the influence of a stable government'. While noting the British government's interest in protecting the indigenous culture,[13] Balfour expressed his skepticism over the future of these tribal tracts, and explained his argument through a curious analogy. The one similarity between the Melanesian islands and the Naga Hills was the tradition of head-hunting which the British administration had suppressed in both cases. Balfour suggested that although the practice led to the killing of people, the effects of its suppression had completely unintended consequences. He said,

> Mortality is unquestionably higher than it would have been had the practice never existed. But is not this artificially augmented death-rate more than counter-balanced by a higher birth-rate due to the vigour, alertness and the

> greater physical and mental fitness which the exigencies arising from such a custom stimulate? The Melanesian evidence bears out this view.[14]

Balfour stated that he did not support the practice of head-hunting but nonetheless viewed it as a,

> typical instance of a practice whose associated ritual is deeply rooted in the social structure of many primitive peoples. So completely involved is it in the general culture-complex of some native tribes, that its sudden eradication is liable seriously to affect the organization, cohesion, general outlook and the interest in life, and indirectly even the physical efficiency of the natives.[15]

Applying these observations to the Naga Hills, Balfour divided the region into two culture zones: the eastern districts were outside the administered area and were largely unsurveyed; the western portions were under the sympathetic administrative regime of the British government. In Balfour's analysis, the 'relatively uncontaminated Nagas' of the central and eastern districts were superior 'in most respects' to the Nagas whose culture had been exposed to infiltrations from the plains. If the 'untouched' Nagas be taken as a yardstick, different levels of advancements in 'cultural-metamorphosis' could be carefully studied. Such a study would be of great administrative value as the agents of negative change could then be identified and checked. Such an anthropological approach would not only help in 'avoiding the mistakes of the past', saving the Nagas from the fate of 'backward peoples in the South Pacific', but also ensure that the Nagas develop 'into an efficient ethnic unit, enjoying a stable organization- a race equipped to play a useful part in the world and with an undeniable claim to a "right to exist"'.[16]

As Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, Hutton became a swift convert to the ideas of Rivers and Balfour. In 1922, following the publication of Rivers *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, Hutton published a review of the book in *Man in India*.[17] He argued that the book contained important lessons,

> for all those who, as missionaries, doctors or administrators have to deal with tribes or races of primitive culture, who have been comparatively recently brought into contact with the outside world. The result of such contact in Melanesia has been very rapid and far-reaching decay, and there is every reason to suppose that a similar contact will entail similar results in other parts of the world, if the lesson is not learnt; and indeed in Assam, at any rate, already shows signs that the same mischief is at work, and that similar results will follow, if the danger is not taken in hand in time.[18]

In this article, as in subsequent works, Hutton became almost obsessed in establishing a connection between the Nagas and the people of the Pacific islands.[19] He agreed that any racial affinity between these two groups of people was difficult to establish, but in terms of cultural features and the effect of culture-contact on their primitive societies, the similarities were striking.

One of the earliest and most extended explications of his views on culture-contact can be seen in Hutton's Presidential Address to the Anthropology Section of the 14th Indian Science Congress.[20] Titled 'Anthropology and Administration', it outlined the importance of following certain key principles of 'scientific' anthropology in the administration of 'primitive' races. Hutton utilized his administrative experience in the Naga Hills to illustrate the form of administration which would suit the needs of the tribal communities.

A careful perusal of the form and content of this address reveals a complete identification with the views of Rivers and Balfour on the debilitating effects of culture-contact. Hutton quoted both authorities many times in the course of his address, and even where he did not cite them, the imprint of their ideas was clear. For instance, he argued that while the administrator may view cannibalism, head-hunting or human sacrifice as customs abhorrent to civilization, to an anthropologist, these were 'natural' as well as 'reasonable and inevitable acts resulting from beliefs and ideas logically applied to circumstances and environment'. If this was accepted then measures to end such practices were likely to be more 'humane and effectual than mere prohibitions and punishments enforced on a people who know perfectly well that their point of view was unappreciated, unconsidered and ignored'. It was the absence of such intimate knowledge which generated ignorance and misunderstanding between the rulers and the ruled. Sometimes this manifested itself in rebellions or disturbances, but the end result was usually 'apathy, depression and degeneracy' leading many primitive tribes to 'decay under administration'.[21]

Generally, Hutton was of the view that the effects of British administration on Naga society were harmful. He commented that before the British administration was established in the Naga Hills, it was necessary for everyone to live in a state of alertness which fostered 'active habits of mind and body'; this was lost as an inevitable result of the peaceful conditions prevailing under proper administration. A further result of these new conditions was said to be the spread of small-pox, measles, influenza and syphilis, diseases that were previously unknown in the hills and caused 'far more loss of life in a short time than head-hunting ever did in a long one'.[22] Drawing a parallel with Melanesia again, Hutton pointed out that the spread of diseases there had been linked with the introduction of European clothing and the Naga Hills which were experiencing a similar transformation carried that risk too.

In developing his ideas on culture-contact, we see how Hutton (following Balfour before him) applied a set of ideas that had been developed while studying the Melanesian islands of the South Pacific to the entirely separate geographic terrain of the Naga hills. Although the Naga hills were a land-locked area, Hutton retained the island imagery in an effort to explain the debilitating effects of culture-contact on its tribal society. Of course, he was not applying their ideas mechanically but took his cues from ground reality and modified the principles accordingly. Hutton said that the greatest importance of anthropology to administrators was 'in informing them and warning them of the evil effects which follow universally the contact between a lower and a higher culture'.[23]In the following sections,

we will see how this anthropological discourse came to be applied in administrative ventures in two different tribal regions, and how these ideas were given a concrete shape in the years to come.

Section II

ANTHROPOLOGY IN ADMINISTRATION: J.H. HUTTON AND THE PARADIGM OF TERRITORIAL SEGREGATION

Making a case for the need to control contact between 'civilization and wild tribes, so that progress is very slow and that the wild man may have time to accommodate himself gradually to new conditions',[24] Hutton suggested devising a protective regime for the tribes. Accordingly, he argued for the territorial segregation of predominantly tribal areas in British India and wrote:

> Among other things much greater freedom is needed in regulating the communications between primitive tribes and the more civilized world. Enlightened countries like Australia have gone so far as to prohibit the entry of any persons whatsoever into their native reserve except occasional scientists and the administrator of the tribe. Even schools and missions have been barred, as this appears the only way at present of protecting the remnant of their aborigines from extermination. There is no reason why legislation on somewhat similar lines should not be applied to these primitive areas of India and Burma, and it would vastly improve the present position with regard to the acculturation of aborigines if the entry of civilized foreigners and of their trade goods into such areas was put under much severer control than it is at present. As I have said before civilization is a drug and its consumption needs very careful regulation and supervision … Anthropologists know that haste in civilizing, educating, and acculturating is likely to do more harm than good. The difficulty is that other people do not believe it.[25]

Thus, almost twelve years before the publication of Verrier Elwin's *The Baiga* (which became notoriously famous for its idea of 'National Parks' for Central Indian tribes), Hutton was already advocating the idea of establishing 'aboriginal reserves' in India and Burma. In these territorially segregated spaces, all kinds of contacts with civilization such as schools, missions and even business were meant to be strictly regulated, if not entirely debarred.

It is important to emphasize that during the 1920s and 1930s, as a result of nationalist movements, the British had begun the process of devolution of legislative and executive powers to Indian political representatives. In this context, Indian political circles were witnessing a steadily intensifying debate around what came to be known as 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas.[26] Notifying tribal areas under these categories meant that they

were excluded, totally or partially, from the legislative powers of the elected Provincial and Central Legislative Assemblies and Councils. The underlying principle behind these terms was that modern representative democracy (with associated laws, courts, pleaders and legal procedures) through the medium of elections was highly unsuited to the tribal communities. This principle also presumed that owing to their peculiar socio-economic and cultural institutions and practices, the tribes were unfitting to responsibly exercise the power of vote. They could manage their life well with the help of tribal 'customary laws' and if they were indeed brought within the ambit of western legal framework prevalent elsewhere in British India, they would surely loose out their distinctiveness and merely swell the ranks of Depressed Classes.

It was in this overarching framework that Hutton was to frame the distinction between tribal and non-tribal areas. His first attempt in this direction was to posit an opposition between hills (tribal) versus plains (non-tribal) in the province of Assam. Hutton based this argument on a particular reading of history that is best outlined in his memorandum of evidence to the Simon Commission.[27] In this scheme, the hillmen were driven to their present abodes by the better organized invaders who occupied the plains. The hostility between them continued unabated, as the 'hillmen rarely ceased to harry the plains',[28] and it was only as a result of British military interference that the hillmen came to be finally subjugated. Consequently, Hutton argued that it would be 'unjust for the British Parliament to subordinate the interests of the hillmen…to interests of their ancient foes'.[29]

The hill-plain divide was also framed at three levels — of religion, society and culture. At the level of religion, the hillmen had 'neither part not lot in Hinduism and Islam'. Their religious beliefs could instead be described as 'Animism' and centered around ancestor-worship.[30] At the level of society, Hutton highlighted the fact that the caste-system, characteristic of the plains, was 'unknown' amongst the hill people. Even the social problems in the hills were 'entirely different from those in the plains'. Although tribes varied on acceptance of polygamous or monogamous relationships, 'such ideas as that of purdah on the one hand and commercialized prostitution on the other would be repugnant to all alike, and there is a very considerable equality between the sexes'.[31] Culturally too, the distinctiveness of hill society from the plains was crystal clear. Linguistically, Hutton called them 'Babel'; however, he highlighted the fact that all the tribal languages of the Assam Hills belonged to the Tibeto-Burmese group and that none of them had 'any affinities with Assamese, Bengali or Hindustani'.[32]

One of the most remarkable contributions of Hutton's career was the 1931 census report of which he was the presiding all-India Commissioner. As is well-known, this was the last colonial census which undertook an enumeration of individual castes and tribes. What is also important, but less well-known is that the 1931 census was also the last to use the category of 'religion' to define the concept of 'tribe'. It is beyond doubt that Hutton made every effort to philosophically set up 'Tribal Religions' as a belief system distinct from

Hinduism, arguing that cultural practices such as fertility cults, cults of the dead, headhunting, erection of monoliths, foundation sacrifices, ideas of reincarnation, totemism and witchcraft etc. all coalesced into a definite religious philosophy of hagiolatry which bound together all the disparate sets of beliefs found among various primitive tribes in India.[33] Despite Hutton's efforts, however, the Communal Award of August 1932 while providing separate electorates to Mohammedans, Sikhs, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans[34], did not recognize the followers of 'Tribal Religions' as a distinct religious minority worthy of separate electorates. Perhaps as a result of this, we witness a change in Hutton's subsequent strategy. No more was the religious distinctiveness of primitive tribes which he so carefully sought to define in the 1931 census resorted to. Instead, from now onwards, the preservation of 'tribal custom' became the pivot of his thesis for territorial protection to predominantly tribal tracts.

In his memorandum to the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reforms, Hutton expressed satisfaction with the provisions of total exclusion of predominantly tribal areas in the British Indian Empire 'provided exclusion is widely and freely resorted to at the outset'.[35] He was also of the opinion that while deliberating on the boundaries of excluded areas, '*regard should be given to tribal rather than to political boundaries*'.[36]

It was in the 'administration of justice' that Hutton saw the main flaw of extending systematic administration to predominantly tribal tracts. Reiterating the hill versus plain binary, he also outlined the disadvantages of applying normal law to tribal areas. Hutton wrote,

> The methods of the plains courts and the legal procedure is completely unsuited to the hillmen and the errors of High Courts particularly the Calcutta High Court, have resulted in serious injustices in the past. Where the Hillman is in contact with the plainsman and the two frequent the same courts with the same procedure the Hillman very soon learns that truth and a straight–forward statement of his case does not pay. Consequently, he resorts to chicanery in which he is no match at all for his more sophisticated neighbour. In non-regulation district, however, the rules of the procedure code are not strictly adhered to, and the more common method is, as in the Assam Hills, to follow the lines indicated by tribal methods. Distances are great and communications bad, and the first essential of justice in the hills is that it should be speedy. Consequently, a form of summary procedure is generally found most suitable for all but really serious cases. Generally, owing to the difficulties raised by languages and customs entirely alien to the plains, lawyers are useless. They are only allowed with the permission of the court, which would be given wherever their interference would be of any value, but generally the employment of lawyers merely complicates cases, and if they once took to practicing in the Naga Hills, for instance, the administration of justice would probably become impossible…[37]

Hutton also opined that in order to ensure good administration, provisions must remain with the 'officer-in-charge to remove any undesirable person from the areas in question'. In particular, he laid emphasis on the 'training and selection of some officers for the administration of excluded areas',[38] even proposing a separate 'Department for the Protection of Aborigines' to be established by the Government of India with headquarters in Delhi or Calcutta.[39] This service was to be staffed with 'men of anthropological training and practical experience', preferably 'European, or mainly so, until it can be replaced, as it should be, by officers remitted from the aborigines themselves'.[40] Hutton did not place even an iota of trust in the ability of Indians to benevolently administer his beloved aboriginals. Instead, he believed that so long as tribals could not administer themselves, only 'sympathetic' European officials were capable of protecting them.

Linked to this were Hutton's objection to the provisions of partial exclusion, for he believed they would not protect the interests of the primitive tribes adequately from 'interference of legislative bodies'.[41] Partial exclusion was an 'unsatisfactory expedient'[42] as it placed the Governor in a position where he would find it difficult to fulfill his 'special responsibilities' and 'withstanding the pressure of … Councils and Ministers.'[43]His stress on the necessity of Special Officers was also intended to preserve the position of the 'sympathetic' official block as a buffer between the tribals and elected law-makers in future India.

Section III

PARTIAL EXCLUSION AS POLITICAL REALISM: W.V.GRIGSON AND THE TRIBES OF THE CENTRAL PROVINCES & BERAR

In its overall contours, Hutton's intellectual paradigm sought to bring together Diffusionist principles with the prevalent tropes of colonial anthropology (such as aboriginality, tribe-caste continuum, detribalization, hill-plain binary etc.). By juxtaposing this framework over the entire Indian sub-continent and using it to argue for the territorial segregation of tribal communities from the reach of elected law-makers, Hutton played a crucial role in the constitutional deliberations of the 1930s.

This idea of an anthropologically driven administration of predominantly tribal areas was one that bound together the aforementioned 'knot of men'. However, the paradigm developed by Hutton and its uniform application throughout the British Indian empire did not go unchallenged within this elite group. One such remarkable administrator who, on account of his administrative experience with the Central Indian tribes, drew upon but also differed from his ideological predecessor was W.V. Grigson.

Wilfrid Vernon Grigson was an anthropologically minded member of the Indian Civil Service who served as the Administrator of the Bastar State between 1927- 31. It was here that he developed a life-long passion for tribals, especially the Gonds, and went on to write an authoritative monograph on the Maria Gonds of Bastar.[44]Grigson was known for his

tremendous acumen in administering predominantly aboriginal areas through a deft handling of popular demands and simultaneous introduction of reforms.

Influenced by the anthropological ideas advanced by Hutton and others, Grigson too believed that the aboriginal communities were a distinct element of the Indian population and that 'culture-contact' had a degenerating influence upon them. He also emphasized preserving and encouraging tribal customary laws as the key to fostering the cultural autonomy of these communities.

But unlike Hutton who argued for the complete exclusion of all predominantly tribal tracts, based on his experiences in Central India, Grigson was of the opinion that partial exclusion was preferable to total exclusion. He reasoned that the aboriginal problem in the Central Provinces was characteristically different from the northeast frontier, remarking: '(O)ur aboriginals live, broadly speaking, as large or small islands in a sea of Hindus'. Further, the kind of isolation experienced by the Assam tribals was not evident in the Central India as the '(M)ain lines of communication by road and rail across India pass through aboriginal areas'. As a case in point, he used population statistics to highlight the fact that even the 'most "advanced" districts include primitive patches'.[45]

Grigson called the powers to tweak laws unsuitable to aboriginal areas under the provisions of Partial Exclusion as a 'most valuable power'.[46] He also opined that for the aboriginals of the Central Provinces & Berar, isolation was not 'practical politics'.[47] Articulating his preference for partial over total exclusion in the case of Central Provinces and Berar, Grigson wrote,

> There is in total exclusion the danger of further blinding educated Indian opinion to the extent of the problem. The country rapidly approaches full self-government, and as Indians are to govern themselves, it would be fatal not to attempt from the beginning to associate them in the fullest way with all attempts to solve the problem and not to do all possible to arouse the Indian conscience to its duties in this respect ... Total exclusion therefore might be a mistake…the aboriginal is face to face with a Hindu and Mohammadan electorate which will be actuated mainly by the self-interest of its most influential landholders and businessmen…[48]

The winds of nationalism were sweeping through the country and being a political realist, Grigson foresaw the major objections from Indian leaders towards the continuation of the colonial 'man on the spot' administrative model. He saw in partial exclusion a useful expedient that, while providing effective cover to the aboriginals, would also not alienate nationalist opinion. Grigson wrote,

> It was not the purpose of Partial Exclusion to label or stigmatize for all time any areas of any province as backward: these provisions of the Government of India Act merely drew attention to an existing state of affairs. In the

> province almost every era of civilisation from the Stone Age to the twentieth century can be seen in the life of different communities in different districts. Can it be asserted that a Kamar or a Bharia-Bhumia or a Maria can by a stroke of pen be transformed into an intelligent citizen and voter in a commonwealth? Partial Exclusion came therefore only to protect the interests of tribes not yet fit to hold their own under the stress of modern civilisation until they have been fitted to hold their own.[49]

An important point of departure for Grigson was his attitude towards 'Tribal Religions' which was once the central tenet of Hutton's approach to the aboriginal question. He explained his objections to the concept in the following manner,

> …I have omitted all reference to the figures of tribal religion. They are meaningless. It is impossible to say when a man's religion ceases to be tribal or begins to be Hindu. Fluctuations in the percentages of aboriginals returned as animists, or tribal by religion occur in different districts at different censuses and are no true index even of the degree to which the tribal religion is becoming hinduised. Much depends upon the approach to this question made by individual enumerators…[50]

Another instance in the report which indicated at Grigson's ideological evolution was the breaking-up of the notion of the aboriginal as the 'original son of the soil'. Instead, the new paradigm indicated a shift towards a notion of 'backwardness' which included other non-aboriginal communities as well. Grigson wrote,

> In the really backward aboriginal tracts, the aboriginal way of life is largely shared by all the villagers whether aboriginal or members of backward Hindu castes or the Scheduled Castes… Moreover, in the Partially Excluded Areas at least, probably also in the other backward areas, it will be impossible to exclude members of the backward and menial castes from the benefits of the measures designed for the aboriginal.[51]

Linked to this was Grigson's advocacy of increased communications in tribal regions. While Hutton were vehemently against the 'opening-up' of aboriginal areas, Grigson was less antithetical to the process. He wrote,

> It may certainly be conceded that it would be premature to open up to the outside world by all weather roads the most backward tracts of the province in their present stage of educational and economic development. At the same time our aboriginals as a whole have been more exposed… and the time has come perhaps in their own interests to make the outer world more accessible to them and their villages more accessible to the protecting officials. The very backward areas not yet ready to be exposed to all that

> the all-weather road and the motor-bus bring in their train…But elsewhere better communications are essential.[52]

Finally, a major point of departure is represented by Grigson's views on the issue of education. Whereas Hutton deemed modern education undesirable, Grigson held that it was one crucial area where massive state intervention was needed. He stressed on the need for aboriginal education by arguing that 'Political and General Education' were the prime 'Nation-Building' activities. Linking up the issue of education to that of effective aboriginal representation, Grigson noted that it was 'lack of education that leaves the aboriginal so much at the mercy of his exploiters and prevents him from using his numerical superiority to control local bodies and properly influence Government through Provincial Legislature'.[53] Consequently, he recommended all schools and training colleges in aboriginal areas give pupils training about the meaning of local bodies and the franchise.[54]

Grigson also recommended that the tribal children be given instruction in their own languages such as Gondi and Korku. This was a challenging task as they lacked any script. He also recommended special training for aboriginal teachers who would participate in educational schemes in tribal regions. Grigson quoted approvingly from Elwin's reply to his questionnaire on tribal education: Elwin wrote that the aim of any scheme of tribal education should be to 'conserve and develop aboriginal culture, religion and tribal institutions', not only to equip the aboriginal against the degrading effects of civilization, but also to allow him to 'take his place in a rapidly changing world' and 'improve his economic condition'.[55] Elwin's note ended with the following words:

> The matter is very urgent If the schools of the existing type are opened on a large scale and with rules of compulsion, *the result will be disaster to the aboriginals, disaster comparable to that which has decimated similar people in the Pacific and elsewhere.* Only by the application of scientific research, by the utmost caution, by centralized control, can this unhappy result be avoided.[56]

Here, we can see a striking continuity in the idea of depopulation of primitive communities as evident by the recurring example of Pacific Islands which continued to hold appeal from Hutton to Elwin. Based upon the evidence presented in the paper, it can be argued that the Diffusionist ideas propounded by Rivers and Balfour helped the select class of anthropologically minded administrators(most notably Hutton), to powerfully advocate for territorial segregation of predominantly tribal areas in the British Indian empire from the purview of elected legislatures. For a certain period of time, this common set of ideas provided cohesion to this group of administrators. However, when individual figures impliedDiffusionist ideas upon their respective regions and landscapes, the theoretical unity amongst administrators started giving way to a divergence of opinion. Consequently, we have in Grigson, a figure who being well-versed with socio-political dynamics amongst the Central Indian tribal communities and took recourse to a significantly different set of

interpretations. He advocated policy measures which significantly dissimilar fromHutton's. Curiously enough, though he also applied the island-imagery developed for the primitive communities in the Melanesian islands ('large or small islands in a sea of Hindus'), Grigson continued to uphold the distinctiveness of the Central Indian tribal belt and advocated partial exclusion for the same. This suggests that this remarkable group of men were not doctrinaire in their approach. Instead, they used their own administrative experience to throw light on changes across space, time and contingent political dynamics which were differently operative in numerous tribal regionsacross British India.

CONCLUSION

The late-colonial constitutional discourse on the future of the tribal communities in India was framed by a select group of anthropologically minded administrators mainly coming from the Indian Civil Services. In the absence of an educated middle class articulating tribal interests, this 'sympathetic' European 'official block' considered itself their primary representatives and sought to maintain the centralized paternalistic 'man on the spot' model of administration which had been followed through most of the colonial period.

But in an era of increasing nationalist demands for representative democratic institutions, this was a tall order to achieve. Perhaps that is why, personalities such as Hutton, Mills, Grigson, Hyde and Mitchell pitched their case for territorial segregation of predominantly tribal tracts to maintain some form of this administrative model where they (and others of similar persuasion) could act as a buffer against the potential exploitation of tribal communities. Because of their numerical inferiority, the tribals were set to lose the battle of culture-contact, and these scholar-administrators argued that because of the inability of tribals to use the power of vote to their own benefit, there was a strong need to 'exclude', either totally or partially, the tracts predominantly inhabited by them.

I would urge that the so-called 'ethnographic' works authored by these scholar-administrators should not be seen merely as contributions to the discipline of anthropology. This is a very singularly limiting assessment which misses out on a significant 'function' of these texts. Instead, I would suggest that they were products of their times and should be seen ascritical interventions in contemporary political debates on the future of aboriginal communities in India.

The debates on the 'tribal question' had long-term 'constitutional' implications. Beginning with the discussions surrounding provisions for 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas under the Government of India Act, 1935, they acquired greater complexity with the interventions made by the scholar-administrators and the nationalist responses to them. The ideas and frameworks evolved through these debates went on to influence the rationale for the Fifth and Sixth Schedule areas under the Indian Constitution.

In the period when this 'knot of men' was crafting their ideas, the issue of the future of tribal communities was literally at the margins of the constitutional deliberations. The twin aspects of the 'Communal' question i.e., Hindu-Muslim relations and the Depressed Classes issue got the major share of attention. Additionally, in the absence of an articulate and English-educated middle class amongst the tribal communities, these handful of European men saw themselves as the only real 'representatives' of tribal interests. Their singular contribution lay in the explication of a minority politics articulated upon a language of cultural distinctiveness and indigeneity. Also, with important variations, their political vision was imbued with a notion of decentralized autonomous administration of predominantly tribal areas. This alternative was consciously articulated outside the hegemonic discourses of 'nation' and 'development'.

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[1] I have borrowed this term from Stokes, Eric. 1982(1959).*The English Utilitarians and India*. New Delhi: OUP.

[2] The biographical information in this paragraph and elsewhere has been mainly taken from Mukerji, B. and P.K. Bose (ed.) *Indian Science Congress Association (with Life-Sketches of General Presidents), 1914-1963,* Indian Science Congress Association, Calcutta, January 1963, pp. 64-65.

[3] In his Presidential Address to the Anthropology Section of the Eighth Indian Science Congress 1921, S.C. Roy remarked about this intensely prolific phase in Assam:- 'In one Indian province alone, the value of such intensive (anthropological) studies appear to have been recognized…', in S.C. Roy, 'Anthropological Research in India', *Man in India*, Vol. 1, pp. 43-44.

[4] Gordon Marshall (ed.), *A Dictionary of Sociology*, OUP, New Delhi, 2004, p. 160.

[5]Quoted in E.A.P., Review Essay on 'Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia by W.H.R. Rivers', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 2, August 1923, p. 147.

[6] An article called 'The Government of Subject Peoples' in *Science and the Nation*, 1917.

[7]Published in the journal *The Lancet,* Vol. 198, 1920, pp. 42 and 109.

[8] Henry Balfour, 'The Welfare of Primitive Tribes', *Folklore*, Vol. 34, No.1, March 1923, pp. 12-24.

[9]*Ibid.*, p. 13.

[10]*Ibid*., p. 16.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 16-18., emphasis original.

[12]*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 18.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 19.

[15]*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

[16] J.H. Hutton, 'Depopulation of Primitive Communities', *Man in India*, Vol. II, 1922, pp. 220-227.

[17]*Ibid.*, pp. 220-221.

[18] J.H. Hutton, 'Assam and the Pacific', *Man In India,* Vol. IV, No. 1 & 2, 1924, pp. 1-9; 'Anthropological Notes and News', *Ibid.*, p. 92. Interestingly, Balfour provided further support and intellectual patronage to Hutton's efforts in this direction, see 'Indian Ethnology in Current Periodical Literature', *Man in India*, Vol. V, 1925, p. 277.

[19] J.H. Hutton, Presidential Address to the Section of Anthropology on 'Anthropology and Administration', *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Indian Science Congress, Lahore, 1927 (Second Circuit)*, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1927, pp. 283-299.

[20]*Ibid.*, pp. 288-289.

[21]*Ibid.*, p. 296.

[22]*Ibid.*, p. 293.

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 298.

[24]*Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.

[25] This denotes the semantic shift which happened from the administrative category of 'Backward Tracts' as used in the framing of the Government of India Act 1919 to a new reformed Constitution provided to British India under the Government of India Act 1935.

[26] Indian Statutory Commission- Memoranda Assam- 57-1033, E-Assam-126- Note by Mr. J.H. Hutton, C.I.E., D.Sc., Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills dated 17th March 1928 (Part of Memoranda of the Government of Assam on the working of the reformed government prepared for the Indian Statutory Commission), Appendix B to Chapter II, Assam Government Press, 1928, IOR/13/1/1.

[27]*Ibid.*, p. 1.

[28]*Ibid.*, p. 2.

[29]*Ibid.*

[30]*Ibid.*

[31]*Ibid.*

[32] J.H. Hutton, *Census of India 1931: With Complete Survey of Tribal Life and System*, Gian Publishing House, Delhi, 1989(reprint)

[33]*The Times of India*, 17th August 1932, p. 9.

[34]Memorandum of Evidence to be given by Dr. J.H. Hutton, C.I.E., I.C.S. to Joint Committee of Indian Constitutional Reform, IOR/Q/IDC/45, p.1, emphasis original.

[35]*Ibid.*, p. 21, emphasis original.

[36]*Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

[37]*Ibid.*

[38] Note by Dr. Hutton- Suggestions for a Department of Protection of Aborigines, IOR/Q/13/2/83.

[39]*Ibid.*

[40]Memorandum of Evidence to be given by Dr. J.H. Hutton, C.I.E., I.C.S. to Joint Committee of Indian Constitutional Reform, IOR/Q/IDC/45, p.1.

[41]*Ibid.*, p. 17.

[42]*Ibid.*

[43]W.V. Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*, (OUP, Delhi for VanyaPrakashan, reprint from London, 1949), 1991.

[44] D.O. No. 185 dated Chhindwara 12th July 1940; From- W.V. Grigson, Aboriginal Tribes Enquiry Officer, C.P. & Berar; To- E.S. Hyde, Deputy Commissioner, Mandla, Box II, Hyde Papers, CSAS, Cambridge.

[45] W.V. Grigson, *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces & Berar*, Government Printing, C.P. & Berar, 1944, p. 426.

[46]*Ibid.*, p. 428.

[47] Memorandum by Mr. W.V. Grigson, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner, Hoshangabad, dated the 1st May, 1935, *The Moral and Material Elevation of the aboriginals of the Central Provinces* in F. No. 4/III/35-G(B). & K.W. , General (B) Branch, Reforms Office, GoI, 1935, pp. 5-10.

[48] W.V. Grigson, *The Aboriginal Problem in the Central Provinces & Berar*, Government Printing, C.P. & Berar, 1944, p. 425

[49]*Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

[50]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

[51]*Ibid.*, p. 413.

[52]*Ibid.*, p. 396.

[53]*Ibid.*, p. 395.

[54]*Ibid.*, pp. 399-405.

[55]*Ibid.*, p. 405, emphasis mine.