Sikkim Political Agency and the Development of British Policy in the Eastern Himalaya.

1889 - 1914

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

I, Ruth Marie Lepcha, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form the basis of award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any degree in any other University / Institute.

This is being submitted to the North – Eastern Hill University for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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PREFACE

Residents and Political Agents have played a crucial role in the establishment and consolidation of British paramountcy in the Indian States. Coming under a variety of designations, their functions, powers and status differed widely, depending largely on the importance, political and strategic, of the State in which they were located. By and large interwoven with the techniques of indirect rule, a few of these Residencies and Residents have in recent years received some attention in the broader studies on the making of British Policy in India. Works on specific Residencies are few: notable among these are W. S. Desai's *History of the British Residency in Burma*, and the recent *Brian Hodgson at the Kathmandu Residency* by K. L. Pradhan. However, these two and much of the other writings relate to the early years of British rule in India. Both Michael Fisher's *Indirect Rule in India. Residents and Residency System 1764 – 1857*, on their growth and functioning, and M. E. Yapp's *Strategies of British India. Britain, Iran and Afghanistan 1798 – 1850* on the importance of the "frontier agency system" in the development of frontier policy, cover only the Company's rule. Little, therefore is known of Residencies and Political Agencies in India under the Crown. The Sikkim Political Agency is one of the least known in India. That virtually nothing is known of its history or the ideas of the men who occupied it and shaped British policy in the region constitute a significant gap in the frontier history of the eastern Himalaya.

The present study aims at a critical analysis of the work done of the Sikkim Agency in promoting colonial interests, both commercial and political, in the eastern Himalaya from 1889 when it was established, to 1914 when it played a decisive role in the Tripartite Conference at Simla and in the resultant Simla Convention. Special attention is being paid to the ideas of the two Political Agents, John Claude White and Charles Bell, and the extent to which they helped shape British policy. It aims, incidentally to throw light on or show in what respects the Sikkim Agency differed from other Agencies or Residencies in the country. The first chapter discusses the

circumstances leading to the creation of the Agency and the establishment of British authority over the State: the various steps taken by the Political Agent, here styled as Political Officer, to reorganise the administration and raise revenues. The second deals with enforcing the provisions of the Convention of 1890 in respect of trade and the Sikkim – Tibet boundary. The addition to the functions of the Agency, when the Political Officer also became the recognized adviser to the Government of India for Tibet affairs, as a result of Curzon's Tibet policy, is the subject matter of the next chapter. The fourth chapter deals with the role of the Political Officer in bringing Bhutan into the British fold. The final chapter discusses how the ideas of the Political Officer, Charles Bell, moulded the North-East Frontier policy of the Government of India. The Epilogue while summarising the results of the findings attempts an assessment of the first two Political Officers. The Introduction, which surveys the East India Company's relations with Sikkim provides the historical background.

This work is based on documents preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi, the West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata and in the Sikkim State Archives, Gangtok. Contemporary and semi-contemporary materials have also been used. A select Bibliography is appended.

This work was undertaken under the supervision of Professor Imdad Hussain, and after his superannuation when he remained as joint-Supervisor, it was completed under Professor Mignonette Momin. To both of them I express my deep sense of gratitude: without their constant guidance and encouragement this work would not have been possible.

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CONTENTS

Abbreviations Used

FPP	-	Foreign Political Proceedings
FPC	-	Foreign Political Consultations
FPAP	-	Foreign Political 'A' and Proceedings
FSEP	-	Foreign Secret 'A' Proceedings
FSEP	-	Foreign Secret Establishment Proceedings

INTRODUCTION

SIKKIM AND BRITISH INDIA: SURVEY AND RELATIONS

Sikkim until recently a tiny Himalayan Kingdom and now a state of the Indian Union, is located between $28^0 07'4"$ and $27^0 04'46"$ North Latitude and $88^0 00'58"$ and $88^0 55'25"$ East Longitude. It has an area of 7096 sq. km, and is bounded on the North by Tibet, on the East by Tibet and Bhutan and on the West by Nepal. It was, in all probability a large kingdom in former times. Ashley Eden, in 1864 noted that Sikkim though a very petty state was formerly a fair-sized country reaching from the Arun river on the west to the Taigon Pass on the East; from the borders of Tibet on the North to Kissengunj in Purneah in the South. One writer gives a picturesque account of the Kingdom:

> Tibet, Nepal, India and Bhutan all touch its borders. Here, the scenic beauty of mighty snow-capped peaks, such as the 28, 162 foot Kanchenjunga on the Nepal – Sikkim border, mingles with the romanticism of an historic past. There are huge, pine covered forests bordering terraces of rice. Sikkim's simple, sturdy and struggling people have preserved a distinct cultural and historical identity. Its villages of quaint wooden buildings hug rugged Himalayan slopes. Lights of little hamlets glitter like a myriad of glowworms in the evening. Old Buddhist monasteries perch on rocky shelves beneath the eternal snows. A mule train picks its way over the sharp rocks that pave the old trade routes to Lhasa, Tibet; for here in Sikkim, is a past living in the present.[1]

Being mountainous, it consists of a tangled series of interlocking mountain chains, rising range above range, from the south to the foot of the north-most range.

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[1] Pradyumna P. Karan and William M Jenkins, *The Himalayan Kingdoms: Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal*, Princeton, 1963, p. 56.

Most of these mountain ranges are 10,000 to 28,000 feet high. Mt. Kanchenjunga (28,140 ft) is situated in the Singli-la-range, the crest of which forms the boundary between Sikkim and Nepal. The other main mountains are Kinchingham (22,700 ft), Siniolchu (22,620 ft) and Chomioms (22,386 ft). Between these gigantic mountains are a number of passes like Chorten Nyima-la, Naku-la, Kongra-la, Chulung-la, Bom Chho-la and Sese-la.[2] These passes link northern Sikkim to Tibet. The Khungyami-la, Gora-la, Nathu-la, Jelep-la and Batan-la link eastern Sikkim with the Chumbi valley of Tibet. Nathu-la and Jelep-la are found in the Chola range and are of great strategic importance to both India and China. The Dako-la pass links south east Sikkim to Bhutan.

While the mountain passes link Sikkim, territorially the rivers contribute in defining the territorial limits of Sikkim. The Teesta, described as the 'life line', is the chief effluent river that seperates Sikkim from the present state of West Bengal. The Teesta which flows in a generally southerly direction is joined at Tsiinthang, by its main tributaries the Lachen, Lachung and Rungeet and at Ringen, it is joined by Rungnu-Chu. All these rivers run through mountainous terrain and over rapids and are therefore un-navigable.

The climate of Sikkim ranges from sub-tropical in the south to tundra in the northern parts. Most of the inhabited regions of Sikkim, however, enjoy a temperate climate with the temperature seldom exceeding 28^0C in summer or dropping below 0^0C in winter. To be precise, Sikkim enjoys a gradation of climatic types with the inner and more land-locked valleys possessing a relatively dry climate. The lower an outer Sikkim which is on the whole ravine-like, with the rivers flowing in deep gorges, has a temperate climate. In northern Sikkim the vegetation becomes much bolder and the valleys open out into wide grassy meadows such as Lachung and Yumthang. In general, the greater part of Sikkim has a climate which favours evergreen forests, these are spotted with small lakes and gifted with a large variety of avi fauna. The state enjoys five seasons viz,

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[2] See Edwin H Pascoe, *A Manual of the Geology of India and Burma*, Delhi 1950, P 318; S C Bose *Geography of the Himalaya*, New Delhi 1976, pp. 11ff.

winter, spring, summer, monsoon and autumn. The monsoon season is between June and September. The average annual temperature for most of Sikkim is around 18^0C. She also receives regular snow fall during the winters. During the monsoons the state is lashed by heavy rains that leads to landslides. Dense fogs also affect many parts of the state during the winter as well as the monsoons.

Since Sikkim is situated in the ecological zone of the lower Himalayas, the forested region of the state exhibits a diverse range of flora and fauna[3]. Owing to its altitudinal gradation the state has a wide variety of plants from tropical to temperate, to alpine and tundra. The flora of Sikkim includes the rhododendron, orchids, figs, laurel, banana, sal trees and bamboos, which are found in the lower altitudes which enjoy sub-tropical climate. In the temperate elevations above 1,500 meters, oaks, chestnuts, maples, birches, alders and magnolias grow in large numbers. In the alpine zone, vegetation like juniper, pine and firs are found. Over 424 species of medicinal plants are found in Sikkim. Similarly, Sikkim has a variety of fauna, like the snow leopard, the musk deer, the red panda, the Himalayan marmot, the barking deer, the Himalayan black bear, the Tibetan wolf, the civet cat and the yak. The avifauna of Sikkim comprises of the impeyan pheasant, the snow partridge, the snow cock, the lammergeyer, the golden eagles, quail, babblers, robins and wood peckers. However, the most beautiful birds of the state are the five species of sun-birds or honey suckers. Sikkim is also a treasure house of butterflies and moths, the number exceeds two thousand varieties.

Sikkim does not only have a variety of flora and fauna but also a variety of minerals like copper, zinc, lead, mica, coal, graphite and limestone. Deposits of copper are found at Rhenock, Dikchu, Barmiak, Rinchinpong. These minerals were not exploited during the period under review. Sikkim's wealth therefore was not derived from its mineral resources but from agriculture. Sikkim's economy remains largely

[3] J D Hooker who is considered the greatest authority on the vegetation of Sikkim, in his *Essay to the Flora Indica*, divides the country into three zones. The lowest level upto 5000 feet above the sea, he called the tropical zone, thence to 13000 feet the upper limit of tree vegetation the temperate and above to the perpetual snow line at 16000 feet the Alpine.

agrarian, based on traditional farming methods on terraced slopes. The majority of the population grows crops such as rice and maize or monsoon crops like millet, barley and buck wheat. Cardamom and potatoes are today among the main export items. Fruits like oranges, pineapples and passion fruits are grown in abundance.

Trade Routes

It was, however, not these resources, but the India-Tibet trade route that passed through Sikkim, that gave the Himalayan State its importance to the British. The formidable mountains rising out of the clouds prevented large scale trade and commerce. There were several routes from the Tibetan plateau to the plains of India through which passed pilgrims and a limited trade. One of the best known of these lay through the Kathmandu valley, its terminus being Benares. From Sikkim easily traversed passed which gave access to the Chumbi valley the comparatively low (1520 feet) and easy gradient to the Nathu La, leading directly to the core areas around Lhasa. The Kingdom occupied a commanding position on the traditional Kalimpong – Lhasa trade route. In neighbouring Bhutan the trail through the Paro valley connected the plains with the Chumbi valley and Tibet. Eastward of Bhutan lay the historic Tsona-Tawang-Assam route. Through these routes and mountain passes into Tibet, traders carried cloth, spices, grain, small manufactured goods and brought back salt, wool and often yak herds; the famed Tibetan gold dust and silver was said to constitute a considerable part of it.

People

The major communities in the state are the Lepchas, Bhutia and the Nepalese. The Lepchas[4], it is believed, are the aborigines of Sikkim. They call themselves 'Rong Kup' which means Children of the Snowy Peak. The name Lepcha is the anglicised

[4] For a study of the Lepcha, Geoffery Grover, *The Lepchas* , Their origin is still doubtful. According to the Lepcha folklore and belief, in the beginning of creation, the first primogenitors of their tribe were Fodongthing and Nazaongnyo who were created by 'Rum' or God of the Pure Snow of Kingtsoomzaongboo Choo's or Mount Kanchenjunga's pinnacle. Thereafter they were sent down to live and prosper in Mayel-Lyang which lies in the lap of Kingtsoomzaongboo Choo. Apart from the Lepcha folklore the most accepted historical theory of the origin is that they came from the East along the foot of the hills from the direction of Assam and Upper Burma. The *Gazetters of Sikkim* will also be found useful for the ethnic composition of Sikkim.

version of the Nepalese 'Lapche' said to mean 'vile speakers.' It is also suggested that 'Lepcha' refers to a certain kind of fish found in Nepal and is known for its submissive nature, very similar to the Lepcha people who are also known for their timidity. The Lepchas had their own name for the country.

The Lepchas are Mongoloid in appearance, with oblique eyes, fair in complexion and small in stature. By nature they are amiable and hospitable. As they live in the mountains, they are a hardy people, capable of walking long distances and working in very difficult conditions. They also possess an extraordinary rich zoological and botanical vocabulary of their own. They are good craftsmen and are known best for the expertise in bamboo handicrafts such as baskets, mats, and bamboo rafts and bridges. Before their conversion to Buddhism and Christianity, the Lepchas followed their own religion called 'Boongthingism' and "Munism'. Their religion was simple. They believed in the existence of 'God' whom they called 'Rum'. They also believed in spirits – both good and evil and attributed all sickness, calamity, and pestilence to the evil spirits which were to be exorcised and propitiated. Plentiful harvest, timely seasons and healthy offsprings were all considered to be the work of good spirits who were to be constantly humoured with prayers and offerings. Agriculture and hunting formed the main source of livelihood. They had a pathological dislike for riches and wealth because they believed that the devil or the evil spirits out of jealousy would harm the rich and prosperous. Therefore, they never accumulated more than their immediate needs.

The pre-colonial history of Sikkim, based on Lepcha oral tradition, states that before the establishment of the Namgyal dynasty, the Lepchas were organized into a loose type of tribal set up under elected chieftains. In the course of time a certain Turve who the Lepchas gave the title 'Punu' or king brought all the Lepcha clans under one fold. He was said to have been killed in a fight with the Limbus. Turve was succeeded by another three Punus but after the death of Tubh Athak Punu, kingship came to an end. Thereafter the Lepchas went back to their old tribal setup.

The Bhutias are a people of Tibetan origin: from 'Bhote' the Sanskrit name for Tibet. Sikkim was unknown to the Bhutias till the 11th Century. Legend has it that Khye-bum-sa the first Tibetan refugee visited Sikkim in the 14th Century in search of the Lepcha patriarch and wizard Thikung Tek to invoke his blessings for the birth of a son. A son was indeed born to him and as a sign of appreciation Khye-bum-sa returned to sign and swear a blood brotherhood treaty whereby eternal friendship was sworn between the Lepchas and the Bhutias. The Kazis are a product of this brotherhood. The establishment of the Bhutia foothold in Sikkim is generally traced to about 1641, when three Tibetan monks, namely Lhatsum Chembo, Sempath Chombo and Rigdzin, came to Sikkim to spread Mahayana Buddhism. They established the Nginmapa or 'red-hat' sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Large numbers of red hat lamas came to take refuge in Sikkim and Bhutan in the 17th Century in order to escape persecution by the Gelupa or the yellow Hat sect which under the fifth Dalai Lama had become very powerful not only in the religious sphere but in the political sphere as well. They summoned and consecrated Phuntshog Namgyal[5] as the first Buddhist Chhogyal, or King who rules according to Chho i.e. righteous law, at Yoksam in west Sikkim. The consecration of Phuntshog Namgyal established the Namgyal Dynasty that ruled Sikkim for nearly 332 years. After the consecration of Phuntshog Namgyal, large Bhutia migration took place in Sikkim and they came to call it 'Beyul Demazong' or Denzong meaning 'The Hidden Land of Rice.' Their monasteries today occupy a predominant place in their socio-cultural life. They settled in higher altitudes, thus driving the Lepchas into the forests and lower valleys. The Bhutias are tall, well built with a good physique. They have retained the Tibetan culture, dress, ornaments, language and script. The early Bhutias were traders and herdsmen. They are still known for their weaving skills, art and painting. The three lamas who consecrated Phuntshog Namgyal also fled Tibet and sought refuge in Sikkim. Of the three lamas, Lhataun Chhembo is considered to be the patron saint of Sikkim. He is said to have been responsible for the conversion of Sikkim to Buddhism. He is also

[5] The ancestors of Phuntshog Namgyal had migrated from Eastern Tibet to the Sikkim region sometime in the early 15th century

credited for having laid the foundation of the state and ushered in a period of social and religious consolidation.

The Nepalese are relatively new comers, having largely migrated from Nepal in the last two decades of the 19th century, owing to the employment opportunities given to them by the British. They came as labourers and cultivators and introduced terrace farming in the kingdom. The Nepalese community have their own tradition, culture and language. The majority of them profess Hinduism, and are stratified into a number of castes such as Bahuns, Chhetris, Newera, Mangars, Murmis, Rais, Tamangs, Gurungs, Limbus, Sarkis and Kaamis. Since the Lepchas and Bhutias preferred to settle in the higher regions which were cooler, the Nepalese therefore settled in the lower regions which were hotter. Being hardy, thrifty, persevering and enterprising they began to rise in status. Gradually they came to form the majority in the population of Sikkim.

Among the Nepalese, there is a certain section of the community who are believed to have been the contemporaries and neighbours of the early Lepchas. They call themselves 'Yakthumba' or Yak herdsmen. The Nepalese call them Limbus meaning 'archers' while the Lepchas and Bhutias call the Tsong[6]. They followed their own religion known as Kirant Mundhum which is distinct from Hinduism and Buddhism. The Limbus claim to have belonged to the Kirant or Kirat race which include the other ethnic groups of Nepal, like the Rais and Sunuwars. It is said that for over two millennium a large portion of the Eastern Himalayas had been the home of the Kirant people.[7]

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[6] The Bhutias claim that the Limbus came to Sikkim from the region formerly known as 'Tsong-Pa' valley in Tibet.

[7] In ancient times, the entire Himalayan region was known as the Kimpurusha Desha, a phrase derived from a Sanskrit term used to identify people of Kirant origin. The Kirants had also inhabited Kathmandu Valley, where they installed their own dynasty. As time passed, the Kirants, now known as the Limbus, settled mostly in the Koshi region of present day Eastern Nepal and western Sikkim. However, from about the 8th century, the areas on the northern frontier of the Kirant region came under the domination of migrant people of Tibetan origin. Later the Sikkim kings were also able to subdue the entire far-eastern part of the Kirant region, historically known as Limbuwan for at least a short period of time. The quest of the Sikkimese rulers for greater control over the eastern Himalayas led to many wars between the Limbus and the Bhutia rulers. The second threat faced by the Limbus was at the hands of the Gurkhas. After the completion of the conquest of the Kathmandu calley in 1769, the Gurkha army marched east towards the Kirant territory. The Gurkhas, after occupying the Kirant territory adopted a harsh divide and rule policy.

Political Evolution

Phuntshog Namgyal was born in 1604 at Gangtok. He claimed his descent from Minyak House[8] in Kham, Eastern Tibet. Gutu Tashe the grandson of Khye Bumsa was his grandfather. In fact Guru Tashe historically can be considered the first ruler of Sikkim as it was he who shifted his family from Chumbi to Gangtok and established the ruling house in and around Tista Valley adjoining Gangtok. Phuntshog Namgyal, after being consecrated in 1642 established his capital at Yoksam and organized a central administration. He divided the country into twelve districts or dzongs each under a Lepcha chief or dzongpon. He was assisted by a council of twelve ministers drawn from the leading Bhutia families. The Limbus and a small group of Magars recognized him as their king and offered him a nominal annual tribute in return for their internal autonomy. His son and successor Tensung Namgyal, 1670, shifted his capital from Yuksom to Rabdantse but the only change he introduced in the administration was the reduction of the number of the councilors from 12 to 8. His third marriage to a Limbu princess gave the state its present name of Sikkim or Sukhim which means 'New Home.' The marriage also led to the strengthening of ties between the Limbus and the Bhutias.

Sikkim was not free from internal troubles owing to disputes over the question of succession to the throne. With most rival claimants turning to either Tibet or Bhutan for assistance, their intervention of these countries in Sikkim became a regular feature. In the last decades of the seventeenth century and the opening years of the eighteenth such intervention had been particularly frequent. This apart, appointment of Tibetan officials to key positions in Sikkim tended to reinforce the Tibetan connection. The appointment's of a Tibetan Lama, Jigme Pao as regent in 1717 during the minority of Chogyal Gyurmel Namgyal led to marked increase of the Tibetan influence. It should be noted that the Bhutias, that is Sikkimese of Tibetan extraction, the community to which the Chogyal himself belonged, wielded considerable authority in the kingdom, occupied some of the

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They divided the Kirants into two groups – the Sampriti and the Niti. The former were those who had surrendered to the Gurkha power and cultural traditions, while the later maintained their own traditions. Thereafter the Nitis fearing persecution , migrated towards Sikkim.

[8] Claims its ancestry to the descendants of the legendary King Indrabhodhi of ancient Udayan in India.

most important positions of State. It is hardly surprising, therefore that the Bhutias should oppose the natural son, by a nun, Phuntshog Namgyal (namesake of the first ruler) as Gyurmel's successor in 1733 on the grounds of his illegitimacy. The royal treasurer, one Tamding, actually led a revolt of the Bhutias against the infant Chogyal. The Lepcha under Chandzod Karwang deeply attached to the latter opposed the protestors. The conflict ended with the Bhutia faction worsted, and the departure of Tamding to Tibet. Chandzod Karwang took over the regency.

From Tibet came an emissary, Rapden Sharpa, to mediate in Sikkim affairs; for the elevation of the Lepcha Chandzod caused a rift among the Limbus. Interestingly, Rapdu Sharpa himself became regent, and remained as such till Phuntshog Namgyal came of age. His ability to defend Sikkim against a Bhutanese invasion added to his strength. These events clearly showed that Sikkim remained faction ridden, despite the first Chogyal Phuntshog Namgyals attempts to weld together the ethnic diversity through political institutions in which all could participate and through matrimonial alliances. The Bhutia faction, with the Chogyal and its aristocracy was to remain predominant and maintained close links with Tibet.

In the second half of the nineteenth century Sikkim had to contend with aggression from the west which helped to paper over the cleavages in its polity. The rise of the Gorkha power under Prithvinarayan Shah in the Katmandu Valley led to their absorption during 1771-74 of Limbuwan, the Land of the Limbus, on Sikkim's western frontier. The Gorkha ruler soon carried out a series of campaigns against Sikkim with a view to annexing the State into his growing kingdom of Nepal. In 1788 he even succeeded in capturing Rabdantse, the then capital, forcing the Chogyal and his family to seek shelter in Tibet. Nepal's conflict with Tibet in 1792, in which the Manchu-Chinese first appear in the Himalaya, halted Gorkha adventurism in Sikkim. In the event it was Nepal's war with the East India Company that saved Sikkim from almost certain extinction.

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The East India Company's relations with Sikkim was established during its war with Nepal (1814 – 16). The Company was of course not unaware of the advantages of closer relations with the kingdom whose northern frontier marched with Tibet. As early as in 1768 it had shown some interest in the Morung, the terai or lowlands south of Sikkim as a source for ship timber.[9] The gradual encroachment by the Gorkhas into this valuable source of raw materials had been viewed with considerable concern. So too was the worry of Sikkim itself as she derived much revenue from these lands, and indeed if only for this reason was to become more responsive to British overtures. But it was prospect of access to Tibet through Sikkim that engaged the attention of the Company's authorities in India. The Gorkha conquest of the Kathmandu or Bagmati valley in the 1760s put an end to trade routes between India and Tibet. The route through Bhutan that Warren Hastings sought and for which he sent George Bagle and others to Tibet never quite developed. The Company, nevertheless, did not quite give up hopes of Tibetan gold and silver flowing into its coffers; and to the Court of Directors trade through the Himalayas remained a matter of abiding interest.[10]

Treaty of Titalia

Sikkim was not just a victim of Gorkha aggression but lost to that state valuable territories. As war with the Gorkhas progressed the Secret and Political Department of the Government of India drew the attention of the Calcutta Council to the fact that:

> the Princes of Sikkim are closely connected with the Lamas of Lassa and Bootan, and their restoration of their former possessions would, no doubt, be highly acceptable to the authorities in those countries and induce them to regard our proceedings with satisfaction.[11]

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[9] Alistair Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia. The Road to Lhasa*1767 – 1905, Edinburgh, 19--, pp 36-37.

[10] See *Ibid* for British attempts to open communications and trade with Tibet during these years, Chapters I – II, pp. 1-85; C R Markham, *Narratives of a Mission of George Bagle to Tibet and the Journey of Thomas Marring to Lhasa*, London 1876.

[11] Quoted in Lamb, *Op cit*, pp. 41 – 42.

Restoration of territories was thus an important lever which the Company was prepared to use in order to establish close friendly relations with Sikkim. There were other reasons of political and military expediency. There were rumors that Nepal and Bhutan, separated only Sikkim, were about to conclude an alliance against the British. "British assistance to Sikkim", Alistair Lamb rightly observes, "had military as well as political objectives, not only did it promise to open a line of communication with Lhasa and keep the Gurkhas and the Bhutanese from intriguing together, but it also constituted an attack on the Gurkha flank."[12]

The Company's policy towards Sikkim enunciated during the Anglo-Gorkha war saw its fruition after its conclusion. It was then decided to "conclude an engagement with the Raja of Siccim, for defining and recording the conditions of our future connections with that State." This engagement, the Treaty of Titalia, concluded on 10 February 1817, met all that the British had wanted. By the restoration of the territory between the river Mechi and the Tista to Sikkim the British established a sound buffer between Nepal and Bhutan. Sikkim was guaranteed protection against Gorkha expansionism, and in return, the Company acquired a measure of control over her foreign relations. Sikkim undertook to return fugitives from British justice who might seek shelter in her territories and assured protection and freedom to traders from India from unjust exactions and exorbitant taxation while carrying on their business in and through Sikkim.[13] The Company thus acquired a clearly defined right to trade upto the Tibetan border through a country under its protection, "a more ready communication with Lhasa and China." Lord Hastings the Governor General considered the treaty a remarkable

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[12] *Ibid*, P.42

[13] C. U. Atchison. *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries*, Calcutta 1909, Vol XII, p. 322- 4; See Appendix A for full text. Two months after the signing of the Treaty, the Governor General on the recommendation of Captain Barre Latter, who had negotiated the Treaty, gave Sikkim an additional territory of the Morung, the fertile lowlands lying between the Mechi and Mahanadi rivers. This was of course a part of the policy of turning Sikkim into a buffer against Nepal. According to Latter the Company could achieve that objective by ceding to the raja the Morung, so that he could "Subsist the garrisons he must maintain for the protection of the passes" from Nepal. S. R. Rao, *India and Sikkim (1814 – 1970)* New Delhi, 1972, P. 5.

achievement, "which we never could have imposed by force of arms, from the extreme difficulty of the country."[14]

Sikkim Politics: Controlling Tibetan Influence

The goodwill engendered by the Treaty turned out in the long run to beshort lived. The injudicious handling of Sikkim's border dispute with Nepal was the first of a series of events that undermined that goodwill.[15] More serious was the acquisition of Darjeeling in 1835; not "voluntarily" given up by the Chogyal as it was made out to be but obtained through direct and indirect pressure. The bickering over compensation to Sikkim for the loss of this territory dragged on for years, and even in 1841 when a sum was decided upon, the date from when it was payable by no means lessened the bitterness. The development of Darjeeling, once the obscure and tiny settlement, Dorje Liang perched on a ridge, and the migrations from the kingdom tended to put the Raja capital in the shade. This apart, there were local irritants such as over the extradition rights that further affected the ruler's position in the eyes of his subjects.

The relations between the Chogyal Tsugphud Namgyal and Dr A Campbell since the latter's appointment as Superintendent of Darjeeling in 1839, was far from cordial. In June 1846 Campbell took upon himself to address the Chogyal charging him with violation of the terms of the Treaty; in particular, of causing "vexatious delays and exactions" upon traders going to or crossing Sikkim from Darjeeling, Bhutan and Tibet[16]. Campbell also took exception to the raja's demand for the surrender of slaves from his territory who had settled in Darjeeling. The problem could, however, be sorted out because the Dewan Ilam Singh was amenable to British persuasion. It was with the appointment as Dewan after Ilam Singh's death in 1847, of the Bhutia or Tibetan Tokhang Donyer Namgyal and the ascendency of the Tibetan faction in the politics of

[14] Lamb, *op cit*, P. 43

[15] In 1827, a dispute arose between Sikkim and Nepal over a hilly tract east of the Michi River. By the terms of the Treaty Sikkim referred the matter to the Company for arbitration. On the findings of a British officer the disputed tract was assigned by the Governor General in Council to Sikkim. On an appeal subsequently by Nepal, and a reexamination of the case the Company reversed its entire decision and gave its verdict in favour of Nepal, S. R. Rao, *op cit*, P. 19, fn.62

[16] FPC 22 August 1846: No. 21; Campbell to Raja of Sikkim. 8 June

Sikkim that matters drifted from bad to worse. Related to the Chogyal by marriage (through an illegitimate daughter) the hostile Tokhang wielded considerable authority.

The Dewan had been opposed to the movement of Europeans into Sikkim. In 1848 he put a good deal of obstacle to the visit of the distinguished English naturalist Joseph Hooker. Campbell suspected that his letters to the Chogyal was intercepted by the Dewan, and concluded that no satisfactory business with Sikkim could be conducted unless he had direct access to the Chogyal. His first visit to Sikkim turned out to be a fiasco. The Dewan made every effort to prevent him from meeting the ruler, and when he finally met the Himalayan potentate it was a timid affair[17]. It seemed evident to Campbell that the Sikkimese were "woefully ignorant' and "misinformed" about the real nature of the British power in India[18]. The second visit in late 1849 in the company of Hooker proved to be a personal disaster. Campbell, and Hooker, suffered the ignominy of arrest and detention at the hands of the Sikkim authorities.[19]

The Dewan Namgyal's position in Sikkim was, however, not unchallenged. He was opposed by the Lepchas who supported the Vakil at Darjeeling, Aden Chebu Lama. The factions headed by these two were in constant intrigues; but it was the Dewan's Tibetan party that still retained its grip in Sikkimese politics. The result was the continuous virulent opposition to the British, and attempts to remove whatever influence it had in the Himalayan kingdom. Border incidents including kidnappings by the Sikkimese, all at the instigation of the Dewan became of frequent occurrence. The deterioration between Sikkim and India was largely due to the retaliation by the British on account of the Superintendent's arrest and the humiliation of the British: the compensation, which in 1846 had been raised from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 6,000 was promptly stopped and the Morung resumed. The climax was reached in March 1860 when thirteen Sikkimese raided a British village and carried off two women, an action it soon transpired

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[17] FPC 15 December 1849: No. 140, *Journal of a Trip to Sikkim in 1848*
[18] Rao, *India and Sikkim*, *op cit*, pp 23 - 24
[19] See lamb, *op cit*, for an account of the entire episode, pp 94 -99, also Rao, pp 24 - 27

was the handiwork of the Dewan's relatives. Demands and threats by Campbell[20] proved of no avail, and in November that year the Superintendent himself proceeded to Sikkim with a large force to enforce his demands and exact reparation. This too proved to be a misadventure; Campbell and his troops were attacked *en route*, and though they held out for some time were ultimately forced to retreat ignominiously to Darjeeling.[21]

Both the Government of India and the authorities in London remained ambivalent: on one hand was the desire to cultivate Sikkim for a trade route to Tibet, and on the other was the need to punish her for the outrage upon an officer of the Government. In the end the need to uphold British prestige took precedence, and it was decided to dispatch a military expedition to Sikkim, as proposed by the Bengal Government. Its immediate objectives were (1) the release of captives seized by the Sikkimese in their recent attack (2) enforcement of its earlier demands for the restoration of the kidnapped British subjects (3) infliction of punishment on the Raja and (4) security against future aggression and "treachery". These were in fact what Campbell had suggested, but smarting under his 1849 humiliation he actually wanted the annexation, in part or in full, of Sikkim. This was opposed by Bengal and their list of what could be sought from the kingdom was accepted by the Government of India. The latter's instructions to Ashley Eden the Political Officer to the expedition to be commanded by Colonel J C Gawler, were clear enough: the punishment of the Chogyal was to be clear to all, the Dewan was to be dismissed and banished and another more "peaceable and justly" disposed towards the British appointed. Sikkim was to be made to enter into a treaty of friendship and alliance with the Government of India, the Treaty being signed in the presence of the Sikkim officials and British forces. In the event of the Raja and his Dewan escaping, their residences were to be destroyed. Eden was however expressly

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[20] FPP November 1860: Nos 393 – 416, Correspondence between Campbell and the Chogyal, and with Cheba Lama., 25 October 1860.

[21] *Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India*. Vol 4, *North and North-Eastern Frontier Tribes*, Intelligence Branch, Army headquarters, Simla 1907, P. 40

told against action and words which could "give ground for the supposition that British rule is to be planted permanently in any part of Sikkim."[22]

From the political and military point of view Colonel Gawler's expedition was a success.[23] Gawler entered Sikkim in March 1861 with no serious opposition. The Dewan fled from Tibet the moment the British troops crossed the Tista, leaving the Raja to conclude peace with the invading force. The Treaty was signed on 28 March 1861 at Tumlong[24]. The Government of India resisted the pressure of annexation , urged upon it from several quarters since Campbell first suggested[25] it in 1850. By the Treaty India gained all that it would have obtained by annexation, but with the additional advantage of not being saddled with the responsibilities of Sikkim's administration. British control over the kingdom implicit in the treaty of 1817 was now virtually made explicit. The author of *Britain and Chinese Central Asia* not inaccurately sums up what the British had achieved:

> The Dewan was forced to flee into Tibet, though he was received here with some distinction. By a Treaty with the raja all the British requirements were met. Namgyal was never again to set foot in Sikkim; free trade routes between Sikkim and British India was assured; Sikkim was to be opened to European travelers; the Sikkim Government was to assist the British in developing trade through the country between India and Tibet, and for this purpose they were to help build roads to the Tibetan border. The Raja was not to reside in Tibet for more than three months in any one year and to devote himself more earnestly to the affairs of his state.

The Sikkim Trade Route

The treaty thus gave the British substantial benefits. On the core issues of the promotion of trade with Tibet through Sikkim Ashley Eden's report ended on an optimistic note:

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[22] FPP December 1860: No. 148, Instructions of the Government of India to Ashley Eden, Political Officer, Sikkim Expeditionary Force

[23] For details see Colonel J. G. Gawler, *Sikkim, with Hints on Mountain and Jungle Warfare*, London 1873

[24] Atchison, *Treaties*, *op cit*, Vol XII, pp 61 -66; Appendix B for text

[25] Lamb, *op cit*, P. 102

> A very considerable trade will spring up between Lassa (and) Darjeeling. The Tibetans will only be glad to exchange gold dust, musk, borax, wool and salt for English cloth, tobacco, drill, etc. and the people of Sikkim will gain as carriers of this trade, and their Government will raise considerable revenue from the transit duties.[26]

Failures to promote direct trade with Tibet in other parts of the Indo-Tibetan frontier soon gave the Sikkim route a greater importance. In 1863 one Captain E Smythe who was authorised to enter the remote regions opposite Kumaon, was stopped on the border by Tibetan officials. He was told that he could not proceed further and enter Tibet without passports obtained from Peking. At the other end of the frontier, in the Mishmi hills of Assam, the intrepid English traveler Thomas Thornville Cooper, was making similar efforts.[27] In 1867 he obtained permission from the Szechuan authorities to travel to India through Lhasa, but on the border was stopped from entering Tibetan territory. Two years later he made an attempt to enter Tibet, but with the same result. The Tibetan border guards refused to let him enter the country.

The suggestion that Tibet's friendship should be cultivated first came from Colonel John Haughton, the Commissioner of Cooch Behar, who was also incharge of the Bengal Government's relations with Bhutan. Haughton who had a leading role in the Anglo-Bhutan War (1864-65) had realized the importance of Tibet in any dealings of the Government of India with the Himalayan Kingdoms. In October 1869 he sought permission to open communications with Tibet. The Bengal Government was dismissive, as such attempts "might excite suspicious as to our motives and do more harm than good."[28] The Government of India was more receptive to the idea and

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[26] FPP May 1861: Nos. 270 -86; Eden to Bengal, 29 March.
FPAP April 1864: Nos. 133-34; also Rao, *op cit*, P. 49

[27] For details, T T Cooper, *Journal of an Overland Journey from China Towards India*, Calcutta 1869; *The Mishmi Hills*, London 1873 and *Travels of a Pioneer of Commerce*, London 1871.

[28] FPAP January 1870: Nos. 123 – 124; Bengal to Government of India, 15 November 1869. The Lieutenant Governor, Sir William Grey, thus told the Government of India, that: "These relations (between India and Tibet) are at present so satisfactory that the Government of that country (Tibet) have always, it is believed, declined to take any action in matters relating to frontier politics when applied to for its interference by its two quasi-feudatories, Sikkim and Bhutan, for the fear by so doing, it should be

Haughton accordingly submitted two specific proposals to remove the trade barriers with Tibet: (i) That Peking should be approached to remove all restrictions on the movement of merchants, British and Indian, and travellers to Tibet (ii) that the Raja (of Sikkim should obtain from Tibetan authorities information as to the duties levied by them and if there were any particular item of trade that was prohibited. This would begin communications with the Tibetans. And if the barriers were removed "a very important increase to commerce by way of Sikkim and Bhutan would take place" and "a brand of traffic (viz. in tea) of much importance to Darjeeling might be developed".[29] Some of these were followed up but there was little improvement in the situation.

The prospect of trade with Tibet had early caught the imagination of the merchants in London who had been lobbying for Government action in the matter. In April 1873, the *Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce*, presented a Memorial to the Secretary of State for India, the Duke of Argyll, in which they pleaded for access to Tibet. About the Sikkim route, specifically, the Memorial made a number of suggestions.[30] (1) early completion of the Calcutta-Darjeeling railway (2) the establishment of a frontier mart on the Sikkim-Tibet frontier (3) opening of consular agencies in Lhasa and Shigatse, and (4) that the British minister at Peking should endeavour to get that Government to "grant full permission to trade along the whole frontier of Tibet." The Memorial, says Alistair Lamb, pointing out its significance, "marked a decisive step in the history of British attempts to open Tibet in that it concentrated attention in England and in India on the Sikkim route, almost to the exclusion of all other ways across the Himalayan border".[31] Lamb is of course not wrong in his assessment. The Memorial had emphasized that the best commercial approach to Tibet lay through Sikkim. It was the shortest and most direct road between British territory and the Tibetan capital which had become open as a result of the Treaty of 1861,

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brought into collision with the British Government. Their reply to application from these frontier states has always been that so long as the British Government does not attempt to interfere with the frontiers of Tibet proper they have no desire to intervene."

[29] FPAP October 1870: No. 70; Haughton to Bengal, 22 July 1870.

[30] FPAP October 1873: No 134; Memorial dated 25 April 1873.

[31] Lamb, *op cit*, P. 134.

and led up to the Tibetan plateau by way of the Chumbi valley. This was a region which offered an ideal site for a trade mart and promise to be of great importance to the future of the Tibetan trade. One of the difficulties of this route, however, was its susceptibility to sudden stoppages, the precise reasons for which British officials never quite understood.[32] It was, *inter alia*, for this reason that Bengal decided to send one of its senior civilians, John Ware Edgar, on a mission to Sikkim to ascertain facts.[33]

Sikkim's consent to the proposed visit was easily obtained. The Raja or Chogyal Sidkeong Namgyal was in Darjeeling to meet the Lieutenant Governor to press for an increase to the subsidy from the Rs. 9,000 to Rs. 12,000. This the Lieutenant Governor was prepared to concede, provided the Chogyal would give assistance to British officers when they visited Sikkim, helped them in opening and developing trade with Tibet and keep the Government of India informed of what went on beyond his northern frontier. These were not unreasonable conditions and Sidkeong Namgyal was a much more amenable personage than his pro-Tibetan predecessor.

The Superintendent of Darjeeling, the highly regarded John Ware Edgar was deputed to Sikkim with instructions to acquaint himself with:

> The present state of things there (the Sikkim – Tibet frontier) – the actual condition, extent and prospects of trade with Tibet – the best line for the road to take, and the advisability of opening one – and all the matters likely to enable the Government to act with certainty on this important question[34]

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[32] *Ibid*, Lamb suggests, p. 136, that this was the result of anti-Nepali demonstrations, in 1871, in Lhasa and Nepal's reaction to these: "In the following year (1872) the Amban helped the regent prepare fortification along the Nepalese border, and this martial preparation produced the inevitable reaction in Kathmandu, whereby in March 1873 the arsenals were working day and night. By then the crisis had progressed almost to the point of war. The Dalai Lama kept the Nepalese resident waiting for several hours when that official made a courtesy call on the Titular head of the Tibetan State. Sir Jang Bahadur broke off all relations with Tibet, withdrew the Resident and closed the Nepalese frontier to Tibetan traders. The Tibetans, in the belief that the Indian Government stood behind Sir Jang Bahadur, then stopped all trade on the Sikkim – Tibet border."

[33] FPAP October 1873; No. 492; Bengal to Government of India, 17 June.

[34] J Ware Edgar, *Report on a visit to the Sikkim and Tibetan Frontier*, Calcutta, 1874, P. 4

Edgar entered Sikkim in October 1873.[35] He visited the passes into the Chumbi valley and held parleys with Tibetan officials and even the banished ex-Dewan Namgyal. The Phari Dzongpon, the leading Tibetan official he met and who had received him cordially, would, however, not allow Edgar to set foot on Tibetan soil. Worse still, the Amban at Lhasa, on learning Edgar's visit to Sikkim and to the borders of Tibet, remonstrated with the Maharaja. His letter of warning to the latter brings out not only China's, and thereby Tibet's, policy of exclusion, but also its attempts to reassert its authority over Sikkim. It reads:

> Your state of Sikkim borders on Tibet. You know what is in our minds, and what our policy is, you are bound to prevent the peling (English) sahibs from crossing the frontier; yet it is entirely through your action in making the roads for the sahibs through Sikkim that they are going to make the projected attempt.[36]
>
> If you continue to behave in this manner it will not be well with you.

Edgar made no attempt to cross the frontier and returned with the impression that Tibet and Tibetan trade had to be approached through Imperial China.

The report he submitted on his return to Darjeeling in December contained a number of suggestions, the first and most important being based on this impression.[37] This was that the British minister in Peking should obtain from the Chinese Foreign office a promise that the obstacles in the way of Indian traders entering Tibet could be removed. He even suggested that such an undertaking could take the form of an edict from the Chinese Emperor, as an "expression of the Emperor's disavowal of the interference of his representative at Lhasa". Next, that without showing undue eagerness British officials should waste no opportunity in cultivating his friendship of the Tibetan officials; a trade mart should be established on the Sikkim – Tibet border. Finally,

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[35] Details in *Ibid.*
[36] Quoted in *Ibid*, also Rao, Sikkim, *op cit*, P. 58
[37] *Ibid.*

referring to the Sikkim – Tibet border road Edgar said when completed "friendly relations with Tibet and a trade singularly advantageous to both countries would follow almost of themselves." He expressed surprise that action had not been taken on it since the treaty of 1861.

As with all reports and recommendations in the past Edgar's report was endlessly discussed and noted to and fro between Bengal and the Government of India. The British minister in Peking was written to on the need to approach the Emperor, which he promptly shot down as inexpedient. Even the Government of India was now rather lukewarm towards the road, a far cry from the position it had taken in 1861, that so long as Tibetan and Chinese opposition to opening up Tibet to British trade remained, there was no sense in prosecuting the road project. There the matter virtually remained for another decade. The Government of India conscious of the ignorance of the conditions in Tibet and the temper of lay and monastic officials decided to overcome this shortcoming by other means. The dispatch of Sarat Chandra Das to Tashilhunpo, the seat of the Panchen Lama was one such attempt. Not that opportunities were wanting. The Chefoo Convention[38] of 1876 contained a separate Article by which the Chinese agreed to grant passports for a British commercial, political and scientific mission from British India into Tibet. The Tibetans who came to know of this Article from the Amban were alarmed but the British never followed it up.

The Abortive Macaulay Mission

In 1883 trade with Tibet once again suddenly stopped[39]. The Bengal Government after obtaining the approval of the Government of India, sent its Financial Secretary, Colman Macaulay, on a mission to find out what had happened. Apart from going into this Macaulay was to enquire into the possibility of a direct or indirect route through The

[38] Lamb *op cit*, pp 145ff; Dorothy Woodman, *The Making of Burma*, London 1962, p. 199. In 1874 a British exploring party crossed the Burma – Yunan frontier to examine the prospects of trade. The following year one of its members H R Margery was murdered by tribesmen, but the local Yunnan administration was strongly suspected of complicity. In the negotiations at Chefoo with the Chinese to prevent similar outrages in the future, the outcome of which was the Chefoo Convention, 1876. Care was taken to insert a separate article relating to Tibet, but it only in 1886, as will be seen, that it was ratified.

[39] See Rao, *Sikkim*, *op cit*, P. 69, n 13 for reasons for the stoppage of trade.

Lachan Valleey into the Tsang province, south of Lhasa, noted for its superior quality of wool. For this he was to try to get in touch with officials of the Tashi Lhumpo monastery, the seat of the Panchen Lama at Shigatse in Tsang.

Macaulay accompanied by Saral Chandra Das arrived in Sikkim in October 1884. He met Chogyal Thothab Namgyal. But could elicit no information about the trade stoppage; rather he was told that trade had resumed that month itself. In the following month, on 8 November, he met the Dzongpon of Khambajong, but in Sikkimese territory. Macaulay was received cordially, just as Edgar was received by the Phari Dzongpon, but the Khamba official was more communicative. What he told Macaulay was in effect what the Phasri Dzongpon conveyed to Edgar eleven years earlier; that China was entirely responsible for Tibet's isolation. The monks for fear of losing their spiritual influence and commercial monopolies had endorsed Peking's directive. There was however, a lay faction which would welcome closer relations with the British. Many Tibetans had lately came to appreciate British goods and would welcome an increase in trade. And so, if the Indian Government could obtain an order from the Chinese Emperor expressing a wish for an improvement in the conditions of the Indo – Tibetan trade, then he, the Dzongpon, would cooperate with Macaulay and do his best to promote trade. Until then he was obliged as a Tibetan official to oppose the British officials entry into Tibet or to endeavours at prosecuting trade[40].

So far as Macaulay was concerned his mission to Sikkim was an eminent success. He appears to have been much impressed by the Khamba Dzongpon, especially since he was instrumental in Macaulay's exchange of letters with the Tashi Lhumpo authorities, even if nothing came out of this. From his dealings with the Tibetan official Macaulay came back with the impression that the people of Tibet would welcome the prospect of trade with the British. His lengthy report[41] on his mission recorded, as did

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[40] Colman Macaulay, *Report on a Mission to Sikkim and Tibetan Frontier*, Calcutta, 1885, pp. 43ff; also Lamb, *op cit*, pp 155ff; and FSEP May 1885: Nos. 752, Memorandum on "British Relations with Tibet", by Macaulay.

[41] Macaulay, *Report*, *op cit*, pp. 57ff.

Edgar after his visit to Sikkim, all this in some detail, though in tone and optimism it far exceeded the level-headed Edgars's. The commercial advantages would be great he emphasized. The import of India tea into Tibet on which the Darjeeling and 'Dooars' companies had set such importance, would sweep the Chinese product off the market. There would be growing demands for English broadcloth, piece goods, heffield cutlery and Indian indigo would in turn bring in Tibetan gold – "there appears to be little doubt that gold is really plentiful", and wool, the quantity for export "is known to be enormous". All that was necessary was to develop the route through the Lachen valley in northern Sikkim and through the Chumbi valley for British goods to enter Shigatse and ultimately Lhasa. It was the Chinese and the entrenched monks who were the obstacles. But the monks could be won over by bribing the great Geluka monasteries of Sera, Drupung and Ganden, who "represent the national party in permanent opposition to the Chinese" and would be glad to see a development which would inevitably lead to the decline of Chinese influence in Tibet.[42]

Macaulay's recommendation was simple enough: Chinese permission, in Peking, should be obtained for a mission to Lhasa. It would confer with the Amban and Tibetan officials about the freedom of Indian traders into Tibet and the removal of trade blocks on the Darjeeling – Sikkim – Tibet route. If the Chinese were reluctant to permit a mission to Lhasa, as feared by the Khamba Dzungpon, it should only aim at Shigatse or Tashilhunpo monastery.[43]

Bengal's Lieutenant Governor, Sir Rivers Thompson, endorsed Macaulay's recommendations,[44] but not quite the Viceroy who was not so easily to be persuaded. Lord Dufferin's hands were full. The Afghan situation was entering into a dangerous phase[45]. And in Burma, the Bombay- Burma Trading Corporation was exerting pressure

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[42] *Ibid*
[43] *Ibid*
[44] FSEP May 1885: No 75; Minute by Sir Rivers Thompson, 19 February
[45] The crisis in Afghanistan began with the advance of the Russians into Afghan territory, terminating in the defeat of the Afghans at Panjdeh, a small town which was claimed by the Russians. The Panjdeh incident almost led to war between Russia and England, but was resolved, through the mediation of the Danish

on his Government for action against Thibaw: it was ultimately to lead to the third and final Anglo – Burmese war and the annexation of Upper Burma, an event that was to have a decisive impact on Macaulay's scheme. Dufferin in short was not prepared to risk confrontation with the Chinese over such a small matter as trade across the Himalaya.

Dufferin apart, the British legation in Peking too were averse to Macaulay's ideas. The *Charge d' affaires* was convinced that the Chinese would not relent and it would be unwise to press the matter as the Tibet trade was "at best a poor trade with no prospect of increase."[46] In England there was misgivings among an important section of the public after the *Times* published accounts of Macaulay's Sikkim visit. A question was asked in Parliament whether the Government of India was preparing to "throw opium" into Tibet.[47] As if upon cue, the Society for its suppression at once set upon the question expressing abhorrence at the very idea of close British relations with the Tibetan Lamas. The Secretary of the Society wrote to the *Times* saying that no European should be proud of Macaulay's attempt "to curry favour with the Tibetan Buddhists by pretending that the British Queen and people do not heartily disbelieve and repudiate the imposture of the re-incarnate Lamas."[48]

Understandably, Macaulay had support among the merchants of England. The Drewsbury Chamber of Commerce petitioned the Foreign Secretary in May 1885 to expedite the opening of the Tibetan markets to British commerce. It would help alleviate, they said, "the depression in trade which has now so long existed", by obtaining in Tibet an outlet for Britsih manufacturers in return for Tibetan wool and gold. And just as Macaulay had recommended it, asked for immediate negotiations in Peking on the

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King who awarded the disputed land to Russia. This led the British to cultivate the friendship of the Amir of Afghanistan with a view to turning his country into a buffer against further Russian advance towards India. This position was formalized by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. See for example, C. Collin Davies, *Problem of the North – West Frontier 1890 – 1908*, Cambridge 1932.

[46] Quoted in Lamb, *op cit*, P. 159

[47] *Ibid*

[48] *Ibid.*

subject.[49] This was followed by similar petitions from the Manchester and Birmingham Chambers of Commerce.

While all this was going on Colman Macaulay arrived in England on furlough. On 15 July 1885 he submitted a memorandum to the Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Churchill, drawing his attention to the advantages of a mission to Tibet through Sikkim.[50] His vision had now broadened enough to embrace the eastern Central Asia: "Darjeeling (is) the natural outlet for the trade of Tibet and South Mongolia", and a mission to Tibet would provide an opportunity for scientific research of much value and there would be enormous political advantages from friendship with "the two great pontiffs* of the Buddhist Church, who exercise boundless influence over the tribes of Central Asia – an influence so great that the present dynasty of China has had to conciliate it in order to secure its own existence. The time had passed, Macaulay's memorandum went on to say, for waiting "till the wall of Chinese obstruction should fall as fell the walls of Jericho."[51] His idea was that a special envoy should proceed to Peking to obtain passports for a British mission to Lhasa. To clinch his arguments Macaulay referred to a reported desire of China for an alliance with the British as an additional reason for attempting to open Tibet.

> Our political influence in Central Asia would receive an enormous accession if, all misunderstanding and jealousy being removed and British envoy and the Chinese Imperial Commissioner were to meet at the Court of the Dalai Lama on cordial terms as representatives of the two great Empires of Asia in alliance.[52]

Such a grandiose project at once appealed to the imagination of Randolph Churchill. He agreed to send Macaulay to Peking for the necessary passports and thence on the mission to Lhasa through Sikkim.

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[49] *Ibid.*

[50] FSEP October 1885. Nos 1 – 23; Memorandum by Macaulay for Lord Randolph Churchill, 15 July

* The conversion of the Mongols was the work of the Yellow Hat or Gelukpon headed by the Dalai Lama. The Mongol Church is therefore modeled on the Gelukpon and is headed by the Jetsundamba Khutukhta. See Ram Rahul, *Politics of Central Asia*, Delhi 1973, pp 99 - 103

[51]

[52] *Ibid*

Macaulay, accompanied by Sarat Chandra Das, arrived in Peking on 9 October 1885. Contrary to what he had persuaded himself to believe, he found the Chinese not just unenthusiastic but positively opposed to the proposed mission. Even before Macaulay left the English shores the Chinese got to know, again from the English press, what was on foot, and were worried. It was only after a good deal of persuasion and wrangling that they issued the passports and agreed to send instructions to their Amban at Lhasa. Having obtained the necessary papers Macaulay was back in India and in no time set himself on organising his mission. Although he was advised by the British Legation in Peking to limit the size of the mission if Tibetan fears were not to be aroused, Macaulay in early 1886 assembled a huge force* at Darjeeling. Here it was destined to remain for long and ultimately terminate.

In Calcutta the Viceroy Lord Dufferin was in no hurry to propel it forward. In the winter of Macaulay's return the annexation of Upper Burma was well under way, and in January 1886 its completion was officially announced. With mounting criticism of his Burma policy Dufferin was hardly likely to risk a war in the difficult terrain of the Himalaya such as would have been the inevitable result of Tibetan opposition. For it was now clear, as Das learnt in Peking and as subsequently confirmed by the British Legation, that the mission would be stopped at the Tibetan frontier. When therefore the Amban was recalled to Peking the Viceroy took advantage of it to suggest that Macaulay wait till a new Amban had taken his post at Lhasa.[54] While the mission idled at Darjeeling the Chinese became extremely uneasy. Burma had been annexed and a large British force was in Darjeeling poised for an advance into Tibet. The Viceroy of Szechuan province, who was responsible to Peking for Tibet affairs, was only just prevented from sending an army to Lhasa for its defence when the new Amban reported to Peking that if the mission entered Tibet "trouble will certainly ensue." The Chinese

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* It included, apart from Macaualay as Chief Envoy by A. W, Paul as Secretary, Colonel Tanner as Surveyor, Dr. Oldham as Geologist, Dr. Leaky as Medical Officer, Warry of the China Consular Service as Chinese interpreter, Sarat Das as Tibetan Interpreter and two Captains in command of an escort of three hundred sepoys. In May the number of sepoys was reduced to fifty eight because of Commissariat difficulties.

[54] For details of the circumstances of the abandonment of the Mission, see *Ibid*, Chapter VI, pp 143 – 173.

Foreign Office sought its postponement. The Chinese, realizing the predicament of the British, next pressed for the cancellation of the Separate Article of the Chefoo Convention. Dufferin, anxious to obtain Chinese recognition of his annexation of Burma decided as a *quid pro quo* the abandonment of the mission. With an army tied down expensively in Burma, and the situation in Afghanistan still critical, there was every need to avoid military commitments in the Himalaya. He therefore gave up the mission for a settlement in Burma. At any rate he was never enthusiastic about the mission, considering that, it "had been imposed upon" him.[55]

The agreement on 24 July 1886 with the Chinese Foreign Office over Article IV of the Chefoo Convention between Bhutan and China "relative to Burma and Thibet", which was the outcome of the changed situation, reads:

> In as much as enquiry into the circumstances by the Chinese Government has shown the existence of many obstacles to the Mission to Thibet provided for in the Separate Article of the Chefoo Agreement, England consents to countermand the Mission forthwith.
>
> With regard to the desire of the British Government to consider arrangements for further trade between India and Thibet, it will be the duty of the Chinese Government, after careful enquiry into circumstances, to adopt measures to exhort and encourage the people with a view to the promotion and development of trade. Should it be practicable, the Chinese Government shall then proceed carefully to consider Trade Regulations; but if insuperable obstacles should be found to exist, the British Government will not press the matter unduly.[56]

"This amounted to", observes Lamb, "a total abandonment of British hopes for the opening of Tibet."[57] The India Office, which at this time exerted enormous pressure on Dufferin to proceed with the mission, now agreed with the Viceroy that the best had

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[55] See A C Lyall, T*he Life of the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava*, London 1905, Vol II, pp 132 – 6; C. E. D Black, *The Marquess of Dufferin and Ava*, London 1903, P. 261.

[56] Quoted in Lamb, *op cit*, P. 169; also Dorothy Woodman, *Burma op cit*, pp 266 - 274

[57] *Ibid*; Lamb goes on to say: "The Separate Article had obliged the Chinese to assist the British in getting a mission through to Lhasa; but it had in no way bound the British to deal with Tibet exclusively through China; indeed it had recognized the British right to establish direct diplomatic relations with the Tibetans. The Convention of 1886, however, removed all ambiguity on this question. In future all British negotiations about Tibet were to be carried on through China. Among the consequences of this was the end to any hope of political results from British contacts with Tashi Lhumpo."

been achieved by the Agreement. By sacrificing the mission and what would have been doubtful gains in Tibet, they had now obtained "the formal recognition of the Chinese Government to the establishment of British rule in Upper Burmah"; complete freedom of action in dealing with any territorial claims on the Burmese border which China may advance in the future"; and "a guarantee for the settlement of the frontier trade between Burma and China, and the opening of S. W. China to our Commerce."[58] Not unnaturally England's commercial community was dismayed over the failure of the Macaulay mission. The Foreign and India Office continued to receive petitions on the subject, from the Chambers of Commerce of Halifax, Hudderfield, London and Manchester.[59]

The failure of the Macaulay mission has been variously interpreted: from Macaulay's rather poor diplomatic skills and failure to understand the real issues involved, to the shift of British interests to Yunnan and Dufferin's bargain with the Chinese. What was overlooked was Sikkim's internal situation, the country through which the trade route lay.

[58] *Ibid*, pp. 169 - 70
[59] *Ibid*

Appendix A

Treaty of Titalia

Treaty, Covenant, or Agreement entered into by Captain Barre Latter, Agent on the part of His Excellency the Right Honorable the Earl of Moira, K.G., Governor-General, &c., &c., &c., &c., and by Nazir Chaina Tenjin and Macha Teinbah and Lama Duchim Longdoo, deputies on the part of the Rajah of Sikkimputtee, being severally authorized and duly appointed for the above purposes, - 1817

Article 1

The Honorable East India Company cedes, transfer, and makes over in full sovereignty to the Sikkimputtee Rajah, his heirs or successors, all the hilly or mountainous country situated to the eastward of the Mechi River and to the westward of the Teesta River, formerly possessed and occupied by the Rajah of Nepaul, but ceded to the Honorable East India Company by the treaty of peace signed at Segoulee.

Article 2

The Sikkimputtee Rajah engages for himself and successors to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against the Gorkhas or any other state.

Article 3

That he will refer to the arbitration of the British Government any disputes or questions that may arise between his subjects and those of Nepaul, or any other neighbouring state, and to abide by the decision of the British Government.

Article 4

He engages for himself and successors to join the British troops with the whole of his Military Force when employed in the Hills, and in general to afford the British Troops every aid and facility in his power.

Article 5

That he will not permit any British subject, nor the subject of any European and American state, to reside within his dominions, without the permission of the English Government.

Article 6

That he will immediately seize and deliver up any dacoits or notorious offenders that may take refuge within his territories.

Article 7

That he will not afford protection to any defaulters of revenue or other delinquents when demanded by the British Government through their accredited Agents.

Article 8

That he will afford protection to merchants and traders from the Company's Provinces, and he engages that no duties shall be levied on the transit of merchandise beyond the established custom at the several golahs or marts.

Article 9

The Honorable East India Company guarantees to the Sikkimputtee Rajah and his successors the full and peaceable possession of the tract of hilly country specified in the First Article of the present Agreement.

Article 10

This treaty shall be ratified and exchanged by the Sikkimputtee Rajah within one month from the present date, and the counterpart, when confirmed by his Excellency the Right Honorable the Governor-General, shall be transmitted to the rajah. Done at Titalya, this 10th day of February 1817, answering the 9th of Phagoon 1873 Sumbut, and to the 30th of Maugh 1223 Bengallie

BARRE LATTER
NAZIR CHAINA TINJIN
MACHA TIMBAH
LAMA DUCHIM LONGADOO
MOIRA
N.B. EDMONSTONE
ARCHD. SETON
GEO. DOWDESWELL

Ratified by the Governor-General in council, at Fort William, this fifteenth day of March, one thousand eight hundred and seventeen.

J. ADAM
Acting Chief Secretary to
Government

Copy of Sunnud granted to the Rajah of Sikkim, dated 7th April 1817

The Honorable East India Company, in consideration of the services performed by the Hill tribes under the Control of the Rajah of Sikkim, and of the attachment shown by him to the interest of the British Government, grants to the Sikkimputtee Rajah, his heirs and successors, all that portion of the lowland situated eastwards of the Meitchie River, and Westward of the Maha Nuddee, formerly possessed by the Rajah of Nepaul, but ceded to the Honorable East India Company by the treaty of Segoulee, to be held by the Sikkimputee Rajah as a feudatory, or as acknowledging the supremacy of the British Government over the said lands, subject to the following conditions:-

The British Laws and regulations will not be introduced into the territories in question, but the Sikkimputee Rajah is authorized to make such laws and regulations for

their internal government, as are suited to the habits and customs of the inhabitants, or that may be in force in his other dominions.

The Articles or provisions of the treaty signed at Titalya on the 10th February 1817, and ratified by His Excellency the Right Honorable the Governor-General in Council on the 15th March following, are to be in force with regard to the lands hereby assigned to the Sikkimputtee rajah, as far as they are applicable to the circumstances of those lands.

It will be especially incumbent on the Sikkimputee Rajah and his officers to surrender on application from the officers of the Honorable Company, all persons charged with criminal offences, and all public defaulters who may take refuge in the lands now assigned to him, and to allow the police officers of the British Government to pursue into those lands and apprehend all such persons.

In consideration of the distance of the Sikkimputtee Rajah's residence from the Company's provinces, such orders as the Governor-General in Council may, upon any sudden emergency, find it necessary to transmit to the local authorities in the lands now assigned, for the security or protection of those lands, are to be immediately obeyed and carried into execution in the same manner as coming from the Sikkimputtee Rajah.

In order to prevent all disputes with regard to the boundaries of the low lands granted to the Sikkimputee rajah, they will be surveyed by a British officer, and their limits accurately laid down and defined.

Appendix B

Treaty, Covenant, or agreement entered into by the Honorable Ashley Eden, Envoy and Special Commissioner on the Part of the British Government, in virtue of full powers vested in him by the Right Honorable Charles, Earl Canning, Governor-General in Council, and by His Highness Sekeong Kuzoo, Maharajah of Sikkim on his own part, - 1861

Whereas the continued depredations and misconduct of the officers and subjects of the Maharajah of Sikkim, and the neglect of the Maharajah to afford satisfaction for the misdeeds of his people have resulted in an interruption, for many years past, of the harmony which previously existed between the British Government and the Government of Sikkim, and have led ultimately to the invasion and conquest of Sikkim and by a British force; and whereas the Maharajah of Sikkim has now expressed his sincere regret for the misconduct of his servants and subjects, his determination to do all in his power to obviate future misunderstanding, and his desire to be again admitted into friendship and alliance with the British Government, it is hereby agreed as follows:-

1

All previous treaties made between the British Government and the Sikkim Government are hereby formally cancelled.

2

The whole of Sikkim territory now in the occupation of the British forces is restored to the Maharajah of Sikkim, and there shall henceforth be peace and amity between the two states.

3

The Maharajah of Sikkim undertakes, so far as is within his power to restore within one month from the date of signing this Treaty, all public property which was abandoned by the detachment of British Troops at Rinchinpoong.

4

In indemnification of the expenses incurred in 1860 by the British Government in occupying a portion of the territory of Sikkim as a means of enforcing just claims which had been evaded by the Government of Sikkim, and as a compensation to the British subjects who were pillaged and kidnapped by the Subjects of Sikkim, the Sikkim Government agrees to pay to the British authorities at Darjeeling the sum of 7,000 (seven thousand) rupees in the following instalments, that is to say:-

May 1st, 1861	1,000
November 1st, 1861	3,000
May 1st, 1862	3,000

As security for the due payment of this amount, it is further agreed that, in the event of any of these instalments not being duly paid on the date appointed, the Government of Sikkim shall make over to the British Government that portion of its territory bounded on the South by the River Rammam, on the east by the Great Runjeet river, on the north by a line from the Great Runjeet to the Singaleelah Range, including the monasteries of Tassiding, Pemonchi and Changacheling, andon the west by the Singaleelah Mountain Range, and the British Government shall retain possession of this territory and collect the revenue thereof, until the full amount, with all expenses of occupation and collection and interest at 6 per cent per annum, are realized.

5

The Government of Sikkim engages that its subjects shall never again commit depredations on British rterritory, or kidnap or otherwise molest British subjects. In the event of any such depredations or kidnapping taking place, the Government of Sikkim undertakes to deliver up all the persons engaged in such malpractice, as well as the Sirdars or other chiefs conniving at or benefitting thereby.

6

The Government of Sikkim will at all times seize and deliver up any criminals, defaulters, or other delinquents who may have taken refuge within its territory, on demand being duly made in writing by the British Government through their accredited agents. Should any delay occur in complying with such demand, the police of the British Government may follow the person whose surrender has been demanded into any part of Sikkim territory, and shall, on showing a warrant, duly signed by the British Agent, receive every assistance and protection in the prosecution of their object from the Sikkim officers.

7

Inasmuch as the late misunderstandings between the two Governments have been mainly fomented by the acts of the ex-Dewan Namguay, the Government of Sikkim engages that neither the said Namguay, nor any of his blood relations shall ever again be allowed to set foot in Sikkim or to take part in the Councils of, or hold any office under, the Maharajah or any of the Maharajah's family at Choombi.

8

The Government of Sikkim from this date abolishes all restrictions on travellers and monopolies in trade between the British territories and Sikkim. There shall henceforth be a free reciprocal intercourse, and full liberty of Commerce between subjects of both countries; it shall be lawful for British subjects to go into any part of Sikkim for the purpose of travel or trade, and the subjects of all countries shall be permitted to reside in and pass through Sikkim, and to expose their goods for sale at any place and in any manner that mey best suit their purpose, without any interference whatever, except as in hereafter provided.

9

The Government of Sikkim engages to afford protection to all travellers, merchants or traders of all countries, whether residing in, trading in, or passing through Sikkim. If any merchant, traveler or trader, being a European British subject, shall commit any offence contrary to the laws of Sikkim, and such person shall be punished by the representative of the British Government residing at Darjeeling, and the Sikkim Government will at once deliver such offender over to the British authorities for this purpose, and will, on no account, detain such offender in Sikkim on any pretext or pretence whatever. All other British subjects residing in the country to be liable to the laws of Sikkim; but such persons shall, on no account, be punished with loss of limb, or maiming, or torture, and every case of punishment of a British subject shall at once be reported to Darjeeling.

10

No duties or fees of any sort shall be demanded by the Sikkim Government of any person or persons on account of goods exported into the British territories from Sikkim, or imported into Sikkim form the British territories.

11

On all goods passing into or out of Tibet, Bhootan or Nepal, the Government of Sikkim may levy a duty of customs according to such a scale as may, from time to time, be determined and published, without reference to the destination of the goods, provided, however, that such duty shall, on no account, exceed 5 per cent on the value of goods at the time and place of the levy of duty. On the payment of the duty aforesaid a pass shall be given exempting such goods from liability to further payment on any account whatever.

12

With the view to protect the Government of Sikkim from fraud on account of under-valuation for assessment of duty, it is agreed that the customs officers shall have the option of taking over for the Government any goods at the value fixed on them by the owner

13

In the event of the British Government desiring to open out a road through Sikkim, with the view of encouraging trade, the Sikkim Government will raise no objection thereto, and will afford every protection and aid to the party engaged in the work. If a road is constructed, the Government of Sikkim undertakes to keep it in repair, and to erect and maintain suitable travellers' renthouses throughout its route.

14

If the British Government desires to make either a topographical or geological survey of Sikkim, the Sikkim Government will raise no objection on this being done, and will afford protection and assistance to the officers employed in this duty.

15

Inasmuch as many of the late misunderstandings have had their foundation in the customs which exists in Sikkim of dealing in slaves, the Government of Sikkim binds itself, from this date, to punish severely any persons trafficking in human beings, or seizing persons for the purpose of using them as slaves.

16

Henceforth the subjects of Sikkim may transport themselves without let or hindrance to any country to which they may wish to remove. In the same way the Government of Sikkim has authority to permit the subjects of other countries, not being criminals or defaulters, to take refuge in Sikkim.

17

The Government of Sikkim engages to abstain from any acts of aggression or hostility against any of the neighbouring states which are allies of the British Government. If any disputes or questions arise between the people of Sikkim and those of the neighbouring states, suchj disputes or questions shall be referred to the arbitration of the British Government, and Sikkim Government agrees to abide by the decision of the British Government.

18

The whole military force of Sikkim shall join and afford every aid and faciltity to British Troops when employed in the Hills.

19

The Government of Sikkim will not cede or lease any portion of its territory to another state without the permission of the British Government.

20

The Government of Sikkim engages that no armed force belonging to any other country shall pass through Sikkim without the sanction of the British Government.

21

Seven of the criminals, whose surrender was demanded by the British Government, having fled from Sikkim and taken refuge in Bhootan, the Government of Sikkim engages to do all in its power to obtain the delivery of those persons from the Bhootan Government, and in the event of any of these men again returning to Sikkim, the Sikkim Government binds itself to seize them, and to make them over to the British Authorities at Darjeeling without delay.

22

With the view to the establishment of an efficient Government in Sikkim, and to the better maintenance of friendly relations with the British Government, the Maharajah of Sikkim agrees to remove the seat of his government from Tibet to Sikkim and to reside there for nine months in the year. It is further agreed that a Vakeel shall be accredited by the Sikkim Government, who shall reside permanently at Darjeeling.

23

This treaty, consisting of twenty-three Articles, being settled and concluded by the honorable Ashley Eden, British Envoy, and His Highness Sekeong Kunzoo Sikkimputtee Maharajah, at Tumloong, this 28th day of March 1861, corresponding with 17th Dao Neepo 61, Mr. Eden has delivered to the Maharajah a copy of the same in English, with translation in Nagri and Bhootiah, under the seal and signature of the Said Honorable Ashley Eden and His Highness the Sikkimputtee Maharajah, and the Sikkimputtee Maharajah has in the like manner delivered to the said Hon'ble Ashley Eden another copy also in English, with translation in Nagri and Bhootiah, bearing the seal of His Highness and the said Hon'ble Ashley Eden. The Envoy engages to procure the delivery to His Highness, within six weeks from this date, of a copy of this Treaty duly ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-general of india in Council, and this Treaty shall in the meantime be in full force.

SEKEONG KUZOO SIKKIMPUTTEE
ASHLEY EDEN
ENVOY
CANNING

Ratified by His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General in India in Council at Calcutta on the sixteenth day of April 1861.

CHAPTER I

THE POLITICAL AGENCY

Sidkeong Namgyal was succeeded on his death in 1874 by his half brother Thothab Namgyal. John Claude White's first impression of the new ruler is accurate enough:

> (He) was a man of about twenty-eight years of age, of medium height, typically Mongolian in appearance and much disfigured by a hare-lip. He was a man of indolent disposition, whose inclination was to live in retirement and aloof from the worries and troubles of the Government of his little state, of a very kindly disposition, and although weak and easily led, possessed also a good deal of common sense, he was entirely under the influence of the Maharani, his Second wife[1]

This was in 1888. There was nothing in the first six years of Thothab's rule to suggest the pro-Tibetan leanings he was to display later. The Tibetan faction in Sikkim had been

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[1] J C White, *Sikkim and Bhutan. Twenty One years on the North East Frontier, 1887 – 1908*, London 1909, P. 22. Of the Maharani, White says: "This lady, the daughter of a Tibetan official in Lhasa, is a striking personality. Small and slight beautifully dressed in brocades, velvets and silks, with much jewellery of rough turquoise, coral and amber, her hair adorned with strings of seed pearls, which reached to the helm of her gown, and wearing the curious Tibetan head-dress adopted by the Maharaja of Sikkim, she was a most picturesque object, a harmony of gold and brilliant colours impossible to convey and which the photograph only gives a very inadequate representation.

She is extremely bright and intelligent and has been well educated, although she will not admit that she has knowledge of any language but Tibetan. She talks well on many subjects, which one would hardly have credited her with a knowledge of, and can write well.

His disposition is a masterful one and her bearing always dignified. She has a great opinion of her own importance, and is the possessor of a sweet musical voice, into which she can, when angry, introduce a sharp intonation. She is always interesting, whether to look at or to listen to, and had she been born within the sphere of European politics she would most certainly have made her mark, for there is no doubt she is a born intriguer and diplomat. Her energies were unfortunately, but naturally, owing to her Tibetan origin, misdirected for years... Her common sense and clear sightedness were only making occasions of the great assistance to me in my task of administering and developing Sikkim, and when I laid various schemes before her she was quick to see the material advantages to be obtained and gave her support accordingly." Pp 22 – 24.

suppressed. The only other claimant to the Sikkimese throne was another half brother of Sidkeong, Tinley Namgyal whose sister was married to the banished Dewan Donyer Namgyal. Even during Sidkeong's life time the ex-Dewan had plotted to put his brother-in-law on the throne, but the refusal of the British to allow Donyer to return to Sikkim put an end to the intrigue. And in 1874 when Edgar in Darjeeling learnt of the death of Sidkeong Namgyal he acted swiftly and told the Darbar that the British would not recognize any successor which would lead to the restoration of the ex-Dewan's influence, and so ensured Thothab's succession. H. H. Risley thus comments on this episode:

> Not a whisper was heard on the frontier of the remonstrance against the vigorous piece of king making, and Tibet acquiesced silently in an act which struck at the roots of any claim on her part to exercise a paramount influence in the affairs of the Sikkim State.[2]

Thinley Namgyal fled to the Chumbi from where he along with his brother-in-law kept up intrigues against Thothab Namgyal depicting him as a tool of the British.

Thothab Namgyal on his part cooperated with the British. He had met Sir Richard Temple very correctly the following year and during the Lieutenant Governor's Tenure in Bengal (1874 -77) assisted the British in making roads in Sikkim – imperial projects that the two malcontents in Chumbi were quick to point out were proofs of British domination of the Himalayan kingdom. Temple would have liked to have Thothab at the Imperial Assembly in Delhi in early January 1877, which would give Tibetans the right signal on Sikkim's relations with the Government of India. Additionally it would impress the Raja with a correct appreciation of the authority and power of the British in India. But there were problems in getting to the distant plains of India a hill chief who had never travelled beyond Darjeeling. In the event the Delhi Durbar was replicated in the Raja's Capital where in an impressive assembly of his Government he was showered with marks of distinction.[3]

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[2] H H Risley, *The Gazetteer of Sikkim*, Calcutta, 1894, P. VI
FPBP December 1877, Nos. 145 - 47

[3] Rao, *Sikkim. op cit*, P. 65

British prestige and influence was now high in the tiny kingdom, much to the uneasiness of the pro-Tibetan faction who were constantly in touch with Chumbi valley. Nor were the former idle. Their energies were soon directed towards exploiting an issue that was bound to strike a sympathetic cord in every Sikkimese heart. British influence in Sikkim marked a rise in the migration of Nepalese, against whom both the Bhutias and the Lepchas nursed a historical grievance. British policy actually encouraged this. In the first place this accretion to the sparse population of the country was expected to promote agriculture and development; secondly, a large Nepali population, encouraged and protected by the British would act as a counterpoise against the royal family and the aristocracy whose dependence on the British could not be taken for granted. The Nepalese, like immigrants elsewhere, had done well and their "industry and fecundity" displacing and outnumbering the local population in key situations. The fears of the Sikkimese that they would soon become minorities in their own land was thus not altogether unfounded. Thothab Namgyal took up the matter with Temple's successor Sir Ashley Eden in 1878 and the solution they found was to restrict Nepali settlement to Southern Sikkim.[4] This agreement was undone, it was generally believed, by the intrigues of the pro-Tibetan faction, in all probability instigated by the exiles in Chumbi. In early 1880 serious riots broke out between the Nepali settlers and the local inhabitants. The Superintendent of Darjeeling, A W Paul, whom Eden despatched to Sikkim succeeded in April in bringing about an understanding between the warring groups. With the issue amicably settled, the pro-Tibetan faction, whose hostility towards the British was becoming less disguised turned to intriguing with the Tibetans. What complicated the situation was a change in the attitude of Thothab Namgyal towards the British.

That year the Rani, the mother of Tchoda Namgyal and Thothab's successor Sidkeong Namgyal, died. Thothab's mother, who was Tibetan, and it is said the ex-Dewan too, induced him to marry a Tibetan lady from Lhasa, the same Rani on whom

[4] Aitchison, *Treaties*, *op cit*, Vol XII, P. 54, also Rao, in *ibid*

John Claude White devotes several pages in his *Bhutan and Sikkim.*[5] In 1883 the Raja took his family to Lhasa, in what was Thothab Namgyal and the Lhasa wife's home coming. He was received in audience by the Dalai Lama, given a great reception and received attractive presents at the Potala. He came back much impressed with his treatment and what he saw there. From now on Thothab's Tibetan proclivities became pronounced with a corresponding dislike for the grasping English. There is little in the official documents on how he reacted to the Macaulay mission; the British actually attempted to use him to communicate to the Phari Dzongpon its dispatch. It is only in the aftermath of that mission that he emerges as a disturbing factor in British relations with Tibet.

Thothab Namgyal and the Lingtu Affair

Towards the middle of 1886 Darjeeling's Superintendent received reports about the concentration of a large Tibetan force just across the Sikkim border in the Chumbi valley. Macaulay in Darjeeling took this to be a reception committee assembled there to welcome the mission.[6] On 27 July the Tibetans advanced through the Jelepla, thirteen miles into Sikkim and fortified a small hill top called Lingtu, "actually in sight of Darjeeling" as White later put it.

Macaulay and his mission was still in Darjeeling with all the rumours of the past month that it would be stopped by the Tibetans on the frontier, Lord Dufferin persuaded himself that the massing of troops by the Tibetans was no more than a reaction to the proposed mission. Macaulay offer to proceed to the spot to discuss the problem with the Amban and Tibetan representatives was promptly negatived by the Viceroy, that it might lead to an "embarrassing collision and rebuff".[7] The truth is, Dufferin upset with Macaulay for selling the mission idea to Randolph Churchill over his head wanted none of him; "whatever is done in reference to the threatened aggression of the Tibetans should

[5] White, *op cit*, n.1, *supra*, P -
[6] Lamb, *op cit*, P. 175.
[7] FSEP September 1886: Nos. 413 – 475, See Keepwith No. 1.

not be done through Mr. Macaulay", the Viceroy had remarked. Macaulay was told to wind up his mission "completely and expeditiously".[8]

The Tibetans did not withdraw even after they learned that the mission had been broken up, but rather proceeded to consolidate their position. Embarassments quickly followed. Thothab Namgyal who was at this moment in the Chumbi valley, supported the Tibetan action declaring that Lingtu belonged to Tibet, and Sikkim was allowed to use it as a matter of grace. Tibet, he further said, was only asserting her rights and resumed the territory because the Sikkim people had exposed their country to the English like meat before a dog."[9] It now transpired that Thothab Namgyal had just concluded a secret treaty with Tibet at a place called Galling in the Chumbi. Translated by Risley, the document which took the form of a petition to the Amban at Lhasa, thus reads:

> From the time of Chogyal Penchoo Namguay (Phuntshog Namgyal, the first consecrated ruler of Sikkim)all our Rajas and other subjects have obeyed the orders of China... You have ordered us by strategy or force to stop the passage... between Sikkim and British territory, but we are small and the (British) Sarkar is great, and we may not succeed , and may fall into the mouth of the Tiger- Lion. In such a crisis, if you, as our old friend, can make some arrangement, even then in good and evil we will not leave the shelter of the feet of China and Tibet... We all, King and subjects, priests and laymen, honestly promise to prevent persons from crossing the boundary.[10]

Namgyal was reminded by Darjeeling's Superintendent of his violation of the provisions of the Treaty of 1861.[11] He was told to return to his Capital, but declined. What strengthened the Raja's resolve was an outcome of a crisis in neighbouring Bhutan. Only about four years back the Amban had decisively intervened in a power struggle in that country. By this action, the Amban submitted to his Emperor, "the preying designs of grasping (British) people were put a stop to, so that it became possible to restore

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[8] *Ibid*, Telegram, Government of India to Macaulay, 2 August.
[9] FSEP September 1886: No. 473, See Oldham's note on "Tibetan aggression in Sikkim", 31 July 1886.
[10] Risley, *op cit*, P. viii
[11] Oldham's note, Letter to Chogyal. 28 July.

tranquility and content upon the borderlands and to strengthen our frontier line."[12] The significance of this was lost neither on the Raja nor on the Tibetans.

Meanwhile the Government of India continued to wait upon events. Its Foreign Secretary, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, however, noted on 2 August, that:

> The unpleasant fact (is) that the Tibetans are holding a piece of Sikkim. They might go back when they know that our Mission has broken up, but they may not, and if not, the political effect would be decidedly bad. Tibet and China do undoubtedly exercise a certain influence in Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal, but we do not want that influence increased and solidified. Sikkim stands in a very peculiar position. It is by treaty practically an Indian feudatory state... Nevertheless, the Maharaja is much in the hands of the Tibetans. It will, I fear, be difficult to get them out of the country if they take a fancy of staying there and assert their claims to suzerainity. Any admission on these points with China might have very embarrassing results.[13]

The Bengal Government, for Sikkim was their direct responsibility, was inclined towards military action[14] but failed to persuade the Government of India. The latter still preferred to wait and see whether "a delay of a few weeks or months may not end in their quiet retirement",[15] and that it was "of far greater importance to prove that the terms of the Burma-Chinese Convention have been, and will scrupulously respected, than to get rid of troublesome handful of men at Lingtu." All that Bengal was allowed to do was to warn Thothab Namgyal, now referred to as Maharaja, of the "probable consequences of his practical abandonment of Sikkim"[16]

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[12] Quoted in Lamb, *op cit*, P. 178. In 1884 both the Tongsa and the Paro Pemlops had revolted against the Deb raja who in turn appealed to the Amban. The latter promptly summoned the two to a conference at Paro and a Sino-Tibetan force was moved to the Bhutan border to back its summons. The Tongsa gave in but the Paro Pemlop continued his defiance; when surrounded by the Amban's troops he committed suicide.

[13] FSEP September 1886: Nos 413 – 75; Note by Durand, 2 August, See Keepwith No. 1.

[14] FSEP October 1886: Nos. 543 – 553; Bengal to the Government of India, 13 September

[15] *Ibid*, Government of India to Bengal, 9 October

[16] FSEP February 1887: Nos 208 -300; Government of India to Bengal, 20 January 1887. The Government of India in fact preferred the British Legation in Peking to do the needful to ensure the Tibetans withdrew from Lingtu.

In March 1887 the new Lieutenant Governor Sir Steuart Colvin Bayley received the Government of India's approval to invite the Maharaja, who was still in the Chumbi valley, to a conference in Darjeeling.[17] Sir Rivers Thompson during whose last months of office the proposal was made to the Government of India had clearly stated what he hoped to gain by the Conference:

> The Maharaja was only a boy when he visited Darjeeling in 1873. The place has made a large advance in prosperity since that time, the railway has been opened and there is much that would appeal to the faculties of this half-educated personage, who has hitherto constantly been subjected to baneful and bigoted influences. It would moreover be an appropriate sequence to his prolonged visit to Choombi and his association there with the opponents of the policy of the British Government; and it would undoubtedly give confidence to the people of Sikkim that the Government were determined neither on one hand to set aside the present reigning family nor on the other to abandon the State to the Tibetan faction and their instigators across the frontier.

Thompson's main objective was to prevail upon the Maharaja to enter into a new treaty with the British, rectifying some of the shortcomings of the treaty of 1861, in particular, the status of Sikkim and the provision for allowing the Maharaja to reside part of the year in Tibet. Thothab declined the invitation. In a second letter from the Lieutenant Governor in October the Maharaja was warned that in the event of his failure to present himself at Darjeeling appropriate measures would be taken to end the "complicated condition of affairs" in his kingdom. The Maharaja was also told that the Khangsa Dewan and his brother the Phodrang Lama would be carrying on the administration of Sikkim in his absence. To this Thothab Namgyal replied that he was under the orders of the Chinese and Tibetan authorities, to whom he was bound by the treaty of 1886 not to cross into British territory. The Maharaja at the same time protested against placing Sikkim in the hands of the two officials.[18]

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[17] FSEP June 1887: Nos. 272 – 292; Bengal to Government of India 18 March, and Government of India to Bengal, 13 May

[18] FSEP July 1887: No. 261; FSEP January 1888: Nos. 1 – 2, Maharaja of Sikkim to Bengal, Undated, received 5 September

The Maharaja's continuous disregard of British orders to return to the capital or attend a conference at Darjeeling was viewed with much concern by Sir Steuart Bayley. Such open defiance and the occupation by a Tibetan force of Sikkim territory, Bayley told the Government of India , would force sooner or later, the pro-British people of the kingdom particularly the Lepchas, to submit to the Tibetans. That apart, British prestige and influence had sunk so low as a result of non action enjoined by the Government of India that it might soon become necessary to "reconquer" Sikkim from the pro-Tibetan faction. And, the Government of India was reminded:

> The occupation of Lingtu is not an isolated measure of aggression taken by the local authorities on their own motion, but a part of the general policy adopted by Tibet of controlling the affairs of Sikkim in a spirit hostile to the British.[19]

The Government of India's handling of Sikkim and Tibetan aggression came in for considerable criticism in England as well as in India. In Parliament members never tired of asking questions about the Macaulay mission. The Manchester and Leeds Chambers of Commerce continued to submit memorials pointing out the importance of the Tibet trade and warned that if there was any delay in opening Tibet, the British might find itself forestalled by another country.[20] The Darjeeling merchants were said to be grumbling while the tea planters expressed alarm at Tibetan aggression so close to their plantations.[21] All this soon made it clear to Dufferin that action against the Tibetans could not be any further delayed. He finally decided upon a military expedition.

A W Paul, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, such as the district officer was now styled, was sent to Gangtok, now the Capital of Sikkim, in November 1887 as a prelude to setting the British war machine in motion. He was directed to report on the state of affairs beyond the frontier and the general feeling of the population. He was also to attempt to induce the Maharaja to return to his capital. The real objective of Paul's

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[19] *Ibid,* Bayley to the Government of India, 28 September.
[20] Lamb, *op cit,* P. 182
[21] Risley, *op cit,* pp. xv - xvi

deputation, it has been rightly remarked, was to boost the sagging morale of the pro-British faction which was under constant threat from the section hostile to the British.[22] Indeed, Paul found the Sikkim government vertically split into two rival factions. The Yangthang Kazi and the monks forming and supporting the Tibetan faction, while all the officers, though attached to the royal family, were favourable towards the British.[23] Thus the Viceroy's decision for a military intervention did not come a moment too soon.

Graham's Expedition

In March 1888 General Graham moved up to Sikkim with a carfully picked 2000 strong column. Along with him went Paul as Political Officer to the expedition, and John Claude White, an Executive Engineer of the Bengal Service and soon to play a crucial role in Sikkim, as Assistant Political Officer.

On the 21st Graham took Lingtu after a brief encounter with the wretchedly armed and poorly led Tibetan.[24] Thereafter he occupied Gnatong in force. The Tibetans overcoming their initial shock of defeat at the hands of a well-armed modern military force made a sudden attack on the British position two months later on 21 May. Such was the intensity of the attack that the Tibetans almost broke through Graham's defenses and nearly captured the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Steuart Bayley, who was touring Gnatong to see for himself the progress of the British force. The Tibetans were finally repulsed with considerable casualties. Thereafter there was a lull in the fighting for about three months. In September the Tibetans regrouped and concentrated a large force near Gnatong, only to be pushed back across the border. Graham followed this up by entering the Chumbi valley, and for a day on 26 September occupied Chumbi village. Meanwhile a small column had moved on to Gangtok. But it was a little late to prevent Thothab

[22] Rao, *Sikkim*, *op cit*, P. 92.
[23] FSEP February 1888: No. 188; Bengal to government of India, 11 February.
[24] For details of the operations, *Frontier and Overseas Expedition from India*, Chief of Staff Division, Army Headquarters, India, Simla 1907; Vol. IV, "North and North Eastern Tribes".

Namgyal and the Mahrani from escaping to Chumbi, only to find that their house there was in occupation by British troops.[25] They were promptly escorted back to Gangtok.

The occupation of the Maharaja's capital, for political rather than military reasons, was not without its desired effect. A senior officer on Graham's Staff thus commented:

> As a political move the marching of troops to the capital of Sikkim has had a beneficial effect; the cordiality with which we have everywhere been greeted, and the hospitality received show that the friendly relations have been established.[26]

Evidently the pro-Tibetan faction had been suitably impressed by the success of British arms. They were now more submissive, and a pro-Tibetan Kazi even voluntarily submitted his dispute with the Ralong monastery to Paul's mediation and decision. Yet the faction as a whole was still hesitant, as Paul explained, "they still fear to throw in their lot with us, as they are still doubtful whether they will get anything from us, and dread in default of our protection, the dread of the Tibetans".[27] But Paul considered the attitude of the Maharaja to be as yet "unsatisfactory".[28] The Deputy Commissioner was unhappy that he gave no information of the Tibetan attack upon Gnatong, which he most certainly knew as his half-brother Tinley Namgyal was fully aware of it. He had allowed, at this critical moment, the Maharani to visit her father in the Chumbi and on 27 April he also sent his three children there to live with her grandmother. A visible presence of the British force in the capital of Sikkim was therefore imperative. At the end of it the Government could report to the Secretary of State that "all along the northern border, not only in Sikkim and Tibet, but also in Bhutan and Nepal, the events of the last few years will have an excellent effect."[29]

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[25] White, *Sikkim and Bhutan, op cit*, P. 22
[26] Quoted in *Frontier and overseas Expedition, op cit*, P. 61
[27] FSEP, August 1888: No. 156; Paul to Bengal, 9 July
[28] *Ibid*
[29] FSEP October 1888: No. 126; Government of India to Secretary of State, 8 October

The defeat of the Tibetans was looked upon by the Chinese with considerable alarm. Their fear was that if a settlement was not immediately arrived at the British might resort to measures that might lead to the loss of position and influence in Tibet itself. Late in December 1888, the Amban accordingly made his way from Lhasa to Gnatong to negotiate a settlement with the British. His appearance gave to what was essentially a local problem of Tibetan aggression a much wider dimension. British objectives, as the events from 1880 onwards indicate, was to establish a greater control over the administration of Sikkim but they were to achieve through these negotiations a general settlement of the frontier problem.

The Political Agency: John Claude White

In Gangtok, Thothab Namgyal, even as Graham was in full fury against the Tibetans, Graham persisted, inspite of repeated prohibition, in sending letters and supplies to Chumbi complicating British relations with the Amban and the Tibetans. Both he and his Maharani were promptly interned at Kalimpong.[30] The management of Sikkim remained in the hands of the two brothers, the Khangsa Dewan and the Phodrang Lama who along with some others constituted a Council. Even while he was in his capital the Maharaja look no real interest or part in the administration of his kingdom. One of Paul's first acts, during 1888 – 89, was to get the Council, though White who was in Gangtok, to compile revenue rolls and list of arrears, and collect current and arrear rents. There were numerous applications from the *Paharias* or Nepalese to settle in Sikkim, and the Kazis in whose lands the applicant wished to settle was made responsible for the settlement, the Council remaining the final authority in the matter.[31]

In so far as the future administration was concerned Paul was convinced that it would be useless to expect the Maharaja if left to himself "to throw in his lot with us and throw off the Tibetan connection". Thothab had refused to see the two brothers, and it

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[30] White, *op cit*, P. 26. White thus records the royal couple's reaction to the order of internment: "The Maharaja remained silent, but the Maharani abused me roundly, called me every name she could think of, and losing her temper entirely, got up, stamped in the floor and finally turned her back on me."

[31] FSEP April 1889: Nos. 127 – 139; Report by Paul.

was highly likely that he would oppose all their efforts at good government if not actually oppose them. There was no one of sufficient standing in Sikkim who could be trusted with the administration without some on the spot to supervise them. Paul therefore suggested that for the next four or five years a European officer of some standing should be left at Gangtok as Assistant Political Officer subordinate to the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling who should be Political Officer for Sikkim. "In this way alone", he said, "do I think we should be able to restore quiet on these frontiers".[32] The man he recommended for the post was John Claude White.

> (who) would make an excellent officer for the work. He has already obtained full insight into the intrigues carried on in Sikkim, and thoroughly understands the relations in which the various Sikkimese and Tibetan officers stand to one another, and has inspected a considerable part of Sikkim, while his experience as a road-maker in the hills cannot fail to produce most satisfactory results. He is already known to and trusted by many of the most influential Kazis and has made very fair progress in colloquial Tibetan.[33]

The Bengal Government accepted Paul's recommendation and accordingly moved the Government of India. The Foreign Department discussed them in detail. The Secretary Sir Henry Mortimer Durand who had known White also felt that he "was the best man to choose."[34] He knew the country well, was a man of conciliatory nature, patient, and got along well with the Maharaja and officials. His energies in road making could be of special value. Since he knew that White did not wish for any definite powers as the Maharaja and the Council would follow his advice. Durand felt he should be appointed Political Agent and the Maharaja told that no important measures ought to be taken by him without first consulting White. Durand also understood the importance of standing by the two brothers Khangsa Dewan and the Phodrang Lama, two "old men" who were "leaders of the anti Tibetan party and (who) are thoroughly in our interest". He

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[32] *Ibid.*
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.* Note by Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, 16 February

too would encourage Nepali migration into Sikkim.[35] "In any case the Agency is necessary", Durand wrote, and "the want of control of late years has done much harm, and if the Raja is left to himself now he will at once return to his former courses."

Bengal's recommendation were approved by the Government of India Whites salary was fixed at Rs. 1,000 a month with other allowances, the cost of the Political Agency was to be met from the subsidy to the Maharaja, of Rs. 18,000, raised from Rs. 12,000, but not paid on account of Thothab's misdemeanours. An amount of Rs. 10,000 was sanctioned for a house and furniture for the Political Officer. In seeking the sanction of the Secretary of State to the establishment of the Sikkim Political Agency, the Government of India said, "we are convinced that the proposal is a good one."[36] Two paragraphs in their letter stand out and deserve to be quoted *in extenso*. The first summarises to correspondence with Bengal as it makes out a case for the Political Agency:

> The administration of Sikkim is completely disorganised. The Raja is a man of weak character and completely under the influence of his Tibetan wife, and, unless an English officer remains in Sikkim for a time to guide and control him, the old state of affairs will inevitably recur. A it is, the Raja's children still remain in Chumbi. The internal administration will also suffer. The only man of any mark in the state are the two brothers known as the Phodrang lama and Khangsa Dewan. These men have some idea of administration, and much goodwill; but they belong to the patriotic and anti-Tibetan party, and are consequently in disfavor with the Raja. If left to themselves they would be at once excluded from all share of administration; and there is no one to take their place.[37]

That the Government of India, like Bengal and the local officers was keen to promote Nepali migration is borne out in the other paragraph:

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[35] *Ibid.* "In a few years" Wrote Durand, "the population and revenues of the State ought to be largely increased and cultivation extended. In British Sikkim the advance made in the last few years is surprising. Numbers of Nepalese are ready to settle in the country and they make very good settlers. They are also brave and confident race, and would effectively prevent any Tibetan aggression in the future specially if we give them some arms".

[36] *Ibid.* Government of India, Department of Finance and Commerce, to Secretary of State, 2 April

[37] *Ibid.*

> There is in Sikkim much cultivable land, and there are many settlers willing to take up if they could be assured of any fixity of tenure. Similar land in British Sikkim (Darjeeling district) is well cultivated, and yields a considerable revenue. If land is now given by the state on favourable terms it will be taken up, chiefly by Nepalese and large pieces of country now covered with forest will be converted, as across the British frontier, into revenue paying fields.[38]

Shortly afterwards John White assumed charge as Assistant Political Officer* at Gangtok. In June 1889 the Bengal Government issued directives to him on the conduct of the administration of Sikkim.[39] All affairs were to be conducted by a Council of leading monks and layman and presided over by the Maharaja when present. When he was not present all decisions of the Council were to be submitted to him. If the Maharaja differed on any point from the Council, the matter should be referred to the Political Officer, and if he agreed with the Maharaja, the Council would be bound to yield. In all cases the decision of the Council should be carried out in the joint names of the Maharaja and that body until such a time as may be expedient to allow the Maharaja to resume individual authority. Until then the revenue should be collected by the Council, and it would be the duty of White to ascertain the minimum amount absolutely required for good administrative purposes; of what remained of the balance should be made over to the Maharaja. The Council was to consist of the existing members with such additions as might be necessary in the future. It should ordinarily meet at Gangtok and should conduct all the civil, criminal and revenue administration subject to the conditions indicated about its relations with the Maharaja.

White's attention was drawn to what the Lieutenant Governor considered the most important questions of internal administration. The directions he issued needs elaboration as they reflect the conditions obtaining in Sikkim at the time. The following were listed as requiring immediate action:

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[38] *Ibid.*

* Though White's appointment was of Assistant Political Officer he is always referred to even in official correspondence as Political Officer, Sikkim.

[39] FSEP July 1889: Nos. 156 – 161; Edgar to Paul, 12 June

(i) The definition and record of the holdings actually possessed by all classes of Sikkimese, and arrangements required for the collection of the revenue from various sources.

(ii) Settlement of unoccupied wastelands now under valuable forests and closely connected with this, measures to be taken to protect Lepcha and Bhutia nobility of the country from the encroachments of Nepalese settlements.

(iii) Measures to be taken for the preservation and utilization of valuable forests and clumps of good trees situated among the cultivated lands or in the midst of forests of less value.

(iv) Arrangements for the settlement of disputes, the punishment of crime and the protection of life and property generally, and

(v) The construction of roads and other works.[40]

With regard to the first three set of questions which were closely interdependent, the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Steuart Bayley, considered that it would only be necessary to lay down a few general principles which should be adhered to. "Few things could be of greater benefit to the people of Sikkim generally than a definition of their holdings, with a limitation of the demands, whether in money, kind or labour, which the officers of the State are entitled to make on them,"[41] the Lieutenant Governor pointed out. Under existing conditions these demands could hardly be said to be fixed, and the only limit on the executions made on the people living within easy reach of the Maharaja's residence was their inability to pay. Those who lived at a greater distance were better off, but all were liable to arbitrary demands from time to time; and very frequently not for the benefit of the Maharaja or even of his immediate family and dependants. It was necessary, the Lieutenant Governor said, to undertake a rough survey and settlement similar to that made in Kalimpong by which everyone knew what he had to pay in money or contribute in produce or in labour to the State. The demand fixed should be

[40] *Ibid*
[41] *Ibid*

realized by the old and recognized territorial officials who should be paid a percentage for their share and be entitled to no more demands. None but these officials should be entitled to demand anything.[42]

The Lieutenant Governor directed that in the progress of the settlement all claims in rent-free lands on account of service or being the property of monasteries should be carefully enquired into and fully allowed if proved. In other aspects the settlement should be very summary, low rates should be fixed, and the officers should follow as closely as possible the ideas and customs of the people. Utmost care was enjoined to avoid the introduction of new or foreign nations. In settling fresh lands, especially with the Nepalese, great pains should be taken to ascertain that there were no ancient claims to them of any sort, that the settlement of the strangers should not be objected to on reasonable grounds by any neighbouring holders of old date, and that the settlement did not in any way interfere with the vested rights of any monastery.[43]

The Lieutenant Governor next dwelt on the preservation of forests, a subject inconclusively discussed with the Maharaja some thirteen or fourteen years ago. Since that time the damage done to the forests and the loss to the Sikkim State had been great, and, therefore, no time ought to be lost in checking the evil. It would be necessary to adopt a very loose and rough system confining regular operations to the valuable forests near the Rungeet and Tista rivers, and good trees scattered through the outer parts of the state, carefully enquiring into and fully protecting all existing rights, and carrying the people of the country by liberal and considerate dealings instead of "arraying them against us by petty annoyances and unnecessary restrictions". The Lieutenant Governor also recognized the necessity of protecting the forests and for obtaining for the Maharaja an adequate price for the valuable timber still contained in them. At the same it would be necessary to avoid cutting off the supply both of charcoal and timber on which the tea-planters and Darjeeling contractors were so greatly depended upon. He further suggested

[42] *Ibid*
[43] *Ibid*

this forest policy could be implemented with the help of Bengal's Forest Department, and that the forest reserves in British territory, that is Darjeeling district, could be opened up in proportion as those in Sikkim are closed.[44]

These matters had already been considered by Paul and White and they had infact discussed them with the Lieutenant Governor in April last. The several points in the note prepared by White on the subject were now turned into a set of rules for guidance with matters connected with in Sikkim.[45] Sir Steuart Bayley further suggested that the existing system of collecting rents through the territorial headmen should be tried, subject of course to a real endeavour to avoid mixed villages as far as was possible; that is, *Paharia* or Nepalese should be settled in exclusively *Paharia* villages under *Paharia mandals* while Lepchas and Bhotias should be kept as far as possible in Lepcha and Bhotia villages under Lepcha and Bhotia *mandals*.[46]

The Lieutenant Governor approved of the attempt, as described in White's note, to regulate and limit the extraction of unpaid labour to the maximum amount of seven days in each year. The idea that everyone holding land was bound to work without payment for the State underlay all the political conceptions of the people of Sikkim, and by so regulating the amount which each had to give, instead of leaving the amount uncontrolled, an "immense boon" would be conferred upon the people. "It would be useless to try to prohibit the customs altogether", said Sir Steuart:

> and if no attempt is made to regulate it, all the efforts made to improve the condition of the people in other respects will be neutralized by excessive and capricious demands for labour being made on them. If we fix the limit of the demand now, it may be possible in the course of time to induce the Raja to allow those liable to commute it for equivalent money payments.[47]

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[44] *Ibid*
[45] *Ibid.* See Appendix C for White's detailed Note.
[46] *Ibid*
[47] *Ibid.*

There had been some consensus among persons in Sikkim who had been consulted that all serious offences and heavy cases of a civil character should be enquired into at Gangtok, sometimes by the Council and sometimes by the Maharaja, if the latter should be induced to take the trouble of trying them. Petty disputes and offences could be dealt with by local officers or by *panchayats*. This seemed to Sir Steuart Bayley the right principle to adopt and he instructed that the Political Officer should confine his efforts to get the system that prevailed in old times reintroduced instead of attempting to import into Sikkim any of the intricate and difficult legal administration in British territories.[48]

Revenue Reforms

By early May 1889 White had established himself as Political Officer at Gangtok. The Maharaja and the Maharani had been interned at Kalimpong and, as he put "the task of reorganizing began in earnest." What he found in Sikkim is best described by himself:

> Chaos reigned everywhere, there was no revenue system, the Maharaja taking what he required as he wanted it from the people, those nearest the capital having to contribute the larger share, while those more remote had toll taken from them by the local officials in the name of the Raja, though little found its way to him; no courts of justice, no police, no public works, no education for the younger generation.[49]

In his autobiographical *Sikhim and Bhutan*, from which the above quotation is taken, John White describes the measures he took to put the new administrative policies into operation. The first step was to appoint a Council, a measure which had been delayed by the behavior of the Maharaja. The men he appointed were the two brothers, the Kangsa Dewan and the Phodrang Lama, Sikkim's chief priest, Poorbu Dewan, more commonly known called the Shoe dewan, Lari Pema, a senior Lama from the important monastery of Pemiongtchi, and four leading kazis. This done the state finances had to be attended to: "The coffers were empty and the first thing to be done was to devise some means by which we could raise a revenue".[50]

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[48] *Ibid.*
[49] John Claude White, *Sikhim and Bhutan. Op cit.* p. 26.
[50] *Ibid.*

It began, as directed by the Lieutenant Governor, by roughly surveying the different areas and assessing them at so much per acre, taking into account the nature of the soil and so on. It turned out to be an arduous task in a mountainous country covered with dense undergrowth which made the survey work extremely difficult and necessitated cutting lines in every direction. The survey did not begin largely for the want of surveyors, before November 1889. It was not a connected survey but each Kazis land was divided and plotted into ten mandals division. As regards the actual settlement White gave the first preference to the original inhabitants the remainder being divided among the other applicants. To avoid disputes between Lepchas, Bhutias and Nepalese the whole of the wastelands between the Ruhiu, the Tuksamchu and the Rungpo rivers were reclaimed to the new settlers. The maximum rate charged to the new settlers for the first five years was eight annas per acre. After the completion of the survey, the whole being completed not before another five years, the settlers were given *pattas* stating the approximate acreage and the rent they were to pay. Regarding the monastery lands some caution was necessary:

> The monasteries and the Lamas were a great power in the land, but in their case also certain settlements and arrangements had to be made with the assistance of the Phodong Lama, Chief Priest in Sikkim, and Lari Pema of the Pemiongtchi monastery. Many of the head Lamas were men to be liked, and although they were not given entirely their own way, their just rights were carefully observed.[51]

The monastery lands were given rent free, yet they still demanded seven days free labour as given to the State by all *ryots* in Sikkim.

The entire revenue settlement was made by the Council under the guidance of the Political Officer as the Lieutenant Governor had directed . The introduction of excise, the establishment of direct control of the forests was taken up by the Council on White's direction. So was the decision to collect revenue accruing from timber and charcoal.[52]

By the close of the year 1890 there was substantial progress in revenue collection. The whole valley of the Rungpo had been surveyed and *pattas* issued for most of the plots, the rent being calculated, on an average of four annas per acre. The left bank of the

[51] White, *Sikhim and Bhutan*
[52] Jha, *Sikkim, op cit*, pp 75 -76

Rongli and the greater part of Sadom and Namthang had also been surveyed. The settlement of monastery lands, with the Pemiongtchi monastery was completed on the lines of White's Note. Nearly the whole of the revenue of Sikkim, except the tax on graziers, was paid in cash. Income from Excise duty and forests and the land revenue more than doubled in 1890 from that collected in 1889.[53] In "about ten years" White later wrote, "the revenue was revised from Rs. 8000, or a little over £ 500 per annum, to Rs. 2,200,000, or about £ 150,000."[54]

The revenue work itself involved constant travel, and during this period "I visited every corner of Sikkim, even the most remote."[55] And while he was thus engaged in the revenue settlement and tracing out roads, important development were taking place in the negotiations after the expulsion of the Tibetans from Lingtu.

The Sikkim – Tibet Convention, 1890

With the arrival of the Amban at Gnatong negotiation began for the settlement of the outstanding issues relating to Tibet and Sikkim. The Government of India had declared that it was entering into discussions with the Amban because "the Chinese Government had shown a very conciliatory spirit towards England throughout the course of the Tibetan difficulty." India was represented by A. W. Paul but after the Foreign Secretary, Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, arrived, the negotiations were conducted by him.[56]

Durand came with a set of instructions from the Viceroy Lord Dufferin on the object of the negotiations. He was to ensure the "formal recognition of their (the Britain's) exclusive supremacy in Sikkim and the restoration of friendly relations with Tibet." He was not to enter into any discussion with the Amban regarding Sikkim as it

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[53] *Ibid.*

[54] White, *op cit*, P. 27

[55] *Ibid.* White thus continues, "(I) became acquainted with every headman and I might also say with every villager. I never refused an interview to anyone, and the people soon realized that they could freely bring before me any grievance they wished to ventilate or case that required settlement. I took up the cases.

[56] Other members of the group, apart from Paul, included the expert on Central Asia, Ney Elias, and the French missionary, Father Desgodins, who acted as interpreter and adviser on Tibetan affairs.

was a "feudatory of the British Empire and its position as such was defined by treaty"; he was also to make it clear to that officer that "the Government of India cannot recognize the existence of any foreign rights or influence within the state and will not permit any interference with its affairs on the part of any foreign power." The Sikkim-Tibet border was already established and Durand was told that there should be no necessity to attempt to define it. A formal trade agreement was not to be insisted on but Durand should do his best "to secure an opening in this quarter for our commercial enterprise."[57] The Chinese Amban, Shen Tai, apparently had his own set of instructions. Though the talks arose out of Tibetan aggression upon Sikkim, he refused to allow Tibetan participation declaring that Tibet was a part of the Chinese Empire and so its rights and interests were the rights and interests of the Chinese. He ensured that there would be no direct dealings between the Tibetans and the British. While, therefore, he undertook to obtain the formal assent of Lhasa to any agreement that may be arrived at with the British, he made it clear that the Tibetan Councillors then in Chumbi were not competent to sign any such agreement. The Chinese position was clear; they would insist upon their control in Tibet and would never allow a position to develop in which that control would be put to a test.[58]

The Chinese were willing to accept the *de facto* position of the British in Sikkim but insisted on the show of the latter's dependency upon Tibet and China. Thus they wanted that the Maharaja must continue to pay his traditional homage to the Amban and be permitted to wear the rank and insignia of dependence, as the Amban saw it, of Sikkim upon Tibet and China.[59]

This was not what Durand understood to be in line with the objectives he was directed to seek by Viceroy Dufferin. The Foreign Secretary felt that this insistence on

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[57] FSEP May 1889: Nos. 325 – 382; Memorandum of Institutions issued to Durand by Lord Dufferin, 16 November 1888

[58] *Ibid.* Memorandum on Negotiations with the Amban, By Durand, 1 January 1889.

[59] For details see Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Cnetral Asia, op cit*, pp. 188ff. This homage, which took the form of "letters and presents" were: the Maharaja must wear the hat and button of Chinese official rank given by the Emperor; he was to send complimentary letters and presents to the Amban on his arrival at his post and at the New year; he was to send similar letters and presents to the Dalai and Panchen lamas; and he was to pay his respects to a number of lay and monastic functionaries.

homage was not a mere issue of ceremony but one that was intended to undermine British position not only in Sikkim but also in the Himalayan region generally. He thus noted:

> If we give away in respect to Sikkim, we must be prepared to do so, at some future time , not only with regard to Bhutan and Nepal, but with regard to Kashmir and her feudatories, such as Hunza and Nagar, and with regard to any of the smaller Himalayan states which may have committed themselves. We might even have China claiming suzerain rights over Darjeeling and the Bhutan Doars which we acquired from her so-called feudatories.[60]

Durand, therefore insisted that India refuse to recognize "any transaction on the part of the Raja of Sikkim which can be regarded in the light of a homage to a foreign power." Thus while he was prepared to allow the Maharaja to send annual complimentary letters to the Amban or to the Dalai Lama, he made it clear that these should "not be couched in the language of an inferior addressing a superior or be regarded in the light of an homage."[61]

These tortuous negotiations continued with both the British and Chinese representatives holding on to their respective positions.[62] Inevitably, the talks broke down, and Durand, angered by Chinese intransigence even recommended to the Government of India the military occupation of Phari. If this were done,

> We should put an end once and for all to our troubles with Tibet, and to our exclusion from that country, which would then be opened to our trade. We would entirely break the influence of the Tibetans, not only in Sikkim, but also in Bhutan; and we should greatly raise our reputation in the Himalayan States.

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[60] *Ibid.*

[61] *Ibid.*

[62] *Ibid.* At one stage the Amban had assumed an aggressive position stating that if the talks failed there would be war between Britain and China. To this Durand replied that he had no doubt as to its outcome, adding that it would be decided not in Sikkim but in China. The Amban then "shut up like a telescope" imploring Durand not to take his words seriously as it was meant to be a "joke". Percy Sykes, *Sir Mortimer Durand*, London 1926, cited in Rao, *India and Sikkim*, *op cit*, P. 99.

When talks resumed in April 1889, James Hart, the brother of Sir Robert Hart, the Inspector General of the Chinese Maritime Customs, who now represented the Chinese produced a draft agreement as the basis for the talks. It read:

> Sikkim and Tibet boundary to remain as before, the British to act on Sikkim side in accordance with the Treaty with Raja, and Raja to send presents and letters as usual. China to engage that Tibetan troops shall neither cross nor disturb Sikkim frontier, and England to engage that British troops shall similarly respect Tibetan frontier.[63]

Further clarifications came when Hart assured Paul that the Government of India could have "a perfectly free hand in Sikkim" and that China would guarantee that Tibetan influence would not be used directly or indirectly "so as to disturb Indian Government's relations with that state".[64] Dufferin's successor as Viceroy, Lord Landsdowne, refused to budge from the letters and present questions. He told the Secretary of State that such an agreement:

> would have remained on record as formal evidence of the success of the Chinese whose reputation, already inconveniently great among our ignorant feudatories, we could not have afforded to increase in this way at our expense. From one end of the Himalaya to the other we should have weakened our influence. In India it is essential to the stability of our rule that we should permit no attempt at interference by any foreign powers with any portion of the Empire[65]

The question was settled when the Chinese Government assured the British Legation at Peking that "the external relations of the protected state will be solely conducted by India and consequently the practice of presents and letters to the Tibetan Government would virtually cease."[66]

Lansdowne accepted this assurance, and in Calcutta on 17 March 1890 he and Amban Shen Tai signed the Sikkim – Tibet Convention. By it the Government of

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[63] FSEP May 1889: Nos. 617 – 655; Hart to Paul, 29 April
[64] FSEP June 1889: Nos. 101 – 111; Hart to Paul, 19 June, also FSEP September 1889: No 13
[65] FSEP August 1889: No 54, Lansdowne to Secretary of State, Lord Cross, 23 August.
[66] FSEP November 1889: No 80; Walsham to Lansdowne, 15 November

India's control over the internal and external affairs of Sikkim was fully recognized; the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet was defined and a joint Anglo – Chinese guarantee of that border was provided for. The old question of trade, pasturage and the method of communication between the Government of India and the Tibetan Government was reserved for further discussion and agreement. It was further stipulated that within six months of the ratification of the Convention a joint Anglo-Chinese Commission would be set up for the purpose.[67]

Despite its obvious shortcomings – the fact that Tibet was not a party to it and never accepted it being the most significant – the Convention finally laid to rest the vexed problem of the status of Sikkim. With the Government of India controlling her external relations and internal administration Sikkim was reduced virtually to the position of an Indian princely state, and the Political Agency hardly any different from the Residencies in the capitals of those states. Nonetheless Sikkim was a frontier state and this fact was to modify if not totally transform the functions of the Political Officer but that was not to come before another decade. Meanwhile, with a free hand in Sikkim, its Political Officer, John Claude White could with ease turn to sorting out those problems that bedevilled the Government of India relations with the tiny Himalayan State.

[67] For details see Appendix D

Appendix C

Extracts (paragraphs 1 to 31) of Note by J.C. White, on Sikkim Affairs

1. As has been reported more than once, the curse of the country has been the uncertainty of the demands by the Sikkim State for money and produce, and particularly for forced service by the Raja and others under him: under this want of system the ryots have long groaned.
2. It is proposed to stop this by fixing the rate at so much per acre, and by allowing the State to require a fixed amount of forced labour: this has been set down at a very liberal rate.
3. To carry out the above it will be necessary to roughly survey all existing holdings so as to secure the original inhabitants in full possession and employment of their ancestral rights.
4. Such a survey, however rough, will be a work of time, and without a more careful examination of the country it is impossible to estimate the establishments required and the cost thereof, as my knowledge of Sikkim does not extend to the west-Teesta or north-Teesta tracts, time not having permitted my making extensive tours.
5. But this need not delay the settlement of new comers, for there are large tracts of culturable land at present unutilised even for grazing. I propose to allow on these settlements of new-comers, whether Pahariyas or other hillmen, under conditions somewhat similar to those that have proved so successful in Kalimpong. That Pahariyas can be settled in Independent Sikkim with advantage to the country, its Raja and minor Chiefs, is patent from the vast improvement that has taken place in the Rhenock and Pachekhana tracts. The substantial appearance of these holdings sufficiently disproves the assertion that Pahariyas only cut down trees for jhooming and for permanent cultivation. If fixed principles are adopted for future settlements, so as not to circumscribe or injure the original Tibetan settlers and the Lepchas, there will be no danger in extending settlement by Pahariyas.
6. At present the Durbar Council have allowed new-comers to settle on waste lands under their own mundals *only* with the consent of the original kazi within whose jurisdiction the land applied for lies, and after local enquiry that the land is really waste, all comers will be required to carefully demarcate their grants.
7. To go into details – From the beginning of February up to date the amount received as earnest-money with petitions asking for land for cultivation has been Rs. 6,177. Land has only been actually given out in the vicinity of Pakhyong and Patheng after personal inspection and the approval of the Kazi concerned. The remaining petitioners have been told they will receive land if available, where they required it, only after personal inspection.

8. The conditions of the leases as corrected and approved by the Council have been accepted by the settlers.
9. To survey these new grants so as to obtain *at once* full revenue from them, it will be sufficient to adopt a somewhat more liberal principle than that current in Kalimpong, where each ryot's holding has been roughly surveyed by plane-table, and all-round rate per acre, irrespective of the actual quality of the soil, has been fixed for a whole hill-side of several square miles in extent.
10. I would even go further than this, and only survey, to begin with, the mundal's block, notifying to him what the revenue for the block is, and leaving *him* to divide it among the several ryots in the block. It will be easy hereafter, as the country settles down and improves, to survey the plots within any required mundalships or to survey any particular ryot's holding wherein injustice is complained of; or, where necessity arises, a survey of any particular old holding in a new mundal's block can be surveyed as the survey of the main block progresses.
11. Before commencing the survey, I propose during the rains to visit the lower part of Sikkim and to demarcate the boundary of the kaziships and the estates belonging to the monasteries. This will be done by building substantial stone-pillars at salient points along the boundary. These will be subsequently available for the survey which is to follow.
12. In the cold-weather I should be employed in fixing a network of subsidiary points, founded on those trigonometrical stations determined by the Survey Department some years ago, on which I would build up my cadastral survey.
13. Thus next cold-weather a couple of native surveyors only could be usefully employed, who should be natives of Sikkim. These, under my supervision, could do all that is required.
14. In assigning blocks, care must be taken to preserve sufficient blocks of forest, clumps of large bamboos and cane, to provide for wood and grazing, and to preserve the springs.
15. So much for the general principles: but the interests of the original settlers must be safeguarded. It is proposed to do this by allowing them to mark off what land they have formerly cultivated, and as much more for extension as they think they can pay for under the above principles, which, however, would in their case be still further relaxed by requiring from old settlers a lower rate than that demanded from new-comers. In addition it might be enacted that no new settler could obtain by purchase even the fields of old Lepcha and Bhutia cultivators. If possible, all ryots, whether old or new, should be required to pay his rents through the territorial mundal.
16. It might also be provided that no new settlers except Buddhists be allowed to enter lands north of the Bokchachu, Dekchu, and Ronghphopchu affluents of the Teesta.

No such restrictions need to be taken in the Greta Rungeet drainage area for reasons below.

17. Over the mundals would come the kazis as at present. Shengnas to be considered as kazis. These I make out to be 23. Both these and the mundals may be given their farms rent-free, and in consideration of their being responsible for their respective revenues, and for order within their charges, 15 and 5 per cent. Of the revenues collected.
18. Thus the Durbar would receive 80 per cent of the gross revenues payable for land by the cultivators.
19. In addition the Durbar will be able to call upon the adult male and female inhabitants for seven days' free labour in the year: this can be utilized in road-making, State tours, &c.
20. I would, however, make an exception in the case of monasteries, who should be given rent-free large estates round the gompas. If this is done, there will be no need to restrict Pahariya settlement in the Great Rungeet tract, as the monasteries will have full power to protect themselves. If the monasteries own detached fields, they should be persuaded to give them up for others nearer their goompas, while for large detached estates they should be treated like ordinary mundals or ryots, and pay rent through the territorial kazi. If the sole exclusive authority of the kazi within his charge is not recognize, there will inevitably be confusion.
21. Other sources of revenue to the State can be derived fromroyalties on timber and mines.
22. The present revenue of Sikkim as taken from the Raja's books, and not including fines, nuzzurs, &c., amounts to Rs. 8,444, made up thus –

		Rs.
Rents paid	in cash	5,320
Ditto	in kind	2,474
Ditto	on copper mines	250
Ditto	on lime quarries	200
Ditto	on timber	200
		8,444

23. The indiscriminate and wanton destruction and waste of valuable timber in the Rungeet forests was noticed by Mr. Edgar as long ago as 1876, and the waste has been going on ever since, with very little gain to the State. In this cold-weather alone 20,000 maunds of charcoal, 20,000 cubic feet of sal, and a very large amount of toon and champ (*magnolia*) planking have been taken to Darjeeling, having an

approximate money value of Rs. 60, 000 at least, though the Durbar has benefitted only by Rs. 200 and some labour expended on the Gangtok Palace. On the other hand, the contractors themselves never know when they may have to pay some black-mail to would-be owners of the trees, so that their anxiety is to extract as quickly as possible what timber they require, without consideration of what they actually waste in the forest, still less of what by management they could have saved.

24. Since the beginning of March I have realized for the Durbar Rs. 664 irrespective of what may accrue from the sums of two annas per cubic foot which the large contractors have promised to pay for timber delivered, after examination of their employer's books.
25. In consideration of the loss and difficulties that would be caused to the tea-planters and the builders in Darjeeling by the sudden stoppage of their expected supplies, no restriction on the contractors has been put this year; but I would strongly urge that the Durbar be encouraged to send a notice to all parties concerned that, after a certain (near) date, no timber will be allowed to be exported except with the permission of the Durbar and under such conditions as may be decided hereafter.
26. For the future the Durbar should claim the complete control of all the forest tracts near the Rungeet and for a little way up the Teesta, which contain sal, toon and other valuable trees, and that in future only trees that shall be marked by competent officers shall be cut down, and that after the payment of suitable fees.
27. In practice it may be found that the Pemionchi Lamas and other old grantees claim rights in certain forests. Such grantees as succeed in substantiating a valid claim might be granted a portion (say one-half) of the fees realized from their forests, and also timber for their own use free of charge; but the direct control and management of the forests should remain in the Durbar.
28. In this way all parties would really gain, and a useful reserve of timber be preserved for the station of Darjeeling and the more adjacent tea-gardens.
29. With the same object in view, new cultivation in these tracts should be carefully controlled.
30. Sikim is very rich in minerals, which, owing to a low Tibetan superstition, have been very sparsely exploited. People should be encouraged to open out mines, which in a very short time would bring in a considerable amount of revenue to the State.
31. All the Sikkim people drink both the wholesome murwa and the baneful Rukshi. With the former I should not interfere, but on the latter I would put a heavy restrictive duty, and also subject its consumption to control by allowing its sale only at fixed places subject to an upset monthly fee to be determined by public auction. Hitherto everyone has been free to manufacture and sell at will, but lately the Durbar have been raising small amounts by licensing pre-exisiting shops at Rhenock and the Rungeet bridge and other places. This practice might now be extended.

APPENDIX D

Convention between Great Britain and China relating to Sikkim and Tibet - 1890

Whereas Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, and his Majesty the Emperor of China, are sincerely desirous to maintain and perpetuate the relations of friendship and good understanding which now exist between their respective Empires ; and whereas recent occurrences have tended towards a disturbance of the said relations, and it is desirable to clearly define and permanently settle certain matters connected with the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet, Her Britannic Majesty and His Majesty the Emperor of china have resolved to conclude a Convention on this subject, and have , for this purpose, named Plenipotentiaries, that is to say:

Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, His Excellency the Most Honourable Henry Charles Keith Petty Fitzmaurice, G.M.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.M.I.E., Marquess of Lansdowne, Viceroy and Governor-General of India.

And his Majesty the Emperor of China, His Excellency Shêng Tai, Imperial Associate Resident in Tibet, Military Deputy Lieutenant-Governor;

Who, having met and communicated to each other their full powers, and finding these to be in proper form, have agreed upon the following Convention I eight Articles:-

Article I.

The boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its alluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet. The line commences at Mount Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier, and follows the above mentioned water-parting to the point where it meets Nipal territory.

Article II.

It is admitted that the British Government, whose Protectorate over the Sikkim State is hereby recognized, has direct and exclusive control over the internal administration and foreign relations of that State, and except through and with the permission of the British Government, neither the ruler of the State nor any of its officers shall have official relations of any kind, formal or informal, with any other country.

Article III.

The Government of Great Britain and Ireland and the Government of China engage reciprocally to respect the boundary as defined in Article I, and to prevent acts of aggression fromt heir respective sides of the frontier.

Article IV.

The question of providing increased facilities for trade across the Sikkim-Tibet frontier will hereafter be discussed with a view to a mutually satisfactory arrangement by the High Contracting Powers.

Article V.

The question of pasturage on the Sikkim side of the frontier is reserved for further examination and future adjustment.

Article VI.

The High Contracting Powers reserve for discussion and arrangements the methods in which official communications between the British authorities in India and the authorities in Tibet shall be conducted.

Article VII.

Two Joint Commissioners shall, within six months from the ratification of this Convention, be appointed, one by the British Government of India, the other by the Chinese resident in Tibet. The said commissioners shall meet and discuss the questions which, by the last three preceding Articles, have been reserved.

Article VIII.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications shall be exchanged in London as soon as possible after the date of the signature thereof.

In witness whereof the respective negotiators have signed the same, and affixed thereunto the seals of their arms.

Done in quadruplicate at Calcutta, this 17th day of MArch, in the year of our Lord 1890, corresponding with the Chinese date, the 27th day of the second moon of this 16th year of Kuang Hsü.

LANSDOWNE

CHINESE SEAL AND SIGNATURE

CHAPTER II

ENFORCING THE CONVENTION: TRADE AND BOUNDARIES

The seventh article of the Convention of 1890 provided for the appointment of two Joint Commissioners, one by the Government of India and the other by the Chinese Resident or Amban in Tibet, within six months of its ratification, to meet and discuss the questions which by the three articles preceding it had been reserved. The negotiations on the last three articles namely pasturage, communications and trade, spread over three years.[1] The first two presented little difficulty. The Chinese conscious of British rights acquired under the Convention, were anxious, the line of the frontier being hitherto undefined and vague, that there ought not to be any change in the *status quo* which would disturb the pastoral economy on the Tibetan side. The people concerned ought to be warned in advance of any change that might be introduced. Equally simple were matters related to communications: that the British would deal with the Tibetans through the Chinese was now the agreed position, and all that remained was to work out a system by which the letters of the Government of India could be got across to the Amban. Such a system had in fact been in operation since 1888. It was the problem of trade, particularly that which involved the right of British subjects to travel to Tibet and the sale of Indian tea in Tibet that presented the greatest difficulty.

Trade Regulations: Agency's New Responsibilities

The British had insisted that all restrictions on trade and travel needed to be removed. But knowing the Chinese mood, were prepared to accept limited access to a

[1] See Lamb: *Britain and Chinese Central Asia, op cit,* pp 197ff; also Camman Schyuller, *Trade through the Himalayas: Early British Attempts in Open Tibet,* Princeton, 1951 for a connected story of the trade question from the early days of the British in India

single mart. They would have preferred Gyantse, but better still Phari. To these the Chinese were not agreeable, and offered instead Yatung, some miles east, and opposite the Jelep La. The British relented, and after some further discussions and communications between the Chinese and British officials hammered out a draft regulation of nine articles. The first article established Yatung as the trade mart.[2] The second stated:

> British subjects trading at Yatung shall be at liberty to travel freely to and fro between the frontier and Yatung, to reside at Yatung, and to rent houses and godowns for their accommodation and the storage of their goods. The Chinese Government undertakes that suitable buildings for the above purposes shall be provided for British subjects, and also that a special and fitting residence shall be provided for the officer or officers appointed by the Government of India under Regulation I to reside at Yatung. British subjects shall be at liberty to sell their goods to whomsoever they please, to purchase native commodities in kind or in money, to hire transport of any kind, and in general to conduct their business transactions in conformity with local usage, and without any vexations restrictions: Such British subjects shall receive efficient protection for their persons and property. At Lang-Jo and Ta-chun, between the frontier and Yatung, where rest houses have been built by the Tibetan authorities, British subjects can break their journey in consideration of a daily rent.[3]

Article III related to restriction on certain items of trade that may be imposed by either Governments: arms, ammunition, military stores, salt, liquors and intoxicating or narcotic drugs.[4] The next article, IV, stated that goods, other than those so enumerated, entering Tibet from British India, across the Sikkim – Tibet frontier, or *vice versa*, whatever their origin, shall be exempt from duty for a period of five years commencing from the date of the opening of Yatung to trade. But after the expiry of five years a tariff, if found desirable , would be mutually agreed upon and enforced.

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[2] FSEP August 1893: Nos 46 – 62; See notes and drafts. For a narrative of the negotiations, FSEP August 1893: Nos 1 – 47.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] *Ibid.* The military items were later specified.

This article did not take care of Chinese worries about the import of Indian tea into Tibet under free-trade regulations. The more important Tibetan monasteries had had to a large extent the trade in this commodity in their hands, and article IV as drafted, would have upset the monasteries, a situation the Chinese would not have liked to see develop. Besides the Chinese themselves used the tea trade to finance their government in Tibet. An addition to the fourth article was thus proposed:

> Indian tea may be sold to Tibet at a rate of duty not exceeding that at which Chinese tea is imported into England, but trade in Indian tea shall not be engaged in during the five years for which other commodities are exempt.

The Chinese tea imported into Tibet was largely the brick tea of Szechuan, against which the conventional Indian tea could not compete. Perhaps for this reason, and rather than further delay the trade agreement, the Government acquiesced. The next two articles relating to Customs and the mechanism to settle trade disputes posed no problems. Nor did articles VII – IX on communications and pasturage. But the Chinese added three "General Articles", and the British on their part introduced a preamble. Having ironed out all difficulties, the Regulation[5] which was appended to the Convention of 1890, was signed in Darjeeling on 5 December 1893 by A. W. Paul on behalf of the Government of India and James Hart, the Inspector-General of Chinese Maritime Customs and Ho Chang-jung, the Amban at Lhasa, on behalf of the Chinese. The mart was to be in operation from 1 May 1894.[6]

The Trade Regulations placed new responsibilities on the officer heading the Sikkim Political Agency, and the Bengal Government at once recommended that his designations should be "Political Officer for Sikkim" instead "Assistant Political Officer in Sikkim", as White's official designation was. It was evident to the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Charles Elliott that White's duties, which till then consisted principally of administering the affairs of Sikkim would in future "include wider functions of a more

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[5] *Ibid.* For full text of the Regulation, See Appendix E
[6] FSEP October 1894: Nos 91 – 159, Nos 125 - 26

purely political nature". He had noted that it now devolved on the Political Officer for Sikkim and his Assistant at Yatung to give effect to all future negotiations connected with the provisions of the Convention. Under Article VII of the regulations the Political Officer was declared to be the Agent for communication between the Government of India and the Amban or Chinese Resident in Tibet, and Article I of the General Articles provided that in the event of disagreement between the Political Officer for Sikkim and the Chinese frontier officials, each official shall report the matter to his immediate superior for disposal. It was clear to the Lieutenant Governor that new responsibility would henceforth rest on the Political Officer and so the time had come to define his status and position. A. W. Paul, on whose recommendations the Sikkim Political Agency was created, had anticipated such wider functions for that office, and had actually wanted White to be Political Officer for both Sikkim and Bhutan. Years later White was to comment:

> It is much to be deplored that the proposals with respect to Bhutan made to the Government of India by Mr. Paul on the conclusion of the Sikkim Expedition in 1890 were not approved of. His suggestion that I should hold the appointment of Political Officer to Bhutan as well as Sikkim was a sound one, and had these schemes of improvement been discussed then, by this time they would have been in working order, to the great advantage of Bhutan. The loss during the last twenty years from the wholesale cutting of their forests along their border in the Duars alone amounts to many lacs.[7]

White was then talking of the development of Bhutan , but his ideas, of an Agency with a wider reach came to be appreciated only later.

Another important question that was often raised in the past months, and of which Elliott was aware was whether the Political Officer should function in direct communication with the Government of India or should remain with the Bengal Government and continue to act through the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division. It had been suggested that as far only as the political issues which would arise out of trade

[7] White, *Bhutan and Sikkim*, *op cit*, P. 166

relations or out of coterminous relations of Sikkim and Tibet, placing the Political Officer under the Government of India had its advantages. The relations of the Government of India with China and Tibet were necessarily of an imperial character, and the Chinese Amban in Tibet would, under the terms of the Convention would correspond with the Government of India and not with the Local Government. There were also the suggestion, Sir Charles Elliott noted, of placing in the hands of the Political Officer the relations, whether of the Supreme or Local Government, the affairs of the state of Bhutan. That for the purpose of watching the political relations between Bhutan and Tibet and between Bhutan and the Chinese, an officer stationed in Sikkim at Yatung, and under the Government of India had, Sir Charles agreed considerable advantages. But going over all these arguments Eliott found little merit in them.[8] So far as the Political Officer's primary charge, the administration of Sikkim itself was concerned the Lieutenant Governor was emphatic that he must remain under Bengal. And it would be convenient if he was also under the Local Government as regards relations with Tibet. "Living during the summer months", he emphasized,

> Within the sight of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, and ruling (over) a considerable population in the Darjeeling district which had emigrated from each of these states, the Lieutenant Governor's special knowledge of what is going on in these countries can hardly fail to bring an influence to bear which would be altogether lacking if the Political Officer were placed in direct relations with the Government of India.[9]

If therefore, the Political Officer for Sikkim must be under the Government of India in his relations with China and Tibet, there seemed no sufficient reason why his correspondence should not be submitted through the Local Government. This was the system now suggested by Sir Charles Elliott. In the ordinary course the Political Officer would address the Commissioner of the Rajshahi Division, but it would be his duty to refer to the Chief Secretary direct in cases of emergency. In some cases it would be

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[8] *Ibid*, H J S Cotton, Chief Secretary, Bengal to Foreign Secretary, India, 26 March.
[9] *Ibid*.

necessary for the Lieutenant Governor to issue orders at once without waiting to consult the Foreign Department of the Government of India.

The Foreign Department at this time held views that were entirely different from those of the Bengal Government. The Maharaja, after a good deal of persuasion and threat, was now in British territory; the Raj Kumar, though still in Tibetan soil, was expect back in Sikkim. In these circumstances it was felt that the Political Officer, or more correctly the Assistant Political Officer, appointed to oversee Sikkim's administration in the absence of the Maharaja, could even be withdrawn. But the Lieutenant Governor now presented an entirely different perception of the Political Agency, a perception that in the current situation the Government of India could not ignore. The Lieutenant Governor's suggestions were accepted, save in one proposal. The Commissioner, P. Nolan, wanted an Indian Officer to take care of Yatung, but Elliott, learning that the Chinese were sending in an European officer, insisted that the Government of India do likewise: "a young military officer with a gift for languages and for dealing with frontier races." The Viceroy was, however, keen that Claude White himself proceed to Yatung to establish the trade meant, but without a military escort for, in his opinion, "nothing would so effectively close the trade route."[10]

Yatung: White's Report

In April 1894 Claude White went up to Yatung to supervise the opening of the trade mart. After crossing the Jelep La in deep snow he was met a little further on, on the Yatung side of the pass, by about twenty Chinese soldiers sent from the frontier. "They presented a gay appearance in their blue uniforms with large letters in black on both back and front of their coats", said White, and a "few of them were armed with guns, but the greater number carried tridents, flags, and other unusual things."[11] At about a mile and a half from Yatung White was taken to a tent, where to conform to Chinese notions of etiquette, he had to change into his official uniform. A little further on he was ceremoniously received by the Chinese and Tibetan officials and conducted to a

[10] *Ibid.* Note by Lord Elgin, 10 July

[11] *Ibid.* White to Commissioner, Rajshahi, 19 May; also *Bhutan and Sikkim*, P. 31

"gorgeous tent" in which tea was served. F. E. Taylor of the Imperial Chinese Customs in Chinese official dress, was amongst those present. The Chinese officials were a Frontier Officer, the Commander of the Guards and an interpreter, who along with two Tibetan officials made up the reception committee. From here, in a "very gay procession with all the umbrellas, flags, pikes etc, carried by the followers of the Chinese officials" White was escorted to his "official residence."

All this ceremony by no means impressed White, and he reported most unfavourably on Yatung. As he later recorded:

> I found the so called Mart perfectly useless for the purpose and that the articles agreed to in the Treaty Regulations had not been carried out in any way. The Chinese had built a wall about one-third of a mile lower down, and posted sentries on the gate and no one was allowed to come to the "Mart" to buy or sell any goods whatever. Extortionate rents were charged for "shops" which were nothing more than hovels, and to crown all the Tibetans refused to acknowledge the Treaty which had been signed on their behalf by the Chinese.[12]

Yatung, at an altitude of over 10,000 feet, was situated about eight miles from Jelep La in the valley of the Yatung chu and its junction with the Chemdi chu which followed down from the Natoi La. The hills to the east and south were covered with pines and larches, those to the west and north were bare. Here was established the trade mart. The only thing that could be said in its favour was that it was on the Chumbi – Darjeeling trade route.

What irked White was the shoddy arrangement made for his accommodation. The house built in the Tibetan style for a European officer was unsuitable for any European. It was a two storeyed structure, consisting of one large room on the ground

[12] *Bhutan and Sikkim*, P. 32. Cf, Sir Charles Bell, *Tibet Past and Present*, London 1924, Rep London 1968, P. 61, in which he writes: "The mart was on an altogether unsuitable site, in a narrow side-valley running down from Sikkim towards the Chumbi Valley. A few yards further down this little valley a wall was built from side to side and manned by soldiers to prevent British traders and travellers from going any further into Tibetan territory. When the time came to carry our these treaties, it was the Tibetans, not having signed them, refused to recognize them. The Chinese control over Tibet was purely nominal... Attempts to develop Yatung was frustrated by Tibetan obstructiveness."

floor, 40 feet by 26 feet with a 4 feet broad veranda all round it, and six small rooms surrounded by a veranda on the first floor. There were no bath rooms. The lower storey was constructed by rough hewn stone; the upper of roughly cut timber frames filled in with rough planks which had large cracks in them and between them. In the outer walls there were glass windows, but the window partition between the rooms and the doors were covered with paper only. The floors were of rough planking which did not fit, while the roof consisted of split pine, simply placed together and liable to shift. It was already leaking. There were no fire places. Consequently, there was constantly a thorough draft blowing through every room, and White found it too cold to sit without the warmest clothing. He was sure that in the winter the house would certainly be uninhabitable.[13]

The engineer of public works in him asserted itself, and White made a list of things that needed to be done to make the house fit to live in:

(i) The outer walls and inner partitions to be leaped.

(ii) The paper partition between the rooms to be filled with planking.

(iii)The floors to be re-laid so as to fill some of the cracks and the ceiling to be boarded.

(iv)Fire places should be provided for each room. This can be done by building stacks (*Paharia* masons would be required for this work, as the Tibetans knew nothing of chimneys)

(v) Two bath rooms should be added. This should be done by enclosing part of the veranda.[14]

In addition to the main house, there were five godowns and a stable. The house and godowns were surrounded by a wall ten feet high. On the east of the house were sixteen godowns or native shops built for trade, but inadequate for the storage of goods or for the use of European merchants. At Langjo and Tachung, which were adjoining villages, there was practically no shelter, the sheds at these two places were of the roughest description, and "not fit for human beings to go into". A small bungalow with

[13] FSEP October 1894: Nos 91 – 159; White to Commissioner, Rajshahi, 9 June
[14] *Ibid.*

two rooms and outhouse ought to be built at Yatung or Rinchingong, a mile and a half north east, for the accommodation of European traders. Similarly there ought to be a rest house at Langjo suitable for Europeans, with one small room with a fireplace and a veranda.[15]

The site of the Yatung mart had been "exceedingly badly chosen", was White's verdict on the place. If possible, therefore, it ought to be removed lower down the valley to someplace between Rinchingong and the place where it broadened out and was much flatter and where there was room for expansion. This was where the road to Bhutan branched off. If the mart were removed to this place the buildings at Yatung could be utilized as a godown for storing wool or other merchandise. A new house built for the British officer at Rinchingong on a more suitable plan with fewer rooms. For one with a long background in Bengal's Public Works Department, White's detailed description of the shortcomings of the building and the site is perhaps easily accounted for. But the prejudice is perhaps largely due to the obstruction of the people in the Chumbi to him and to the prospects of trade.

"The people in this valley have combined to keep the trade in their own hands", White complained in his report, and "this they say they have done in order to recoup themselves the expense they were put to during the Sikkim War." The Phari Dzongpon had been charging 10% on all goods passing through Phari, both on imports and exports. Men passing that place without loads were charged two annas a head. This largely affected the Bhutanese as Tibetans were not allowed to pass Phari with their goods. The latter were obliged to sell their merchandise to the people of Phari Dzong who having acquired them carry the goods to Kalimpong and Darjeeling. This action on the part of the Phari people, said White, entirely did away with any free trade that was provided for in the treaty. Again, no one was allowed to enter the Chumbi valley from Sikkim, something that was never done for generations. "In fact", he added, "these people are

[15] *Ibid.*

doing all they can render the treaty abortive by their jealousy and petty restrictions," and the matter should be represented to the Amban at Lhasa.[16]

If these people continued to be obstructive, White said that the mart should be removed as soon as possible from Yatung to the north of Sikkim, and trade encouraged in the meantime to come down by the Lachen road. This would increase the trade by opening up a new district, and once this was achieved he would close the Chumbi – Jelep La route. He gave four reasons for his recommendation:[17]

(i) The Lachen route was shorter and easier; by the Chumbi route both the Tang-La and the Jelep La would have to be crossed; by the Lachen route only the Supaba La.

(ii) That the Khambajong people were very friendly and had been so all through the war.

(iii) It would entirely break the monopoly of the Chumbi valley people, who were most hostile, and everything at present was in their hands.

(iv) It was possible that the threat of opening up the new mart would very rapidly bring these people to a sense of their own advantages and make them conform to the spirit of the treaty. They would rather than lose the trade , consent to the removal of the mart to a

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[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Giaogong, the most important settlement in this region was visited by Joseph Hooker in 1848 and Colman Macaulay in 1886. White had apparently visited the palce twice. He describes it as " a desolate, windswept spot lying in the centre of a gorge between Chomiomo, 23,000 feet on the west and Kanchenjhau, 24,000 feet, in the east, and is a veritable funnel up which the wind is always howling. I managed, however, to find a fairly sheltered spot for my camp and stayed for a few days." This was during his second visit to the area, in June - July 1891, when the Khamba Dzongpon stopped him telling him that he was in Tibet and must return the way he had come. "It was useless to point out to him that I was some miles within the Sikkim frontier, or even to read him that portion of the Treaty between our Government and the Tibetans which had recently been signed. He declared he knew nothing about that, and that the Thi-La (Where he was stopped) was the proper boundary whatever the Treaty might say", vide his *Bhutan and Sikkim*, *op cit*, pp. 72 – 75. White therefore was fully aware that this was disputed area.

> more suitable place in the Chumbi valley. If these were done the mart might be allowed to remain in the Chumbi valley.

The amount of trade from the month of May amounted to imports, Rs. 40,587, and exports Rs. 44,999, and White felt this could be much increased if the merchants came forward. The Tibetans had informed him that this they had ordered them to do, but none had come in so far. The trade in wool could be improved and new trades, such as goat's hair and mules, opened up and traders helped in many ways. All this of course would take time.[18]

The Political Officer talked to the Chinese and the Tibetan officials on these points and found that the former agreed that the treaty was not being carried out in a proper spirit. The Tibetans on the other hand told him that they had a right to impose what taxes they chose at Phari so long as goods were allowed to pass Yatung duty free. They denied that Tibetans were not allowed beyond Phari. He found that while the Chinese treated him with utmost courtesy and consideration, the Tibetans had been discourteous and obstructive. None of the officials called on him for nearly three weeks he had been in Yatung. The Chinese, he said, had confessed to him that they were unable to manage the Tibetans and from "what I gather, the Tibetans repudiate the treaty and assert that it was signed by the British Government and the Chinese, and therefore they have nothing to do with it." There seemed to White overwhelming evidence that the "Chinese have no authority whatever here". The Tibetans would not obey them, and they were afraid to give any orders.

> China is Suzerain over Tibet only in name. This appears to be partly due to the Chinese Emperor always dealing leniently with the Tibetans, and also that the Chinese have only some 500 soldiers in Tibet and these were wretchedly armed with old swords, tridents and old muzzle-loading fowling pieces. They are also without the elements of drill. The Chinese, therefore, though rulers in name, have no power and can enforce no order.

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[18] *Ibid.*

This made negotiations most difficult, wrote White, for though the Chinese agree to any proposal they were unable to answer for the Tibetans. And the latter, when spoken to, either sheltered themselves behind the Chinese or said they had no power to give an answer for Lhasa and could only report. Thus,

> It is absolutely impossible to get at any one, for he simply puts the blame on some higher authority who is not forthcoming. If the Chinese had any real power, negotiations would be comparatively easy, as there would be only one power to deal with.[19]

At the end of his rather lengthy report White drew five conclusions on the basis of which the Tibetans should be dealt with:

(i) The Chinese were most friendly and willing to help, but were quite powerless as regards the Tibetans.

(ii) The Chumbi valley people were most hostile and were doing all in their power to render the Treaty abortive.

(iii) The only way to deal with a Tibetan was to force his hand, and this could be done in the present instance by threatening to close the trade route by the Jelep-La and by opening that by the Lachen valley.

(iv) That the mart at Yatung had been most badly chosen, and should never have been allowed to be in its present position. It should be moved down to Rinchingong or Chema, where it would command the three routes, *viz*, into Tibet, Bhutan and British territory via Jelep La. The house for the British representative should be at Chema, and

(v) That apparently under the orders from Lhasa the free trade clauses of the Treaty were not carried out.[20]

Sikkim – Tibet Boundary

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[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*

Sikkim – Tibet Boundary

What seems to have rankled White was the news which he received in Yatung that Tibetan soldiers had been ordered to occupy the old positions in Sikkim which they held before the signing of the Convention in 1890.[21] This was the Giagong area, to where he would have liked to shift the Yatung mart. He saw this action on the part of the Tibetans as a violation of Article I, which stated that "the boundary of Sikkim and Tibet shall be the crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its effluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet." The line was defined as commencing at Mt. Gipmochi on the Bhutan frontier and following the water parting to the point where it met the territory of Nepal. Giaogong in northern Sikkim, where the Tibetan soldiers had positioned themselves, fell by his definition, in British territory. Five days before his official report on the Yatung mart, White had complained demi-officially to his immediate superior, Nolan, Commissioner of Rajshahi:

> As far as I can see we have gained nothing by the treaty. The treaty is not even acknowledged by the Tibetans, and as I have already pointed out their soldiers are still in Sikkim. This I do not think ought to be tolerated for a moment, and I wish Government will allow me to open the (boundary) question <u>now</u>. It appears to me that any delay will be most foolish in as much as the Tibetans will think we are giving in to them. If the question is opened here (in Yatung) there ought to be no difficulty in settling matters, and it only requires going over the boundary with a Chinese and Tibetan official to show them where it is and point out to them the import of the treaty. None of the Tibetans who pass through this post have ever seen the treaty. I wish you will point this to (Chief Secretary) Cotton and obtain orders for me. As I have already told you none of the Tibetans have called and it will not do to allow them to treat a British representative as they choose. They <u>must</u> be made to learn and respect us, and to calmly sit down and allow them to break the treaty as they choose is not the way to manage them.[22]

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[21] *Ibid*, Nos 129 – 30; Telegrams, Chief Secretary, Bengal to Foreign Secretary, 2 June, Foreign Secretary to Chief Secretary, Bengal, 6 June. The Foreign Department had advised that "White should as far as possible confine himself to trade questions and avoid controversial matters. If Chinese officials have actually asserted right to send troops as reportred, White may protest, but if he has merely learnt by accident that a small post is being temporarily established, he should take no action without reporting further. It does not seem advisable to attach importance to the matter."

[22] *Ibid*, Demi – Official, White to Nolan

Four days later, on 8 June, White reiterated his view officially to Nolan.[23] The Commissioner was supportive. On the question of re-locating the trade mart, however, he pointed out, and with which the Lieutenant Governor agreed, that Yatung was established by treaty and could hardly be changed so long as the trade agreement remained valid for the stipulated five years.

The Foreign Department was less sympathetic, and some of its officials were critical of White's report on Yatung as inadequate. The Deputy Secretary Captain Hugh Daly was even skeptical about Tibetan soldiers occupying positions in northern Sikkim. His own view was that the so-called soldiers were in all probability only villagers and very likely local headmen who had no idea that their action was not within their rights.[24] "The whole thing seems to me," Daly had noted, "of no importance". On White's proposal to be allowed to settle the Sikkim – Tibet frontier, Daly was quite firm that the Political Officer for Sikkim "is not the person to make the move." He felt that White was "evidently irritated at the Tibetans holding aloof from him at Yatung; his irritation in not unnatural, but we know the Tibetans did not regard the trade arrangements with favour, and utmost caution and patience will be necessary if trade is really to be developed."[25]

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[23] *Ibid.* No. 132; White to Commissioner, Rajshahi, 8 June, White reported that he had learnt from the Chinese Frontier Officer that the soldiers along the passes had been ordered by the Tibetans to build themselves stone houses instead of the tents they formerly used. This appeared that the Tibetan troops were being located permanently. "I am of opinion", White informed Nolan, "that the Tibetans should not be allowed to picket their soldiers in territory which the late treaty assigns to Sikkim, and in my opinion this could easily be done now and may be difficult here after. It will be remembered that I pointed out some time back that the Tibetan soldiers were in Sikkim, and it was then decided not to open the question till after the conclusion of the Convention and opening of the mart at Yatung, as it might lead to fresh difficulties. This can no longer be the case," and "with a Chinese and Tibetan official to accompany me, there would be no difficulty in pointing out the boundary and securing the removal of Tibetan troops from Sikkim."

[24] *Ibid.* See Notes, Daly, 4 June

[25] *Ibid.* Notes, Daly, 19 June, Daly's Note, with which both the Secretary and the Viceroy agreed, further stated: "The Chinese Resident in Tibet knows all about the treaty arrangements, and as the Bengal Government think a move should be made in regard to the frontier, it might perhaps be as well to address the Resident, (i.e. the Amban) and say that we should be glad to know when, in his opinion, it would be convenient to mark out the border on the ground, and whether he would be prepared to depute officers to meet Mr. White for the purpose. I don't think this could do any harm if our letter was so worded as to show we attached no immediate importance to the matter, and it might serve a useful purpose by drawing the Resident's attention to the Tibetan action in crossing the border."

Both Daly and William J. Cunningham, the Secretary, were of the view that the matter ought to be taken up with the Chinese Amban at Lhasa, particularly as the Convention "did not provide for demarcation." Cunningham added that, "if we are going to address the Chinese Resident in Tibet on the subject of going over the line on the spot, I think we must say that we have heard that Tibetan soldiers are now on the Sikkim side, and for that reason think that the frontier officials should see the boundary as laid down by the Convention."[26] With the Viceroy agreeing to this proposal letters were addressed to the Amban at Lhasa. It was proposed to the Amban that future violations might be avoided if the frontier was demarcated on the ground by a Joint Anglo-Chinese Commission.

The response of the Amban was favourable. He immediately discussed the subject with Lhasa and reported that the Tibetans were willing to join the Boundary Commission on the condition that the British Commissioner did not set foot on Tibetan soil. On this basis it was agreed that a Joint Commission should start demarcation in May 1895.[27]

Demarcation, if White's views on the Tibetans were any indication, was not going to be easy. Indeed, when White arrived at the frontier in April he found that the Tibetans had refused to provide the Chinese Commissioner, one Major Tu, with any transport. The Tibetan Commissioner did not show up at all. Major Tu wished to await his Tibetan counterpart before starting work,[28] but White was in no such mood. On Sikkim's eastern frontier on the Jelep La and the neighbouring passes into the Chumbi valley there was no dispute about the location of the border. Here White unilaterally, and against the protests of the Chinese in Chumbi and without waiting for the Tibetan Commissioner, put up boundary pillars. The Bengal Government which had generally been supportive of their Political Officer for Sikkim, approved of his action.

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[26] *Ibid*, Note, Cunningham, 20 June.
[27] FSEP July 1895: Nos 103 – 174 (Nos 172)
[28] FSEP October 1895: Nos 174 - 209

Sikkim's northern border in the Giaogong area which was under occupation by Tibetan troops naturally posed far greater difficulties. The Lieutenant Governor, Sir Charles Elliott, had enjoined on White the same methods that the latter had adopted on the Jelep La side: if the Chinese and Tibetans failed to put in an appearance he was to proceed to demarcate on his own; if the Tibetans were found in British protected areas they should be made to withdraw, by force if persuasion failed.[29] Elliott viewed the presence of Tibetans in Giaogong, which was about eight to nine miles south of the watershed – the boundary defined by the Convention – as a serious challenge to the validity of the Convention. He, therefore, considered it more important to "teach" the Tibetans a "lesson" rather than follow the dictates of the protocol of a joint commission. The Political Officer and the Lieutenant Governor, when further facts were made known to him, saw good reasons to take a strong position. In June the boundary pillars that White had erected in the eastern borders were pulled down. White would have liked an apology from the Amban himself, but the Government of India counselled moderation. The Viceroy, Lord Elgin, still thought that the key to the Tibetan difficulty was held by the Amban and so deprecated any move that might embarrass him: "It is desirable that our local officers should not adopt any action on the border which might increase the Resident's difficulties", Bengal was told.[30]

By the middle of 1895 it had become increasingly clear to the Political Officer that the monks of the three important Gelukpa monasteries of Sera, Drepung and Ganden, whose influence dominated Tibetan politics, were the chief obstacles to a satisfactory Anglo-Tibetan relations. Any display of British weakness in the matter of demarcation of boundaries and expelling Tibetan encroachments was likely to be interpreted at Lhasa as a victory for the monastic establishment. And if the British pursued its goals resolutely, monastic opposition would collapse because, as he told Nolan, "there is no doubt that the Tibetans are most anxious to avoid a conflict with India."[31] Elliott agreed with this assessment, and knowing the views of the Government of India and the Home authorities

[29] Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia, op cit*, pp. 210ff
[30] Quoted in *Ibid.*
[31] Quoted in *Ibid*

about the importance of China in balancing relations with Russia, went to the extent of suggesting measures to strengthen Chinese suzerainty over Tibet.[32]

A few points regarding the Tibetan side of the picture emerged when Nolan and White had talks in November at Yatung with the Chinese and the Tibetan delegate, Tensing Wangpu, said to be close to the Dalai Lama.[33] The observations which White had made and complained about did not, it now appeared, violate the letter of the Trade Regulations. The duty charged at Phari, for instance, was actually no "vexatious" innovation; it was uniformly imposed on all traders – Nepalese, Bhutanese and Chinese and not just on British subjects – and at all trading posts, including Tachienlu in eastern Tibet. The Tibetans did not consider the prohibition of their merchants from passing beyond Phari to visit Yatung as incompatible with the Regulations which merely stated that British and Indian traders should be allowed to visit the mart. That the Tibetans did not approve of the Trade Regulations was made obvious, and equally that they were going to do nothing to render it a success. There seemed no prospects of Indian tea being exported to Tibet after the stipulated five years. More importantly, if the Tibetans did not approve of the Regulations they could not be expected to agree to British demands for a border demarcation with Sikkim based on a Convention to which they were not a party, and which action would just gift away Tibetan territory. They were only willing to discuss the boundary on their own terms, but Wangpu made it clear to the two British officers that "Tibet would not give up land because required to by the Convention."[34]

Since these talks led nowhere Nolan could only suggests that the British demarcate the borders unilaterally during the following year. If the Tibetans persisted in their claims to that portion of Giaogong they should be driven off. To this Elliott added that if the Tibetans did not honour the boundary when demarcated the Chumbi valley should be annexed.[35]

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[32] *Ibid.*
[33] For details, *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Ibid.*

Policy Advocated by Elgin

The persistently hard line towards the Tibetans by the Bengal Government and their officers was disturbing enough for the Viceroy. Britain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, whose opinion Elgin had sought advised that the British ought to "assert our claim to the boundary in question, not by a permanent occupation, but by periodically knocking down the erections of the Tibetans, walls and edifices," and "this should be done as cheaply as possible"[36]. The Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, advised a stronger line:

> It is annoying to have to waste money and men even to the small extent involved in determining this question, but there seems no alternative but to make the Tibetans understand, if they insist on ignoring the Treaty, they will be punished.[37]

The views of these two British cabinet ministers and of the Viceroy were, despite the difference in their methods, determined by the same consideration. British commercial interests in India and in England were exerting considerable pressure for the opening of Tibet and the development of the India – Tibet trade. In England Salisbury and Hamilton did not wish to be seen indifferent to this clamour and soft on Tibetan obstructiveness; while in India extreme caution prompted Elgin to take a moderate line towards the Tibetan and the Chinese. It seemed good policy to avoid complications with the Tibetans, which the issues raised by the Political Officer and the Bengal Government was likely to lead to, so as to ensure that there was no stoppage of the trade across the Himalaya.

In November that year the Bradford Chamber of Commerce had addressed the India Office on the importance of developing British trade with Tibet:

> Tibet as you are aware (the memorial said), has an area of some 700,000 square miles, and is said to have a population of six or seven millions. The mean altitude of the country being about 15,000 feet above sea level,

[36] Quoted in *Ibid.*, P. 216
[37] *Ibid.*

> the inhabitants require warm clothing, blankets and other articles of British manufacture. These might be exchanged for the natural products of the country, which include not only gold, silver and other minerals and skins, furs, but articles in which the Bradford district is particularly interested viz the hair of the shawl wool goat and a very soft wool, suitable in every respect, for the Bradford trade. There is a large quantity of this wool available, and with greater freedom of trade and improved facilities for transport, Tibetan wool would undoubtedly become an important article of import into the United Kingdom.

That a railway to Darjeeling had been opened for some years by which access to the interior could now be easily obtained was noted by the Chamber. This however, seemed of little practical value so long as the trade was practically restricted to a comparatively small number of officials. The Tibetans themselves, they believed, were desirous of entering into commercial relations with other countries, especially India, and the Chamber noted with satisfaction that during the last few years there had been a steady growth of the indirect trade with India through Nepal inspite of the heavy duties levied by that State on both imports and exports. The trade via Darjeeling and Sikkim had increased rapidly, "chiefly in consequence of a small concession having been made by the Lama" in permitting British subjects to establish themselves at Yatung and carry on business there. If this privilege were extended so as to permit British subjects to trade in the interior as far as Lhasa an immense impetus would be given to the trade with that country. The Chamber was therefore,

> firmly convinced that in Tibet will be found a "new market", of great value to Great Britain, and they earnestly trust that His Majesty's Govenrment will do all in their power to further the opening up of that country, either by means of a treaty with the Emperor of China or with the Grand Lamas of Tibet direct, or by such other means as may be deemed expedient.[38]

[38] *Ibid*, In reply the Secretary of State wrote that he would continue to watch the growth of the Tibet trade with great interest and use any opportunity that may arise for increasing the facilities offered to it. But he did not consider that any attempt in the existing circumstances could be made to revise the Regulations for the Sikkim – Tibetan trade until the end of the period of five years, for which these regulations had been accepted by the Governments concerned.

Elgin therefore saw no reason to adopt an aggressive attitude towards the Tibetans. Giaogong at any rate the Viceroy noted, was "a worthless piece of territory."[39] The whole project of boundary demarcation was postponed till the summer of 1896. The Bengal Adminsitration for 1895 – 96, however, gave its own version: that the Commission appointed to demarcate the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet was unable to carry out its work in consequence of the failure of the Tibetan delegates to meet the Political Officer on the frontier; that it had hoped that an enquiry into a claims of the Tibetans to lands within the boundary laid down in the Convention with China would have been completed within the year under report but difficulties arose and the enquiry had to be deferred to the next year.[40]

In the spring of 1896 the position was reviewed. The Foreign Secretary noted with reference to the demarcation that "it does not seem to me that we are bound to go on, if it is better not to do so."[41] Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who in the meanwhile succeeded Sir Charles Elliott as Lieutenant Governor, recorded the opinion that "the boundary line is not worth quarrelling about", and that "our policy during the five years of the Convention ought to be to do all we can to conciliate the Tibetans and incline them to make reasonable concessions later on."[42] In March 1896 the Chinese Amban was accordingly informed that the Government of India were prepared to instruct a British officer to examine, in conjunction with Chinese and Tibetan representatives, any evidence which the Tibetans may wish to bring forward in support of their claims to grazing grounds[43] near Giaogong within the Sikkim boundary fixed by the Convention of 1890. It was, therefore, proposed that the delegates should meet for the purpose of conducting a local enquiry on the frontier and that the actual demarcation in that quarter should be postponed pending the result of their investigation. The Amban accepted the suggestion and asked that the local enquiry might be extended to the frontier south of the

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[39] Private letter, Elgin to Hamilton, quoted in Lamb, *op cit*, P. 218
[40] Bengal Administrative Report, "Relations with Tributary States and Frontier Affairs", for the year 1895 – 96.
[41] FSEP March 1896: Nos 252 - 271
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] FSEP July 1891: Nos 103 – 145 (No. 127)

Donkya La.[44] The Government of India was prepared to accept the suggestion when a request was received in May from the Chinese that the proposal should be held in abeyance till the arrival of a new Amban, the man who made the correspondence having been recalled. To this Elgin assented.[45]

Bengal protested, but Elgin persisted with his moderation. Not only was there to be no further action on the frontier until the new Amban arrived, but the military post maintained at Gnatong, on the Sikkim side of Jelep La, was to be withdrawn as a gesture of friendship.[46] Elgin thus explained himself:

> We are no hopeful of any great advance in trade on this frontier, and we should, we think, rest content with that gradual development which may be expected to follow the restoration of confidence on the border and the opening of such trade routes on our side of the frontier as can be constructed and kept in order at a reasonable cost.[47]

In May 1897 the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal was told that the Government of India thought it better not to make any move in the matter of the Sikkim – Tibet boundary for the present.[48]

Claude White's New Proposals

During 1897, when the frontier question remained on hold, White made certain recommendations which in their developed form was to mark a radical departure in India's Tibetan policy. Throughout that year there had been conflicting reports and rumours about the deterioration of Tibet – China relations. White learnt from Hobson, the Chinese trade agent at Yatung, that disturbances had broken out in the Szechuan frontier and that the Chinese had annexed the eastern border district of Chantui. Nothing

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[44] FSEP June 1896: Nos 169 – 200 (No. 199)
[45] *Ibid.* This largely because the new Amban, Wen Hai, had "the reputation of being a comparatively honest official, and is favourably contrasted in this respect with Kwei Huan, his predecessor in Tibet."
[46] C. E. Buckland, *Bengal under the Lieutenant Governor*, Calcutta 1901, vol. II, P. 975
[47] *Papers Relating to Tibet*, 1904, quoted in Lamb, *op cit*, P. 218
[48] FSEP October 1897: Nos 127 - 130

definite was heard till June, and as Nolan noted, "we hear only what the Chinese are pleased to let us know", and this "comes to very little".

> We do not know (he told the Bengal Government) whether the power of China in Tibet has been increased by the display of military force on the frontier, or has been reduced by the hostility which their encroachment is said to have caused, and by the growth of the of the Dalai Lama in years and experience.[49]

There were also reports that the Amban and certain Chinese officials were extremely unhappy in Tibet and were anxious to be relieved. White accordingly suggested the advisability of endeavouring to obtain full and reliable information as to what was then going on in Tibet and at Lhasa in particular. What he had in mind was to encourage Ugyen Kazi, Bhutan's vakil in Kalimpong, to visit Lhasa. The Kazi would go as the agent of his own government, i.e of Bhutan, and would receive nothing in writing from any Indian Official: "His connection with us would be secret."[50]

The Bengal Government, no less concerned about the meager and uncertain information that trickled in from across the frontier at once seized the suggestion and turn it into a definite proposal for the Government of India to consider. The principle points on which Ugyen Kazi would procure information was detailed:

(i) The position occupied by the Dalai Lama in the administration
(ii) How the administration was constituted
(iii) The different parties at Lhasa and by whom each was led
(iv) The precise extent of the Chinese influence
(v) The state of feelings as regards the annexation of the Tibetan district of Chantui and what action was being taken by the Tibetans.
(vi) The prospects of the early cooperation of the Tibetans and Chinese with the British for the settlement of the Sikkim – Tibet boundary question and

[49] FSEP October 1897: Nos. 127 – 130; D.O, C.W. Ballion to W.J. Cunningham, 21 June, and Nolan's Note.
[50] *Ibid.* See Extract from the Diary of the Political Officer, Sikkim, from the 7th to 13th June 1897.

what was the disposition of the Tibetans in regard to the development of trade with China.

The Government of India's Foreign Department did not think this was a good idea at all. "I do not quite like the secret character of the mission which the Bengal Government is disposed to propose", said one note.[51] The Tibetans were so suspicious that the accidental discovery of anything which was not quite above board may tend to weaken what the Chinese Foreign Office had once termed "the bond which has lately been added to the friendly ties between the two nations." "I also feel shy of the proposal", noted the Deputy Secretary.[52] The Secretary Cunningham was equally skeptical, but nonetheless left to the Viceroy. Elgin did not hide his feelings about it:

> Whether a talkative open horse dealer is likely as a Secret Agent in Tibet to obtain reliable information on the "precise extent of Chinese influence", and other rather intricate questions of policy set forth in the notes, I feel doubts. Why if he "is well known to all Tibetans who visit Kalimpong," he cannot answer the first three questions, I do not quite understand. The road project is more intelligible, though I don't quite see how it is going to be worth Rs. 4,000 to us. (the cost indicated by Bengal)[53]

Lord Elgin sought one of the recognized experts on Tibet – China, Major Hamilton Bower's opinion before coming to a conclusion.

Major Bower's note, on 15 July 1897, is interesting not merely because it provides the information Bengal had wanted but principally as shedding light on developments in Tibet and Central Asia that was to shape British policy at the turn of the century. That the Chinese Government was powerless to impose its wishes on Tibet had been demonstrated by the history of British negotiations since the Sikkim war. The boundary question was of no great importance one way or the other, but a time may come when it would be advisable to deal direct with Lhasa, and in that case evidence on the

[51] *Ibid.* Note by J. Lang, 6 July
[52] *Ibid.* Note by H Daly, 8 June
[53] *Ibid.* Note by Elgin, 9 July

exact position and influence of the Amban would be useful. As regards the prospects of early cooperation of the Tibetans and the Chinese, Bower felt that the Tibetans would always shelter themselves behind the Chinese so long as it suited them. And the Chinese unwilling to show their inability to enforce anything on the Tibetans would continue to procrastinate fearing that their position in Tibet may be exposed: "Nothing is dearer to the hearts of the Tsungli Yamen than a suzerainty however shadowy."[54]

Bower's remarks on the issue of trade is equally revealing. The Tibetans were avaricious, have strong commercial interests and left to themselves would be willing to trade. But the monks fearing that the result of foreign contacts may be detrimental to their domination would always do their best to prevent it, and they were strong enough to prevent it. "No one who has not been in Tibet", he remarked, "can realise the extent to which the people are body and soul the slaves of the monks."[55]

From a military point of view, however, Bower felt that the proposal might be useful. The existing reports on the routes to Tibet were incomplete. Though the chances of Britain sending troops were remote yet such an eventuality could not be said to be outside the sphere of practical politics. In the first place, in the event of the Tibetans giving trouble on the Sikkim border serious enough to warrant an expedition it would certainly be advisable to at least threaten their capital; any other policy would only result in interminable and unsatisfactory negotiations. With their sacred city in danger the monks would soon be on their knees.[56] The other military point, though equally remote, was not entirely unworthy of notice. This was the chance of the Russians spreading south. Lhasa, he said, was the "Mecca of a large proportion of their Asiatic subjects" and its possession would add enormously to their prestige among the Mongols and other kindred tribes. There was already evidence to suggest that the Russians had an eye to the place, possibly partly with the idea that their presence there would certainly be annoying to the British in India. Bower had always believed that a large force could neither be

[54] *Ibid.* Note by Major Hamilton Bower, 15 July.
[55] *Ibid.*
[56] *Ibid.*

brought in from the north nor fed when they got there, and a small force could be annihilated from India. The knowledge of this fact, he thought, would probably keep the Russians from sending troops to Tibet. There were now military opinions to the contrary, that a considerable force could not only be taken to Lhasa but also fed there.

> The country north of Lhasa is indisputably the strongest frontier in the world and should the Russians spread south we ought to keep that frontier between us and them; their presence in Lhasa would be most objectionable and possibly might have a very disturbing effect in Calcutta.
>
> If there is a reasonable chance of the Russians occupying Lhasa at an early date the question as to the advisability of forestalling them would then be of great value.[57]

As for Ugyen Kazi Bower knew him to be talkative, fond of swaggering, generally making himself conspicuous and an "unscrupulous liar", qualities that made him unsuitable for the role of a Secret Agent. Besides, he was just the man to take money from both sides and deceive both. He would have preferred Sarat Chandra Das.[58]

This was just the report Elgin wanted. He refused to accept the Kazi as the agent suggested by Bengal. Das would certainly be better but for a military report a specialist alone would be of any use. Elgin therefore discouraged the project.[59]

The new Amban took office at Lhasa in February 1898 and soon announced that work of demarcation of the frontier so long put off should now begin. But first the Tibetans should personally inspect the line of demarcation so as to be thoroughly "enlightened" as to the general direction when the time came for demarcation. What the Amban had in mind was a Tibetan – Chinese examination of the frontier which would occupy the whole of the year, the actual demarcation taking place only in the following

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[57] *Ibid.*
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] *Ibid.* Elgin's Note, 22 July

year. The Amban also expressed a wish to visit Calcutta to confer with the Viceroy.[60] Elgin at once agreed,[61] the Bengal Government again protesting. When told of this White referred the Commissioner, C. J. O'Donnel to his predecessor, Nolan's remarks on the Amban's proposal to allow the Tibetans to examine the frontier:

> I would remark that the Tibetans have for some years had every opportunity of examining the treaty boundary, which was also explained to them, and even in part marked with pillars. I do not understand what more can be required in that direction, or when it can be considered that time for consideration has passed and that for action arrived. A visit by the Amban to India appears to be desirable but it is doubtful whether any settlement as to the frontier can be made with him. I rather expect that he will declare the intention of China to levy a duty on goods passing Yatung.[62]

By this time the idea of shifting the mart from Yatung to Phari had taken over White. At Yatung in August last, Hobson the Chinese Trade Agent, had casually remarked that trade would double if the mart was shifted to Phari. This at once appealed to the Political Officer, for at this place "intending purchasers would meet Tibetan dealers without the interruption of the middleman in Chumbi valley."[63] He felt that efforts should be made to remove the mart to the new site at the time the boundary was being settled. His abortive meeting at Yatung in November with the Chinese Frontier Officer and the Tibetan delegate Wangpu only served to strengthen his resolve on Phari. It became clear to him at that meeting that the Tibetans would not trade Giaogong for better facilities at Yatung; for restoration of the latter was no concession, they considered it their right. Only after their claim to Giaogong was recognized would the Tibetans be ready to discuss trade.[64]

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[60] FEAP June 1898: Nos. 100 – 106; D. J. Macpherson to Foreign Secretary, India, 13 May and Encl, Letter from Amban to Viceroy

[61] *Ibid.* Viceroy to Amban, 2 June.

[62] *Ibid.*, C. J. O'Donnel, to Chief Secretary, Bengal 4 May.

[63] FSEP, October 1898: Keep with No. 2; see Extract from the Diary of J.C. White, Yatung, 31 August

[64] Lamb, *op cit, P. 219*

Towards the close of the year White submitted definite proposals on the Phari idea, and much else besides. The timing of the proposal is of course significant: the five year stipulation in the Trade Regulations would come to an end in November when a new agreement would be due. He now proposed that Tibetan claims at Giaogong should be recognized only if they removed the mart to the completely new site of Phari at the edge of the Tibetan plateau, and not just improve Yatung's conditions or shift it to Rinchingong. The Tibetans should agree in addition to an extradition agreement with the British which would prevent the employment of Tibetan criminals fleeing British territory.* White next referred to two objects, both of which Hamilton Bower made in his July 1897 note to Elgin: "we should endeavour to negotiate direct with Lhasa", was one . There was little chance of any advance in the negotiations through the Chinese. The other referred to the Russians, who he said "are making progress in the north, and have already, I am informed, tried to make their influence felt in Tibet. We should certainly be there before them, and not allow the Tibetan markets to be closed to English goods."[65] White, as Alistair Lamb remarks proposed two changes, both of which were a radical departure of policy of far reaching import:

> Firstly, that in exchange for recognition of Tibetan rights at Giaogong the Tibetans should agree to the removal of the mart to Phari, where it would operate under the same conditions as those which should have been in force at Yatung. Secondly, that in Anglo-Tibetan relations the mediation of the Chinese should be dispensed with and direct contact established between the British and Lhasa.[66]

White's latest proposal seemed desirable to the Bengal Government for two reasons. The first was the information brought from Lhasa by Ugyen Kazi. The last had

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* Claude White's insistence on this was largely because the Tibetans had employed as English interpreters and advisers on British affairs two refugees from British territory. These two, Dhurkey Sirdar was wanted by the Darjeeling police for theft and for illegal political activities, and Jampay, a former clerk who had run off with money belonging to the Darjeeling Improvement Trust. They were to play a part on more than one occasion in the growing tension on the Sikkim-Tibet border that followed the arrival of Lord Curzon

[65] *Ibid.* for details, pp. 220 -221, also S. Gopal, *British Policy in India*, Cambridge, 1965, P. 228

[66] *Ibid.*

not been heard of the "horse trader" since the rebuff administered by Elgin in July last. He had obtained a pass from the Bhutan Government, obtained "leave" in Kalimpong and proceeded to Lhasa on his own at the end of July.[67] On his return he reported to White, who in January submitted a note to the Bengal Government recording the information the Kazi had obtained at Lhasa.[68] He was apparently received in audience by the Dalai Lama who received the presents sent him by the Bengal Government and Bhutan's Governor of the eastern province, the Tongsa Penlop. Ugyen Kazi told White that the Chikyab Lama, roughly Chief Secretary to the Tibetan government, had complained to him that the Chinese would not consult them and would not say what they wanted but worked on their own account. The Chinese had told the Lama that they were going along the Sikkim frontier and wanted some Tibetans to accompany them. These were sent but were given no authority by Lhasa to act in anyway whatsoever. The Lama said they would wait and see what the Amban would do, and that if nothing came out of it to enquire of the British if they would receive a man of rank for negotiations. The Amban and the Dalai Lama had not made up their quarrel and were not on talking terms. Formerly, they jointly appointed the civil authorities after settling between them who were to be appointed, the Amban merely writing to Peking to obtain formal sanction. Since the rupture between the two the Amban sent his nominations to Peking direct, and only once did the Dalai Lama object. The Tibetan did not like the Chinese yoke, Ugyen Kazi told White.

The second was the increase on the volume of trade registered at Yatung. The figures for the year 1898 -99 were:

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[67] FSEP August 1899: Nos. 56 – 57; See Notes, p.4 Bengal's suggestion, it will be recalled, was not accepted either when first made in 1897 or when renewed in January 1898. In May 1898 the Bengal Government again wrote saying Ugyen Kazi wished for four months leave and proposed to go to Lhasa on his own responsibility, having obtained a pass from his own Government. The Foreign Department felt that the Tibetans would most probably believe that the British had sent him, but the Viceroy did not think it right to prevent his taking leave and that the Government could not stop his going to Lhasa on leave.

[68] *Ibid.* C. W. Bolton, Chief Secretary Bengal to Foreign Secretary India, 23 January, with Encl., White 's Confidential record.

Imports into British territories	Export from British territories
Rs. 11,21,019	Rs. 10,17,685.

The increase had been steady and was the greatest that year. If the treasure was omitted, the value of imports was Rs. 8,91,195 in 1898 – 99, against Rs. 7,74,913 in 1897 – 98 and of exports rs. 8,61,362 in 1898 – 99 against Rs. 6,37,840 in 1897 – 98. Phari in Tibet and Kalimpong in the Darjeeling district remained the two terminal centres of the trade. The most notable increases in articles of trade during that year occurred in musk and wool imported from Tibet and in cotton, piece-good, coral, matches, mirror and silk, Chinese and tussar exported from British territory.[69]

These two reasons underscored the importance of direct access to Lhasa and the need to remove the mart to Phari. With only minor changes in the conduct of business under which the new mart at Phari was to function the Bengal Government approved of White's proposals in February 1899. They were to become by the middle of the year the declared policy of the Government of India under Elgin's successor, Lord Curzon.

[69] *Bengal Administration Report*, "Relations with Tributary States and frontier Affairs, 1898 -1899"

Appendix E

Regulations of 1893 Regarding Trade, Communications and Pasturage to be Appended to the Sikkim-Tibet Convention of 1890

I. – A trade-mart shall be established at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the frontier, and shall be open to all British subjects for purposes of trade from the first day of May 1894. The Government of India shall be free to send officers to reside at Yatung to watch the conditions of British trade at that mart.

Trade

II. – British subjects trading at Yatung shall be at liberty to travel freely to and fro between the frontier and Yatung, to reside at Yatung, and to rent houses and godowns for their own accommodation and the storage of their goods. The Chinese Government undertake that suitable buildings for the above purposes shall be provided for British subjects, and also that a special and fitting residence shall be provided for the officer or officers appointed by the government of India under Regulation I to reside at Yatung. British subjects shall be at liberty to sell their goods to whomsoever they please, to purchase native commodities in kind or in money, to hire transport of any kind, and in general to conduct their business transactions in conformity with local usage, and without any vexatious restrictions. Such British subjects shall receive efficient protection for their persons and property. At Lang-Jo and Ta-chun, between the frontier and Yatung, where rest-houses have been built by the Tibetan authorities, British subjects can break their journey in consideration of a daily rent.

III. – Import and export trade in the following articles –
arms, ammunition, military stores, salt, liquors, and intoxicating or narcotic drugs, may at the option of either Government be entirely prohibited, or permitted only on such conditions as either Government on their own side may think fit to impose.

IV. – Goods, other than goods of the description enumerated in regulation III, entering Tibet from British India, across the Sikkim-Tibet frontier, or *vice versa*, whatever their origin, shall be exempt from duty for a period of five years commencing from the date of the opening of Yatung to trade; but after the expiration of this term, if found desirable, a tariff may be mutually agreed upon and enforced.
Indian tea may be imported into Tibet at a rate of duty not exceeding that at which Chinese tea is imported into England, but trade in Indian tea shall not be engaged in during the five years for which other commodities are exempt.

V. – All goods on arrival at Yatung, whether from British India or from Tibet, must be reported at the Customs Station there for examination, and the report must give full particulars of the description, quantity, and value of the goods.

VI. – In the event of trade disputes arising between British and Chinese or Tibetan subjects in Tibet, the shall be inquired into and settled in personal conference by the Political Officer for Sikkim and the Chinese Frontier Officer. The object of personal

conference being to ascertain fats and do justice, where there is a divergence of views the law of the country to which the defendant belongs shall guide.

VII. – Dispatches from the Government of India to the Chinese Imperial Resident in Tibet shall be handed over by the Political Officer for Sikkim to the Chinese Frontier Officer, who will forward them by special courier.

Communication

Dispatches from the Chinese Imperial Resident in Tibet to the Government of India will be handed over by the Chinese Frontier Officer to the Political Officer for Sikkim, who will forward them as quickly as possible.

VIII. – Dispatches between the Chinese and Indian officials must be treated with due respect, and the couriers will be assisted in passing to and fro by the officers of each Government.

IX. – After the expiration of one year from the date of the opening of Yatung, such Tibetans as continue to graze their cattle in Sikkim will be subject to such Regulations as the British Government may from time to time enact for the general conduct of grazing in Sikkim. Due notice will be given of such Regulations.

Pasturage

General Articles

I. -- In the event of disagreement between the Political officer for Sikkim and the Chinese frontier Officer, each official shall report the matter to his immediate superior, who, in turn, if a settlement is not arrived at between them, shall refer such matter to their respective Governments for disposal.

II. – After the lapse of five years from the date on which these regulations shall come into force, and on six months' notice given by either party, these Regulations shall be subject to revision by Commissioners appointed on both sides for this purpose who shall be empowered to decide on and adopt such amendments and extensions as experience shall prove to be desirable.

III. – It having been stipulated that Joint Commissioners should be appointed by the British and Chinese Governments under the seventh article of the Sikkim-tibet Convention to meet and discuss with a view to the final settlement of the questions reserved under articles 4, 5 and 6 of the said Convention; and the Commissioners thus appointed having met and discussed the questions referred to, namely, Trade, Communciation, and Pasturage, have been further appointed to sign the agreement in nine regulations and three general Articles now arrived at, and to declare that the said nine Regulations and the three general Articles form part of the Convention itself.

In witness whereof the respective Commissioners have hereto subscribed their names.

Done in quadruplicate at Darjeeling this 5th day of December, in the year one thousand eight hundred and ninety-three, corresponding with the Chinese date the 28th day of the 10th moon of the 19th year of Kuang Hsü.

CHAPTER III

CURZON, TIBET AND SIKKIM

Lord Elgin's moderation in dealing with the Tibet problem was not the product of any Viceregal weakness as it may seem, but it was a policy dictated by events of great complexity in the North-West the difficult and expensive frontier wars of 1897 – 98.[1] These had been over when Curzon arrived and it was possible for the new Viceroy to begin the process of disengagement, of what was called the policy of "withdrawal and concentration". After establishing British dominance in the Persian Gulf region Curzon was relatively free to deal with Tibet. What in the beginning seemed no more than a local irritant was soon to be transformed and lead to events of far reaching consequences.

Few Governors–General and Viceroys had prepared themselves more than Curzon for the Indian appointment and fewer still came equipped with such vast knowledge of India and Central Asia.[2] He did a stint as Under Secretary of State for India and when not tied to office in England travelled widely. During 1888 and 1894 he visited most of Central Asia, Persia, Afghanistan and the difficult Pamirs, the Far East, Japan, China, Korea, the Indo – China and Siam. He put this vast knowledge into print: *Russia in Central Asia in 1889*, published that same year; *Persian and the Persian Question* in 1892, and the *Problems of the Far East* a few years later.[3] He was aware of his own qualification for the Indian Viceroyalty, describing them in 1897 to Lord Salisbury when he sought that high office:

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[1] See C. Collin Davies, Problem

[2] Curzon's Viceroyalty would naturally attract numerous scholarly works. For a brief bibliography see Parshotam Mehra, *The Younghusband Mission, An Interpretation*, Bombay 1968, Rep. New Delhi, 2005, pp 122 – 23, n.

[3] In addition were his *Tales of Travel*, London 1923, and the two posthumously published *Leaves from a Viceroy's Note-Book*, London 1926, a companion volume to the *Tales* and *British Government in India*, London 1925.

> I have for the last 10 years made a careful and earnest study of Indian problems, have been in the country four times and am acquainted with and have the confidence of most of its leading men... the views or forecasts I have been bold enough to express have... turned out to be right... I have been fortunate too, in making the acquaintance of the rulers of the neighbouring states... At the India Office... I learnt something of the official working of the great machine... a very great work can be done by an English Viceroy who is young and active and intensely absorbed in his work... (and who has) a great love of the country and pride in the imperial aspect of its possession.[4]

Implementing White's Proposal

Such a man could hardly be expected to accept Tibetan or Chinese obstructions with equanimity, even if his hands, like those of Elgin before him, were full of Imperial problems elsewhere. Almost immediately after he assumed office in January 1899 Curzon decided to act on White's proposals. He was early convinced by the Political Officer's views that Yatung "can never be expected to be a real market." He showed a willingness to leave Giaogong, and its environs to the Tibetans, that desolate region they were "so desirous of retaining", but on the condition that Phari be thrown open to traders from India. These Indian traders were not to be hindered from conducting their business directly with the Tibetans, and that there should be an option of sending a British official to visit Phari and reside there "if this should prove desirable."[5]

What seemed most irksome to the Imperial Pro-Consul was the established mode of communicating with the Tibetans through the Chinese. This system he considered as

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[4] Quoted in Mehra, *The Younghusband Mission*, P. 121

[5] *Ibid*, P. 144. The Anglo – Indian press too had been pressing for decisive action in the matter of trade with Tibet. The *Commercial Intelligence* of London, in its issue of 18 February quoted a correspondent of *The Englishman* saying "In this year of the renewal and reversal of the Indo-Chinese-Tibetan Treaty... there will be more than interest felt in the land that lies between India and China, which, though the property of neither, may become the highway of both for intercourse and commerce... The key to the whole situation lies in the coming treaty with Tibet. Let the Indian Government make the treaty with Tibet first-hand. Let the treaty be made between India and Tibet guaranteeing freedom for travel and trade - a freedom as free to China as to anyone else - and let the Indian Government give the Tibetan authorities every encouragement to trust them in a move towards freedom and a longer acquaintance with outside things, and so prevent a relapse into the Chinese policy of a "closed preserve" for the good of China only.

"most ignominious", and the use of the Amban as an intermediary "an admitted farce". "We seem to be moving in circles", Curzon further noted, "if we apply to Tibet, we either receive no reply, or are referred to the Chinese Resident"; and if the latter was approached "he excuses his inability to put any pressure upon Tibet." He wondered to the Secretary of State, now Lord George Hamilton, if this method of communication ought not to be ended:

> I do not feel quite sure, however, whether in your opinion we have so far committed ourselves in this method of procedure in the case of Tibet as to render any experimental departure from it impossible.[6]

Nevertheless, two days after this written, on 25 March, Curzon addressed the Amban on the proposed changes in the location of the mart on the lines of Claude White's 1898 proposals.

The letter was despatched through Captain E. LeMesurier who officiated for White during the latter's furlough and was delivered to the addressee at Yatung on 15 April. In a long demi-official to H. S. Barnes, Government of India's officiating Foreign Secretary LeMesurier described what transpired at Yatung.[7] The Amban discussed Lord Curzon's letter the moment he received it, and said that that the Tibetans had strongly opposed the removal of the trade mart to Rinchingong, as carrier hinted to them by White, and that it would be hopeless to try and persuade them to agree to a move to Phari. When asked if he intended to reply to the Viceroy as to whether he was prepared to recommended the move of the mart to Phari to his Government he declined an answer, repeating that his recommendations would be futile as the Tibetans would never agree to the move. After much persuasion he wrote a reply, which like his conversation was entirely evasive and beside the point. He did not answer the question as to his own readiness to recommend the move to Phari, which led LeMesurier to believe that "he has no intention of doing anything to further the matter." In the course of the conversation

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] FSEP August 1899: Nos. 56 – 57; D.O. Captain E. LeMesurier to H., S. Barnes, officiating Foreign Secretary, India 29 April 1899.

the Amban had remarked that if the Government of India insisted on maintaining the Convention boundary as against Tibetan claims, the Tibetans would fall back on the support of the Russians who had for some time been in negotiations with them.

The day before the officiating Political Officer left Yatung four Tibetan Lamas called on him, of whom the chief spokesman was a "Lhasa lama", whom LeMesurier found to be an intelligent and most pleasant man to meet. They professed every desire for friendly relations with the Indian Government and said that other people, who LeMesurier interpreted to be the Russians, constantly offered them help and support, but that they always declined such overtures. They pressed their claims to the Giaogong and Lonakh valley territories which they said had been cede by the Chinese without their consent. The Political Officer replied that commercial relations and trading facilities to merchants from India must form the preliminary to any consideration of such claims. The Tibetans assured him that they would represent this to the Dalai Lama on their return to Lhasa.[8]

LeMesurier found that in their conversation these Tibetan officials were less obstructive than the Chinese Amban, and he felt convinced that the Phari mart would be more likely to be obtained from them than through any negotiations with the Chinese. The latter thought, in his opinion, that the development of trade from India would injure their monopoly for supplying Tibet from China. They also felt that their power in Tibet was declining and that closer relations between Tibet and India would tend to destroy further their waning influence. "This, such as it is," said LeMesurier, "is now based on clever diplomacy and the liberal subsidizing of Tibetan monasteries."[9] He then went on to show evidence that proved Chinese power in Tibet was indeed declining:

(i) Only a few months ago an order was passed by the Grand Council at Lhasa that all "parwanas" issued to Chinese and other foreigners for free

[8] *Ibid.*
[9] *Ibid.*

supplies and transport must be signed by a Tibetan as well as by a Chinese official, and that otherwise they would be disregarded.

(ii) Everywhere it was reported that Wen, the Chinese Amban, lately drew up a scheme for levying duties on all trade passing the post at Yatung – to have come into force on 1 May 1899 (i.e. after the expiration of the five years mentioned in the Trade Regulation of 1893). The Tomos, i.e. Tibetan tribe inhabiting the Chumbi valley who hold the monopoly for the carrying of a trade between Tibet proper and India, vigorously protested against the scheme and Wen was compelled to drop it.

(iii) At Yatung, the Amban put one of the Tibetan officials (a *depon*) under arrest, ostensibly for failing to collect transport for him and his followers by a certain date, but general report had it, that it was because the *depon* had invited LeMesurier without the Amban's permission. The Tomos rose in a body, and demanded, not only his release but a condition that all supplies and transport provided for the Ambans in future should be paid for. They obtained the *depon's* release and (LeMesurier heard) the second demand was also ceded.[10]

At the end of his letter LeMesurier suggested to Barnes what he thought would settle the boundary problem. The territory around Giaogong was open for grazing for some three months of the year, about 15 May to 15 August, and the Political Officer should reside during the greater part of that period in and around that place, and whilst there, should arrange for the levying of a small grazing tax on all Tibetan flocks driven to the British side of the Convention border. A small escort of about twenty or thirty sepoys under a havildar from the detachment from Gangtok was all that would be necessary to enable him to do this peaceably and quietly. This would assert British possession of the disputed tract and would give the Political Officer excellent opportunities for getting into closer relations with the Tibetans chiefs along the border, unhampered by Chinese influence, and of learning the Tibetan language. Such action if carefully carried out may induce the

[10] *Ibid.*

Tibetans to enter upon future negotiations with a feeling that a substantial *quid pro quo* is to be gained they yielded to the British. This so far had not been the case.[11]

LeMesurier letter was carefully examined in the Foreign Department where there was a general agreement about his Giaogong proposal. Curzon accepted it, and noted:

> If we wait for a reply of the shadowy Tibetan officials who interviewed Captain LeMesurier we shall sit still till the crack of doom.
>
> We shall do nothing with Tibet, until we elbow out the Amban and deal with Lhasa direct. It will be a good thing to frighten them a little to start with in order to show that we mean to stand as per our rights.
>
> The frontier concession will then be all the more gracious and valuable.[12]

The Bengal Government, to whom the proposal was referred since it came from an officer directly under them, was less enthusiastic, if only because the "forcible occupation of Giaogong" would probably lead to the stoppage of trade by the Kalimpong-Phari route, and eventually perhaps even to hostilities. Bengal's views halted the Government of India's hands. [13] and the idea of sending the Political Officer of Sikkim to Giaogong was ultimately shelved.

By then a news item in the *Simla News* of 11 May, headed "Russians in Lhasa," had appeared which at once caught Curzon's attention. The Foreign Department had no information on it. All they could tell the Viceroy was what LeMesurier learnt from the

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[11] *Ibid.* LeMesurier added in conclusion that "I am doing all I can to push on the construction of the recently sanctioned Lachen road in the north of Sikkim" and this "road materially assert an effectual occupation of the Giaogong territory, should the above proposals be approved during the present season, and its construction will itself have an excellent political effect on the Tibetans."

[12] *Ibid.* Note by Curzon, 13May

[13] *Ibid.* See Notes, p. 4 – 6; One of them queried, "Whether it would be expedient to risk another war with Tibet for the sake of enforcing commercial concessions the advantage of which have yet to be proved, is part of a larger question involving our relations with another great Power: perhaps this is not fitting moment for risking such a contingency; and a step which would be regarded as an act of disrespect to China might injuriously affect the attitude of the Chinese Government towards concessions in another quarter."

Amban and the Tibetan officials at Yatung. The news remained unconfirmed, but Curzon was constrained to record:

> I have very little doubt that the Russians have been in communication with Lhasa; and that our policy up to date has been a mistake and must be reversed.
>
> For years we have been treating China as the *de facto* sovereign, and have ignored Tibet.
>
> Now for the first time for many years we have a Dalai Lama who is of age, who is civil as well as a sacerdotal ruler, and who means to make what he can out of his independence.
>
> We shall only get along if we enter into communication with him direct and give the go-by to that preposterous Amban.[14]

Access to Lhasa: Search for Agents

To the Viceroy there appeared only two persons on the horizon who could be used as channels to Lhasa – the "unpopular Chandra Das" and the "garrulous Bhutan vakil." They did not impress. Curzon directed the officiating Foreign Secretary, H. S. Barma, to get in touch with one Paul Mowis of Darjeeling , said to be the author of the recent article in the *Simla News*. Barnes met him on 23 May and recorded the interview in a long Memorandum. Mowis, when asked for more information, was rather vague about the party of Russians.[15] But he was certain that some Europeans had visited the Dalai Lama's capital recently. He too spoke of the need "to get into direct

[14] *Ibid.* Note by Curzon, 17 May.

[15] *Ibid.* No. 60. See Memorandum by Barnes, 27 May. Mowis, however, confirmed some of LeMesurier's observations, on Chinese commercial interests in Tibet: "it is to the interest of the Chinese to keep this trade entirely in their own hands, and that consequently they will place every possible obstacle in the way of trade between India and Tibet... that it is the Chinese who are really at the bottom of all the difficulties experienced in opening trade with Tibet, and that they encourage the Tibetans in their exclusiveness... Chinese influence in Tibet is owing mainly to their practice of subsiding the Lamas who number-one-sixth of the population, and that they have even encouraged the importation of shoddy articles from Darjeeling in order to demonstrate to the Tibetans the worthlessness of English goods... That a way to the proximity of Lhasa, manufactured articles could be supplied from India much more cheaply than through China and of a better quality. Tea, for example, which is largely consumed in Tibet, could be supplied from Darjeeling at a fourth of the price of, and much better quality than, the brick tea which the Chinese get from China..."

communication with the Lamas and to ignore the Chinese Amban." A subject they discussed, the acquisition of the Chumbi valley, provides an interesting side light on the desperation of the Foreign Department. Mowis told Barnes that,

> With an expenditure of a very small sum (Rs 300 or 400) he could place the Government in communication with the Penlop of Geongtse Jong, the principal town between Chumbi and Lhasa, and that, with judicious management, he believes it would not be difficult to arrange with the Tibetans for the purchase or lease of the whole Chumbi valley upto Phari and the establishment of a mart at the latter place. Mr. Mowis is convinced that, with Phari in our possession, capital would at once be forthcoming in Calcutta to supply the mart with the best English goods, which can then easily find their way into Tibet inspite of the Chinese.[16]

Instead of using force in Giaogong, Mowis said a good deal was to be got out of the Tibetans by "sweet-hearting" them as the Chinese did. Barnes sent the memorandum to Bengal reminding them that "it has been more than once suggested that to effect any permanent improvement in our trading facilities with Tibet, it is of importance to open direct negotiations with Lhasa."[17] That Mowis could be the agent for this went without saying.[18]

What is remarkable about his interview is the importance given to a man who the Foreign Depatment hardly knew and who had no *locus standi* with the Government. Barnes seems to have taken him rather too seriously and for a while, even the Viceroy Until Bengal's Chief Secretary C. R. Bolton informed them that Mowis was a former hairdresser in Darjeeling and a failed dealer in Tibetan curios, heavily in debt and whose "statements regards himself and his knowledge of Tibet are generally discredited". Such a man would be "altogether unsuitable for any negotiations with Tibet or Bhutan."[19]

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[16] *Ibid*, Mowis even suggested to Barnes how the Government of India should go about acquiring the Chumbi valley. Mowis to Barnes, 20 June, in *Ibid.*

[17] *Ibid.* H. S. Barnes to Chief Secretary, Bengal, 3 June

[18] *Ibid.* Mowis had told Barnes that he was visiting Lhasa next September on a religious mission accompanied by some influential "fellow Buddhists" from Ceylon and Bhutan. He had stated that he already had permission from Lhasa and Bhutan allowed the mission through that country and that the mission was being financed by the Rothschilds, the *New York Herald* and the Calcutta *Englishman.*

[19] *Ibid.* Bolton to Officiating Foreign Secretary, India, 8 July

Bengal's preference was Ugyen Kazi. The Foreign Department, still relying on Hamilton Bower's opinion of the man, which was shared by Elgin, was hesitant, and noted as such,[20] but in the absence any other likely agent agreed to go along with the Local Government. Barnes noted on what the Kazi was to do in Tibet:

> If he is sent, he should be instructed to let it be known that the Government would be glad to receive a Tibetan of rank, if the Dalai Lama is willing to send one. He might also be told to say that the Government are willing to make concessions in the matter of the boundary if additional facilities are given in the way of trade, and I think he might also be told to hint, if he finds an opportunity, that the Government of India would be willing to pay something for the acquisition of rights in the Chumbi valley upto Phari.[21]

Curzon's resolve was strengthened by a communication from London. The Viceroy had, on 20 March when the subject was first before him, sought the opinion of the Secretary of State on the twin issues, opening of direct communications between the Indian and Tibetan Governments and the modifications of the trade arrangements and whether diplomatic pressure could be exerted upon the Chinese to achieve these objectives. Lord George Hamilton discussed these with the Foreign Office. Lord Salisbury was skeptical about the efficacy of diplomacy in Peking and said that under existing circumstances the preferred course would be to open direct negotiations with the Tibetans, and should this be found possible, to endeavour to obtain free access to Phari for Indian traders in exchange for rectification of the frontier.[22] This suggestion, Hamilton now informed the Viceroy may be acted upon. He was, however, doubtful of the policy of insisting upon the right of sending a British official to visit or reside at Phari since that might complicate and delay the settlement of the essential part of the

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[20] *Ibid.* See Notes, P. 13. Captain Daly, for example, wrote, "I don't think Ugyen Kazi can be authorised to make offers to the Tibetans or to enter into anything like negotiations with them. His role, I understand, is to try and break down Tibetan suspicions, and induce their leading men to come forward and discuss matters directly with our officers. He might be given a letter from the Viceroy or the Lieutenant Governor to the Dalai Lama, and he should at the discretion of the Bengal, be provided with presents in cash and kind for distribution." Barnes would have preferred to use the resources of the Political Officer, Sikkim.

[21] *Ibid.* Note by Barnes, 18 July

[22] *Ibid.* Francis Bertie to A. Godley, May; Godfrey to Bertie, 4 May

negotiations.[23] Curzon accordingly approved Barnes note of 18 July. He hoped that the Kazi or whoever the agent was, would be a reliable person and would have a reasonable chance of coming into direct contact with the Dalai Lama, "to convey a letter from me to the latter." The Dalai Lama would very likely be afraid to send a Tibetan of rank to negotiate with the British and Curzon thought "he may be amenable to a compliment of a letter, and may even unbend to a correspondence."[24]

In September Ugyen Kazi proceeded to Tibet, armed with instructions from Bengal that from Phari he should write to the Dalai Lama, using his own words, and inform him of the British willingness to receive a Tibetan official. If only this succeeded would he be entrusted with Curzon's letter to the Dalai Lama. In November Ugyen Kazi reported that he had written to the Dalai Lama as instructed but the Tibetan Pontiff was cautious and in no way indicated that he wished to such a correspondence which might invite Chinese retribution. At this Bengal observed that it was "useless to make any further endeavour at present to open direct communications through an agent, with the Tibetan authorities."[25] Curzon's own conclusion was : "Ugyen Kazi had proved a failure and we can now settle what we like. I am not impressed with the efficacy or success of the present system."[26] The Foreign Department was directed to submitted proposals.

With the failure of the mission under Ugyen Kazi the Viceroy directed the efforts of the Government towards the two important and interwoven issues: to render Sikkim and the Political Agency more responsive to the needs of the Tibetan policy. The second was the more immediate: in view of the obstacles and suspicious attitude of both Chinese and Tibetans it would be advisable to desist from attempts to open up communications with the Dalai Lama and other high officials through Sikkim, and therefore it was necessary to try some other route. There were three possible alternatives.

(i) send up someone from and through Nepal

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[23] *Ibid.* George Hamilton to Curzon
[24] *Ibid.* Note, Curzon, 19 July.
[25] For details Lamb, *op cit*, pp. 243 - 244
[26] FSEP September 1900: Nos. 78 – 108, Note, Curzon, 28 December

(ii) send someone from and through Ladakh, and

(iii) to send someone round through China from the east.

The first was not without its advantages. The Nepal Darbar maintained a Mission at Lhasa and a good many traders went up into Tibet through Nepal. It seemed possible therefore, that a carefully selected Gorkha officer travelling as a trader might go through Nepal without attracting attention or suspicion, and might, especially if he were able to gain the assistance of the Nepalese Mission at Lhasa, succeed in gaining access to the Dalai Lama. The Resident at Kathmandu, with whom Deputy Secretary Daly discussed the possibility, was not very enthusiastic. At least not before taking the Prime Minister Sir Bir Shamsher into confidence as it would be impossible to get a man through Nepal without the knowledge of the Darbar. The Resident of course felt that no harm would be done if Bir Shamsher was cautiously sounded on the subject.[27]

Daly was not keen on any attempts through Almora as recent events that had occurred on the borders would make the Tibetans as suspicious as on the Sikkim side. Ladakh might prove a better alternative towards western Tibet. The "Lapchak" or triennial mission from Ladakh to Tibet always had a representative of the Maharaja of Kashmir, taken from a Tibetan or Ladakhi family of eminence. No other person, not even a Dogra of high rank from the Maharaja's own Court would be welcome, probably would not even be received at the Dalai Lama's capital. Whether it would be possible for a Ladakhi of high rank who could be safely entrusted with negotiations, such as the Viceroy had in mind, the views of the Resident would have to be sought.[28] The third alternative was admittedly "a startling one". The reason why Daly brought it up was that there was in Burma one Taw Sein Ko a man who in many respects would be "a most admirable Agent". Daly did not know him personally, but only by reputation. The man was Adviser on Chinese Affairs in Burma and author of a pamphlet, *Suggested Reforms For China*. If Taw Sein Ko were to be deputed to try and reach Lhasa, the best route for

[27] FSEP, September 1900: Nos 78 – 108; Department Notes, Daly's Note of 11 January
[28] *Ibid.*

him to take would probably be through Yunnan and the west of Szechuan by Batang and Chiamdo. The journey would be a formidable one and would take several months. But Daly was confident that whether the Agent succeeded in his mission or not he would be able to bring back much information of value and interest.[29] The Foreign Secretary, Sir William Cunningham too had been toying with the Yunnan route being assured by a former Consul at Momein that this would be feasible.[30]

Both the Ladakh and the Yunnan routes were to be tried out, but Nepal not to be pursued immediately in view of the Resident's advice against attempting anything independently of the Darbar. Meanwhile, all pressures from the Sikkim side was to be dropped and the Political Officer directed to be "as friendly as possible with all Tibetans, but to ask them for nothing."[31] The Bengal Government was to be told that in the opinion of the Governor General in Council Sikkim affairs would be better managed by eliminating the Commissioner of Rajshahi from the chain of official correspondence and by letting the Political Officer write direct to the Local Government. A change in the Commissioners was going to be made in a couple of months and that would provide the opportunity of changing the system.

In the event Taw Sein Ko was found to be unsuitable. He was "very fat" and would be unable to undertake, as Curzon had anticipated, the difficult journey involving complete command of Chinese, great physical endurance and sufficient familiarity with Buddhist rites and customs. Word now got around that the Government of India were looking for agents to proceed to Tibet on an important political mission. One Annie Taylor of the Tibetan Pioneer Mission at Yatung speaking of the "friendly relationship that exists between me and the Tibetan Government," offered her services to the cause of trade and Empire.[32] No use was made of them as the Bishop of Calcutta, said, she

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid*, Note, W.J. Cunningham, 12 January
[31] *Ibid.*
[32] *Ibid*, Annie Taylor to Private Secretary to the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, 27 June; and Bishop to W.R. Lawrence, 4 July. "It has been my great aim and prayer that Tibet should be opened without the horrors

"excitable and rather apt to exaggerate her political importance." Captain W. F. O'Connor submitted a "Proposed Scheme for a Mission to Lhasa,"[33] only to gain Curzon's rebuff: "Captain O'Connor is not required to make any attempt at present. He would merely spoil our plans. I have told him that I have at present no call upon his services."[34] Discussions on the Ladakh route had by then had sufficiently progressed.

Sir Adelbert Talbot, the Resident in Kashmir, had recommended his assistant Captain R.L. Kennion to the Government of India.[35] Kennion had been showing great interest in western Tibet, in Gangtok, in particular, which until Sikkim was opened after 1861, and again after 1898, was considered as the obvious gateway to Lhasa. A year ago he had visited Rudok, across Ladakh in Tibet and the success of this journey had convinced him that he might succeed with establishing contacts with the two Garpons, or local heads of the districts. His interests were re-ignited when he learnt from Talbot that the Government of India were looking for agents to carry a letter from the Viceroy to the Dalai Lama. Kennion at once proposed that he might be authorised to visit Gartok and carry the letter to the Garpon for onward transmission through them to Lhasa. The number of things Kennion proposed to do on the way and at Gartok was so confusingly varied that it prompted Curzon to remind the Foreign Department that, "What we want is to get in touch with the Dalai Lama. That is the object of the endeavour."[36]

Kennion proceeded to Gartok in September 1900, brushing aside, it is said, some twenty five mounted Tibetan border guards who tried to prevent his entry into Tibetan territory. It was not easy going, but to put it briefly, Kennion was able to hand over the letter to the Garpons which they agreed to take to Lhasa. In March, 1901 the Garpons returned the Viceroy's letter. They said they had sent it to Lhasa but had been returned

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of war" the lady missionary wrote at the end of her letter, and "let us continue in prayer that it may be so."

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, Note, Curzon, 20 July

[35] *Ibid*, Sir A.C. Talbot to Captain H. Daly, 1214a

[36] *Ibid.* Note, Curzon, July, Also Lamb, *op cit*, pp 246 – 250, for details.

unopened as the Tibetan Government saw no need for any communication with the British. It was back to Ugyen Kazi, the Bhutan vakil.

It so happened that the Dalai Lama had taken a fancy to elephants and asked Ugyen Kazi, so he told White in December 1900, to get him two young ones. Thinking that this could be "one of the best ways to get into communication with the Dalai Lama", White mentioned it to the Foreign Secretary Sir William Cunningham, saying that a present of these should be made by Government.[37] White was on his way to Rangoon with Sikkim's Sidkeong Namgyal on what was the young Prince's educational tour, and a month later Barnes, who had taken over from Cunningham, got in touch with Bengal enquiring after the elephants. More importantly, "Could Ugyen Kazi be entrusted with them and with a letter from his Excellency to the Dalai Lama?"[38] Bengal said he could be – Ugyen Kazi had been to Lhasa and had seen the Pontiff at the Potala.[39] White confirmed them when he met Barnes in Calcutta on his way back to Gangtok.[40] The Government of India accordingly decided that Ugyen Kazi shall carry a revised version of the Viceroy's letter that had been lying with Bengal since 1899.

In June 1901, the vakil proceeded to Lhasa with the two elephants (one died on the way) two peacocks and a leopard, which the Dalai Lama paid for, and the Viceroy's letter.[41] He was to hand over the letter to no one but the Dalai Lama and in utmost secrecy, request the Lama to give a reply and bring it back to India. In October Ugyen Kazi returned from Lhasa with the Viceroy's letter unopened and its seals intact. He said that he had landed the letter to the Dalai Lama, who declined to accept it on the ground that he had been forbidden to have any dealings with foreigners except in consultation with the Amban. And the Amban would not permit. There was doubt in many quarters whether the Kazi had ever hand the letter to the Dalai Lama at all. Curzon was one of

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[37] FSEP August 1901: Nos 18 – 28, White to Cunningham, 23 December 1900.
[38] FSEP, August 1901: Nos. 18 – 28; DO, Barnes to C E Buckland, 17 January
[39] *Ibid.* Buckland to Barnes, 24 January.
[40] *Ibid*, Note A, by White, 15 March
[41] Lamb, *op cit*, pp 250 -251

them: "I do not believe that the man ever saw the Dalai Lama or handed the letter to him. On the contrary, I believe him to be a liar, and in all probability, a paid Tibetan spy."[42]

The Sikkim Agency: Proposed Changes.

The failure to get a letter across to the Dalai Lama had now acquired a new significance, if not an ominous implication. From around October 1900 that there had been news of Russian intrigues, and Tibet's complicity, in the roof of the world. A mission under one "Aharamoha Agvan Dorjiew" was reported to have made its way to the Tsar's Court and was by all accounts given a great welcome. The absence of worthwhile information on these goings on was to prove worrying. The India Office had some information but wanted more details. White's enquiries at Yatung drew a blank. Bengal turned to Sarat Chandra Dass but could elicit no information. All that the Indian expert on Tibet could say was that in all probability the mission went from Urga in Mongolia which had a large Buddhist population. Curzon could only tell the Secretary of State for India, on 18 November, that, "as far as I can ascertain no mission went from Lhasa and it is possible that the Tibetan delegates may have come from Urga in Mongolia, the seat of the Lamas known as Talei Lama."[43]

In these early months Curzon was not "much disturbed" by the reports on the alleged mission. It was not likely that the Tibetans would be able to overcome their "incurable suspicions" to send open missions to Europe. But soon there were other events that made the Viceroy sit-up.[44] Bengal's Chief Secretary J. A. Bourdillion's casual reference to a statement made by Sarat Chandra Das of the visit of two high Lamas from Drepung monastery, situated two miles outside Lhasa,[45] was quickly picked up in the Foreign Department. The two lamas from one of three great monasteries of the Gelukpa school headed by the Dalai Lama had spent two months at the Ghoom monastery near Darjeeling and, Bourdillion's letter had stated, "Sarat Babu had frequent

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[42] *Ibid.* P. 251.
[43] FSEP January 1901: Nos 80 – 95 (86) Telegram, Viceroy to Secretary of State , 18 November
[44] Mehra, *op cit*, see Chapters 8 – 10, pp 143 – 179, for further details
[45] FSEP January, 1901: Nos 80 – 95; J.A. Bourdillion to Foreign Secretary, 15 November

long meetings with the both at Ghoom and his own house in Darjeeling." It seemed strange to Deputy Secretary Captain Daly that Bengal did not know of or report on this earlier as this "visit (by the Lamas) may have offered just the opportunity we were looking for, for opening up communications with Lhasa."[46] Just as Daly had completed his note, a demi-official letter from Sarat Das arrived stating that one of the Lamas who had accompanied the mission to Russia and was received by the Tsar in Court, "came to see me here in June last."[47] The implications of this was clear enough that the mission could not have gone from Siberia, and it seemed certain that it went from Lhasa. Daly saw Bourdellion at the beginning of December but the Chief Secretary only said Das behaved badly in that he did not keep him informed of what was going on.

Calcutta's *Statesman* of 19 and 20 January 1901 carried a news item that a "Grand Lama of Tibet", who was on a visit to Ceylon was expected in Calcutta at the end of February and that Sarat Das was arranging a reception for him at the Town Hall. Daly was interested in the visitor, the "Lama *might* prove to be just the sort of emissary we want and might be entrusted with the presents to the Dalai Lama."[48] Bengal had no information on the man, but only said arrangements were being made to secure quicker and better information regarding travellers who passed through Darjeeling from, or to Tibet. Nor did it seem that proper use was being made of the Political Officer in Sikkim to obtain information. All this went to show, Daly noted:

(i) that intercourse with Lhasa is not so difficult to arrange as the Bengal Government have represented.

(ii) That travellers to and fro from Lhasa can come and go under the very noses of the Bengal Government without being detected; and

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[46] *Ibid.* note, Daly 21 November.

[47] *Ibid.* DO, Sarat Chandra Das to L.S. Russel, Undersecretary, Foreign India, 18 November. Sarat Das also made reference to presents for the Dalai Lama, "the most appreciated one was a phonograph which, to the wonder of the entire Court, recited the Buddhist formula, "*Om Mani Pemai hum*" any number of times."

[48] FSEP, July 1901: Nos 81 – 86; Note, Daly, 4 February 1901

(iii) that at the very time when special attention is being directed to opening up communications with influential Tibetans the exact stamp of men whom we want to get hold of can come down to Darjeeling and live in the neighbourhood for weeks without the Bengal Government hearing anything about it.[49]

Bengal of course again promised that arrangements will be made to obtain quicker and better information regarding such travellers. But, Daly concluded

> The recent revelations seems to me to raise in a somewhat acute form the question whether the Sikkim appointment should not be brought directly under the Government of India... If we *did* take over Sikkim, Bengal would have to provide for Mr. White, and this would not be easy. But that can hardly be allowed to affect the decision, if imperial interests are involved.[50]

The Sikkim Political Agency, established to carry on the administration of the State in the absence of the Maharaja, was not equipped to handle frontier intelligence. The Political Officer did not seem to be fully aware of the issues that agitated the Viceroy and his officers in the Foreign Department, and was concerned with only the local problem in the frontier. In the second of his two notes that White submitted on 15 March 1901 to Bengal at the insistence of the Chief Secretary, C. E. Buckland, this becomes clear.[51] In it White says that if Government wished to open up a mart at either Phari or Gyantse and have the boundary question settled they must adopt a firm line of action. Men who knew the Chinese well, and he named three successive European trade agents at Yatung working for the Chinese, he said , were all of the opinion that nothing would be got until the Indian Government took a firm attitude, and as soon as that was done they would gain all that was required.

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[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] FSEP August 1901: Nos 18 – 28; Buckland to Barnes, 21 March; Encl Notes A & B from J. C. White, 15 March 1901.

This firm action accordingly to the Political Officer ought to take the form of the occupation of the Chumbi valley and would amount to "sending an intimation to the Tibetans that we intended to remain there and keep the valley as security for demands.[52] The occupation should be made without fuss, moving, sometime in May when the snows had melted, two companies of native infantry with mountain guns to Gangtok, and thence to the Chumbi valley. Once there "we are the masters of the situation and can dictate our own terms; can go to Phari or elsewhere as we chose." That such a scheme should be proposed by White was largely because the position of the Political Agency in regard to British relations with Tibet and Chinese was still to be defined in the altered circumstances, and the Political Officer remained in the dark about what transpired between Bengal and the Government of India. Both Curzon and the Foreign Department was aware of this, and in fact noted on the subject when it was first raised by the officiating Political Officer for Sikkim, Captain E. LeMesurier, in September 1899.[53]

That month LeMesurier had received, the only time since he stood in for White, copies of correspondence that had been going on for the past six months between the Government of India, the Government of Bengal and the Commissioner of Rajshahi Division on the subject of establishing direct communications with the Tibetans. From these he had learnt that as long as on 26 July Barnes had directed that the Political Officer "should be furnished with copies of both the despatches and other recent correspondence and encouraged to further the policy", Since then he had been twice to Giaogong, and not having the faintest idea of the policy of the Government, and being doubtful of how much he was entitled to say, could take little advantage of his meeting with a Tibetan Dzongpon. Indeed, his last instructions from the Commissioner in reply to his Giaogong proposals was that he was on no account to take any action without further orders. Had the orders of 26 July reached him in time giving him the cue, "I should have prolonged my stay in Giaogong, entertained the Tibetan emissary royally, and done all I could to pave the way to communications with Lhasa."

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[52] *Ibid.*

[53] FSEP, September 1900 : Nos 78 – 108; DO Captain E. LeMesurier to H. S. Barnes, 28 September 1899

As it was LeMesurier had only just then learnt that Ugyen had again been sent to Tibet.[54] The point he emphasized in that connection was that "it is most unfair that the Political Agent should be ignored, and that such an agent should be employed without his being consulted or even informed of the mission until after the man's departure. I have not in my office even a copy of the record of Ugyen's last visit to Lhasa." It was at the end of this demi-official letter to the officiating Foreign Secretary that Captain LeMesurier brought up the subject to which Curzon was later to hold similar views:

> I am convinced that Government will make no advances in Tibet until they put their Political Agent in direct communication with the Foreign Department, copies of correspondence being merely sent by courtesy to Bengal. The present complicated channel results in the Government of India getting information only at fourth hand, and is fruitful of delay and lost opportunities. A favourable occasion for making a change offers next month, when the present Commissioner of Rajshahi leaves the service. Every inch of the Tibetan border with which we have any dealings is contiguous to Sikkim, and not to Bengal. Neither the Commissioner of Rajshahi not the Lieutenant Governor tour in Sikkim, and the former is ordinarily a man without frontier and political experience. They can know absolutely nothing about Tibet except through yarns spun them by Darjeeling merchants, such as Ugyen. Whereas the Political Agent is in daily intercourse with men of the same language, religion, and customs as the Tibetans, and whose Chiefs freely intermarry with them. He is the only man who has the means of learning the true state of things across the border.[55]

Daly agreed; there was "no reason why the Political Officer for Sikkim should not be brought directly under the Government of India," But was not quite sure if the necessity for such a change was then apparent. The Government of India merely expressed a desire that copies of relevant correspondence may be communicated to LeMesurier and that he should be encouraged to "open up confidentially direct communications with the

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[54] *Ibid.* "I would say", LeMesurier wrote, "that little good will come of using him as an agent. He is a petty Bhutanese peasant, of neither family or education, who has made some money in trade. He is not really a kazi, nor is he considered as one by the Sikkim chiefs."

[55] *Ibid.*

Tibetans." Bengal preferred to await White's return since LeMesurier was only in temporary charge.[56]

In the end the necessity for the change came soon enough. By the middle of 1901 a good deal of information was before the Viceroy on movements and sojourns of Buddhist monk parties in Indian territories. The mysterious Agvan Dorjieff, the Government of India was now sure of his name in the first instance was reported to have stayed in India before taking off to Russia through Indian ports. Clearly no watch had been kept in his movements in India and the first Curzon heard of him was through the Russian press in October 1900.

Early in July of the following year, a Reuters correspondent reported that a deputation, presumably under the same Dorjieff, from the Dalai Lama to the Tsar had reached Odessa and was expected at St. Petersburg by the end of the month. The party was discovered to have once again gone through Indian territory. The presence of such a group of monks was first mentioned by Captain Frederick O'Connor, who picked up the information in Darjeeling. The Bengal Government would not have known but for the accident that White chanced to be in Yatung where he too learnt of it. Nor did Bengal have any information of the arrival of another party at Sagauli. Barnes at once noted for the Viceroy that this "defective information" both at Darjeeling as well as at Sagauli should be pointed out to Bengal for "it must be admitted that we have been badly served when two missions from Lhasa to Russia can pass through India without ever knowing anything about them,"[57] Curzon's response was tersely worded: "why do we not at once take away the political business on the Tibetan frontier from Bengal? In that case can we not have our own agents in Darjeeling, Yatung and elsewhere? The present system is a discredited farce."[58] The next day Curzon poured out his anguish to Lord George Hamilton:

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[56] *Ibid.* Notes, pp 4 – 5, Note by Daly, 11 November 1899.
[57] *Ibid*, Note, Barnes, 8 July 1901
[58] *Ibid.* Note, Curzon 9 July

discredited farce."[58] The next day Curzon poured out his anguish to Lord George Hamilton:

> I am very much exercised over the question of Tibet. Bengal has charge of Sikkim and as a consequence, of the Political relations with Tibet and the whole Tibetan frontier... and they had let slip two Tibetan missions that visited the Tsar, at Livadia last year, and again in this, left Lhasa crossed the British border, passed in one case through Darjeeling and in the other through Segowlie, travelled India by rail and took ship from Indian ports... who would have believed possible the negotiations could have been passing between Lhasa and St. Petersburg, not through Siberia or Mongolia or China but through British India itself.[59]

Curzon was anxious to assume in taking over the Sikkim Agency, the "political guardianship of the frontier." And the sooner the Agency was taken over the better, for in that case there would be no need to insist upon Bengal to display greater vigilance in the frontier.[60] The Lieutenant Governor was reluctant even to eliminate the Commissioner of Rajshahi from the chain of official correspondence, on the ground that advice at that level was essential for the formulation of effective policy. The question remained in abeyance. When further evidence of Bengal's poor gathering of intelligence were forthcoming Curzon could only lament, "one of the eloquent results of handing over political functions to Local Governments who have no aptitudes, no tastes, no experience and no men for the job."[61]

White and Giaogong:

Meanwhile the press continued to gossip about Russian intrigues. At the news of another Tibetan Mission to St. Petersburg the *Overland Mail* of 17 June 1901, which Calcutta received on 7 July, quoting several sources warned that the old rumours about Tibet seeking a Russian protectorate against British designs could be revived. And, it went on to say:

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[58] *Ibid.* Note, Curzon 9 July
[59] Curzon to Hamilton, 10 July, Hamilton Papers, quoted in Mehra, *op cit*, P. 168.
[60] FSEP March 1902: Nos 1 – 77, Note, Curzon, 12 July.
[61] Curzon to Hamilton, 5 November 1901, quoted in Lamb, *op cit*, P. 258

> Himalaya to the Gulf of Tonquin, thereby encircling Burma and bring such pressure upon Siam that this kingdom would also fall entirely under their influence. People in Vienna who take an interest in the matter are curious to know whether England will allow Russia to get a footing in Tibet without an effort to thwart her designs before it is too late.[62]

Press reports, news of the Dorjieff Missions and the political danger created by British failure to establish direct relations with the Dalai Lama and to keep an eye on what was going on across the frontier led Curzon to develop a more active Tibetan policy. It was important to keep Russia out of Tibet which would only have an unsettling effect upon the Himalayan States. The India Office, at the receiving end of a large official and private communications from India, recognized the Government of India's difficult position; in particular that "the publicity given to the Tibetan Mission which recently arrived in St. Petersburg cannot fail to engender some disquietitude in the mind of the Indian Government as to the object and result of any negotiations which may ensue."[63] India Office even saw:

> Some resemblance between the attitude now taken up by the Government of the Dalai Lama and that adopted by Amir Shere Ali in 1876 when he refused to receive a Mission from the British Government while carrying on negotiations with Russian authorities in Central Asia.*

By August the Secretary of State came round to the view that with reference to the attitude of the Dalai Lama, the continued occupation by the Tibetans of a corner of British territory, the destruction of frontier pillars and restrictions imposed on Indian traders together with the impossibility of communicating with him on these subjects, Curzon "would be justified in adopting strong measures". But Hamilton put in a few words of caution: that this would be viewed with much quietitude and suspicion by the Nepal government; that it must be remembered Tibet was subordinate to China; that owing to its rugged character and its sparse population important military operations were not likely to be undertaken by the Russians; and finally, that it would in all likelihood

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[62] FSEP March 1902: Nos 1 – 77; Notes, "Russia and Tibet". P. 2

[63] *Ibid.* A. Godley to Undersecre3tary of State, Foreign Office, 25 July

* This, it may be recalled, was the underlying cause of the Second Anglo-Afghan War under Lord Lytton (1879 – 80)

increase Tibetan distrust of British intentions and strengthen any disposition on their part to attempt the establishment of closer relations with Russia.[64]

Hard on the heels of Bengal's final communication in October on Ugyen Kazi failed Lhasa Mission,[65] Curzon and the Foreign Department reviewed the outstanding problems of Anglo-Tibetan relations with a view to the future course of action. In the last twelve months several suggestions had been put forward from several quarters. In March, it will be recalled, White in his second note had suggested the military occupation of the Chumbi valley. In July Graham Sandberg, the Chaplain at Darjeeling and the author of several accounts on Tibet affairs including *Bhotan: The Unknown India State* in 1897, had submitted a Memorandum arguing a case for the dispatch of "a peaceable little mission" with the least possible delay and with the minimum fuss or preparation, being kept secret until fairly on the move." No attempt should be made, as was the case in the abortive Colman Macaulay Mission, to ask any consent from China. There should be a small detachment of British soldiers, who could best face the Tibetan climate as a purely defensive guard.[66] Captain Daly thought well of this proposal. "the heroic remedy of sending forward a Mission to Lhasa."[67]

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[64] *Ibid.* Hamilton to Curzon, 16 August, See also Lamb, *op cit, P. 259*

[65] *Ibid.* (No 57) Telegram, Chief Secretary, Bengal to foreign Secretary, India, 31 October. Opinions on Ugyen Kazi and whether he actually handed the Viceroy's letter to the Dalai lama is sharply divided. Paul Mowis, who was himself considered unreliable, spoke of him as a spy in the pay of Lhasa. E.H.C. Walsh, the Deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling, the latest of Ugyen's critics, drew his conclusions from Sarat Chandra Das who was said to be "notoriously jealous" of the Kazi. The Lieutenant Governor did not share these opinions and both Bourdillion and Buckland had no doubts that their emissary was telling the truth. Barnes, in the presence of the two Bengal officers, found him very impressive, and a "big hearty sort of person of very respectable appearance and with a frank manner." Curzon, almost alone remained skeptical: "I still retain my doubts as to whether Ugyen Kazi ever presented the letter: and some day I expect we shall find that I was right. If risk was involved in presenting it – which is the Lieutenant Governor's argument... - then clearly the simplest way to avoid the risk was not to present the letter, but to come and say that it had been refused. On the other hand, the Dalai Lama, being human, must have wondered and wanted to know what were the contents of the letter. I might have been offering him the tooth of Buddha or a stable-full of elephants or a dozen other things, and curiosity alone would have prompted him to read the letter before returning it. His independence and the isolation of Tibet would have been much better vindicated by returning the letter when read than by refusing to open it. Therefore I do not believe Ugyen Kazi. However, as my lack of belief rests upon suspicions only, I cannot oppose his being given the suggested reward; Rs. 1,500 will be ample."

[66] *Ibid.* Graham Sandberg. "Memorandum Regarding Possibility of Political Diplomatic Mission to Tibet", 6 July 1901

[67] *Ibid*, Note, Daly, 20 December 1901.

Barnes was not quite sure if the military occupation of the Chumbi valley as White recommended would be sanctioned by the Secretary of State in view of the caution enjoined by him in his 16 August dispatch. Nor did it seem that any economic blockade on the Sikkim frontier would answer. This would hurt Indian and Tibetan traders alike besides driving the trade towards Nepal. Barnes advised that the best if not the only thing to do would be to enforce the Treaty rights in the matter of the boundary, re-erecting the pillars, exclude Tibetan graziers from Giaogong or at any rate impose a grazing tax on them. Any attempt by the Tibetans to resist should be met by force. This was what in its essential features White had suggested in his first note in March last. The Foreign Secretary said that in taking this course the Government of India would be entirely within its rights, and "our patience and forbearance have, in fact, been phenomenal, and all our efforts to effect a friendly compromise having been flouted, I do not see how, if the treaty is to stand, we can do less."[68]

Barnes summoned White to Calcutta and went over the details with him. The Political Officer assured him that there would be no difficulty in enforcing the Convention boundary and putting up the pillars, and that he would be "delighted to undertake the job." All he asked for was a company of Gorkhas. Barnes anticipated from this, that if the Tibetans acquiesced, the treaty rights would be secured, and their exclusion from or taxation on the grazing lands would probably induce a desire in them to enter into some communication with the British. If on the other hand they knocked down the pillars the Tibetans could hardly complain if there was a collision with the troops. Damaging the boundary pillars would put in the wrong idea, and more so if they went for that occupation of the Chumbi valley which Mr. White recommends, or for insisting on separation from China, one of the conditions of which might be permission to dispatch an armed Mission to Tibet."[69]

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[68] *Ibid*, Note, Barnes, 13 January 1902.
[69] *Ibid.*

Curzon agreed with Barnes' note, there is no other alternative policy, he declared. Its modest character and the legal basis on which it rested should lead the Secretary of State to approve.[70] Hamilton however, remained cautious and considerably modified the scheme.[71] No fresh boundary pillars were to be erected; this would only tempt Tibetan irresponsibility; there was to be no questions of the occupation of the Chumbi valley which the Foreign Office would disapprove as a violation of China's territorial integrity. Hamilton saw no objection to the expulsion of the Tibetans from Giaogong, the alternative of imposing a grazing tax having now been dropped. Curzon was authorized to go ahead with his plans, setting them into motion as soon as the Viceroy saw fit.

In May instructions to the Political Officer have been framed:

(i) to tour along the frontier, to re-erect the three pillars which were originally put up and to erect pillars at such other points as he may consider necessary, *provided* that there is no doubt that the points at which such additional pillars are erected are actually on the Treaty frontier.

(ii) Should he meet any Tibetans within the treaty limits, either at Giaogong or elsewhere, he should require them to withdraw, and, if necessary, compel them to do so, unless they were private individuals who were in Sikkim for innocent purposes, such as grazing.

(iii) The idea of imposing grazing dues should lie over, for the present season at any rate: but the Political Officer should pay special attention to the question during his tour and should in particular endeavour to ascertain to what extent Sikkim subjects grazed their herds in Tibet and subject to what dues, if any.

(iv) The Political Officer should bear constantly in mind the desirability of inducing the Tibetan authorities to enter into negotiations with the British

[70] *Ibid.* Note, Curzon, 14 January 1901; dispatch to Secretary of State, 13 February.
[71] Lamb, *op cit*, P. 269.

and should be on the watch for opportunities of taking any steps which might conduce towards that end.[72]

At the end of June 1902 Political Officer Claude White went up to Giaogong with 150 men from the detachment of the 44th Gorkhas at Gangtok under a British Major. There were about forty Tibetans in the disputed area and, in Lamb's words, a few light blows from White's and the Major's canes set them moving towards Tibet. This done, they settled down to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII, and await the Tibetans and the Chinese.

The Younghusband Mission and After

The Tibetan reaction to the expulsion was surprisingly mild. There was no stoppage of trade on the Sikkim frontier that Bengal had so long feared would result from such an action. Rather, Tibetan officials rushed to the frontier to have talks with White. The Political Officer refused to engage in any such exercise except with a delegate duly accredited by the Dalai Lama, and that too not on the frontier, which would be "a mere waste of time" but at Lhasa. The Chinese too showed their willingness to open talks with the Indian Government, but on the frontier. Preliminary correspondence and discussion involving junior officials began in the summer of 1902 but actual negotiations did not begin for one reason or another. Curzon saw no reason to begin talks with the Amban who would shortly demit office, and much to the Viceroy's annoyance his successor was not expected before another ten months. When he did finally arrive the Viceroy's inclinations had cooled, and the man found no British representative with whom he could begin talks. In his letter[73] to the Viceroy the Amban suggested that a British representative should proceed for the purpose to Yatung or that he himself would come to "Sikkim or such other place" – not in Tibetan territory, as Curzon noted.[74]

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[72] FSEP, July 1902; Nos 527 – 549, Note, H. Daly, 6May; Buckland to foreign Secretary, India, 11 June; Buckland to Commissioner, Rajshahi Division , 9 June

[73] FSEP July 1903: Nos 38 – 95, From Political Officer, Sikkim, 21 April, 2 Encl for a good account of the expedition see Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa*, London 1961

[74] *Ibid*, Note, Curzon, 24 April.

Unfortunately for the Amban, Curzon ideas about what to demand from the Tibetans had undergone a dramatic change. The fact was by 1902 trade and the frontier issue ceased to be of importance, and was overtaken by a need to convince the Dalai Lama and his monks of the dangers inherent in refusing to open relations with the British. As early as on 13 February 1902 Curzon had declared:

> The most extraordinary anachronism of the 20th Century that there should exist within less than three hundred miles of the borders of British India a State and a Government with whom political relations do not so much as exist, and with whom it is impossible even to exchange a written communication.[75]

By the year's end Curzon, and indeed the India and Foreign Office in England, had become convinced that the rumours of an impending Russian protectorate over Tibet through some arrangements with the Chinese were not entirely without foundation. In November, Curzon told Hamilton that he was "a firm believer in the existence of a secret understanding, if not a treaty, between China and Russia over Tibet."

On 8 January Curzon sent his now well known and well argued dispatch to the Secretary of State. The "constitutional fiction" of Chinese suzerainty and the policy of Tibetan isolation, had only been tolerable to the Government of India so long as there were "no political and military dangers." The possibility of a Russian protectorate over Tibet demanded a completely new approach. The Government of India would talk to the Tibetans, not at Yatung or some place in Sikkim but at Lhasa, and these talks would deal not only "with the small question of the Sikkim frontier, but with the entire question of our future relations, commercial and otherwise, with Tibet, and "should result in the appointment of a Permanent Consular or Diplomatic representatives in Lhasa." A Mission was therefore to be sent to Lhasa with an escort to defend itself in case of an attack by the Tibetans. The Mission was to be described to the Chinese and Tibetans as a

[75] *Ibid, P. 275.*

commercial one, and assurances would be given them that the British did not contemplate the establishment of a protectorate over, or annex any part of Tibet.[76]

By April 1903, the preparations for the Mission were set in motion.[77] After some exchange of letters with the Amban Curzon decided to opt for Khambajong, some twenty five miles north of Giaogong, as the venue of the talks. Khambajong had its advantages: it was in Tibetan soil, had reasonable communications with through Sikkim with British India, and lay on the main routes to Lhasa and Shigatse. The small town was in the territory of the Panchen Lama of Tashilhumpo monastery who was better disposed towards the British than the Pontiff at the Potala. The object of the negotiation would be to secure the removal of the trade mart from Yatung to Gyantse, but Lhasa was not altogether given up. As Curzon explained:

> The first and most essential guarantee for the practical execution of the arrangements will be the facility of communication with the Tibetan authorities. Otherwise the new Treaty will be killed by passive obstruction just as was the old. We cannot any longer acquiesce in the position of being boycotted by the Tibetan Government, and having our letters returned unopened by the Dalai Lama. If we are not to insist upon a representative to Lhasa (as Hamilton had directed), then our representative at Gyantse, or wherever he will be, must have means of free communication, not merely with the Amban (who is a fraud and a blind), but with the Tibetan Government. If these means are refused or having been ostensibly granted are afterwards nullified then we must hold palpably and distinctly in reserve the threat to place a man in Lhasa itself.[78]

Curzon appointed Major Francis Younghusband, the Resident at Baroda, to head the Mission with the local rank of Colonel. John Claude White was to be his assistant and Captain William Frederick O'Connor, the Secretary. Younghusband and White were briefed in Simla on the objectives of the Mission and the proposed negotiation. While still in Simla Younghusband worked out the details with Secretary of the Foreign

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[76] For details, Lamb, *op cit,* pp 282ff

[77] FSEP July 1903: Nos 38 – 95; See Department notes, pp 2ff.

[78] *Ibid*, Note, Curzon, 3 May 1903

Department. In May the force assembled in Sikkim. The Secretary of State, was kept informed of all developments telegraphically.

On 6 July 1903, White on Younghusband's direction crossed the Tibetan frontier into Khambajong in the face of stiff, though not violent opposition from the Tibetans.[79] "the first step has been accomplished," wrote Younghusband to the new foreign Secretary, Sir Louis Dane in Simla, "we have now a Political Agent with a good strong escort in real Tibetan territory: and a communication with high Chinese and Tibetan officials. This is one great point gained, and is due to the energy which the Government has shown during the last few months. For neither the Tibetans nor the Chinese *liked* our going there at all."[80] Younghusband followed with the rest of the escort on 19 July only to find a few lowly officials. O'Connor's dairy has this entry for 3 August:

> Their (Tibetan) present policy is one of passive obstruction. They have made up their minds to have no negotiations with us inside Tibet, and they simply leave us here.[81]

It was now clear that an advance upto Gyantse was inevitable, and as Curzon said, "I even think that the new settlement may have to be signed in Lhasa." It seemed , by September, that the Lhasa Government were "determined to resist." In November Curzon obtained the approval of the Secretary of State for the British occupation of the Chumbi valley and the advance to Gyantse. The Mission was reconstituted, Colonel Younghusband being given the sole political charge, White returning to Sikkim to take care of the transport and other arrangements, Brigadier General J.R.L. Macdonald was given the command of the escort which swelled to 8,000 guns with artillery.

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[79] Captain O'Connor thus describes the Tibetan opposition: "They... pressed forward on foot, and catching hold of Mr. White's bridle importuned him to dismount and to repair to their tents. At the same time their their servants pressed round our horses, and seizing our reins endeavoured to lead us away... The Khambajongpen afterwards followed us, and made repeated efforts to induce me to halt... He was in a very excited and agitated state... He said 'you may flick a dog once or twice without his biting, but if you tread on his tail, even if he has no teeth he will turn and try to bite you..." quoted in Parshotam Mehra, *The Younghusband Expedition*. *op cit*, p. 211.

[80] FSEP August 1903: Nos 416 – 467; Colonel F. E. Younghusband to Sir Louis Dane, 8 July

[81] Quoted in Mehra, *op cit*, P. 214.

In December the slow advance upon Gyantse began and on 11 April it was under British occupation. After some unfortunate engagements, that at Guru became no less than a massacre of an ill-equipped Tibetans, Younghusband reached Lhasa. There on 7 September 1904 British terms for a settlement was dictated to the Tibetans in the absence of the Dalai Lama who fled his capital. The nine-article Lhasa Convention[82] recognized the Sikkim – Tibet frontier as laid down in the Convention of 1890; it opened two new trade marts, Gyantse and Gartok, which were to operate under the conditions established for Yatung, a British trade agent was to reside at the marts; questions relating to tea and tariff was reserved for subsequent discussions; it provided for free trade for articles not subject to the tariffs to be mutually agreed to later; It obliged the Tibetans to keep open the roads to the new marts and to transmit letters from the British Trade Agent to the Chinese and Tibetan authorities. Article VI imposed an indemnity of Rs. 75,00,000, payable in seventy-five annual instalments, and till that was paid the Chumbi valley was to be under British occupation. All fortifications between the British frontier and Gyantse were to be demolished and, finally, Tibet was to have no dealings with any Foreign Power without British consent. By a Separate Article, appended to the Convention, the British Trade Agent at Gyantse was permitted to visit Lhasa whenever he saw fit.

The Convention thus secured for the British all the objectives that Lord Curzon had set out. Yet the Convention was soon whittled down. London objected to the period of occupation of the Chumbi valley as tantamount to annexation, and that advantage could be taken of the Separate Article by Russia to demand a commercial agent for themselves at Lhasa. Curzon was on leave in England, and there was none in India to counter opposition to these articles. As it was, Lord Ampthill, who stood in for Curzon as Viceroy, on his own authority reduced the indemnity to Rs. 25,00,000 and the period of occupation to three years.[83] To obtain Chinese acceptance of the Convention an

[82] For full text, See Appendix F
[83] Lamb, *op cit*, P. 303.

Adhesion Agreement[84] was signed in Peking in April 1906 after tortuous negotiations. By it the gains of the Convention were further thrown away: China alone was recognized to have special status in Tibet and the articles in the Convention which excluded "Foreign Powers" from exercising influence in Tibet was to be applied not to China but to Britain. All that the British retained in Tibet were the trade marts and the right to link those marts to India by Telegraph. The Anglo-Russian Convention,[85] 1907, further strengthened China's position. The effect of all this on Bhutan and on India's North-East Frontier was soon to be seen.

John Claude White's crucial role in the formulation and execution of Curzon's Tibetan policy – the importance of direct access to Lhasa and the occupation of the Chumbi valley – was quickly forgotten. He was side lined even before the negotiations began, and Younghusband's fulsome praise for the man was replaced by criticism at Khambajong itself.[86] This seems to have had its impact on Curzon's opinion of him. The Sikkim Political Agency, however, underwent the long awaited change. Curzon's unhappiness over its control by Bengal had continued throughout the Tibetan difficulty, and in march 1902 he had feared, "Should the Russians get into Tibet or should their influence become predominant there, it may be very desirable that we should palce Sikkim under Foreign department."[87] Bengal's Lieutenant Governor Sir Andrew Fraser had by now agreed that the political questions connected with Sikkim were of no more than provincial important. In seeking the approval of the Secretary of State to the change the Government laid emphasis on the following reasons:

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[84] Appendix G

[85] Appendix H for full text

[86] See Mehra, *op cit*, P. 211. Younghusband wrote to Curzon on 19 July: "Politically things are bad. Old White had made a terribly hash of it. He will treat these Chinese and Tibetans as he would the Sikkimese and will not remember that when he crossed the boundary, he crossed out of his own district... and though we may pull through without a row here because the Tibetans are a mild people it will not be any thanks to White. He has never been out of Sikkim: he is a little God there but he is absolutely useless and worse than useless in dealing with high officials of an independent nation... and bitterly I regret I ever let him come on aboard alone. I have a deal to make up and you know how difficult it is to make a bad start... I had no idea that he was appalling unfit as he had proved himself to be."

[87] FSEP March 1902: No 35; also in S.R.RAo, *India and Sikkim*, *op cit*, pp 143 - 144

> The main for British trade with Tibet, at present, passes through the Sikkim State, and both that State and Bhutan are as closely connected with Tibet that we deem it of highest importance that their political relations should be under the direct control of the Government of India, until such a time, at least, as our relations with the Tibetans are placed upon a much more definite and satisfactory footing than at present, and until trade within the prescribed limits is safely established.[88]

With the approval of the India Office[89]the separation was effected on 1 April 1906 and with it the Political Officer became the adviser to the Government of India for Tibet affairs.

In October 1906, however, the Secretary of State, now John Morley, suggested, in order to reduce the work of the Government of India's Foreign Department, that both Sikkim and Bhutan should revert to the control of the Local Government, Eastern Bengal and Assam. The Government of India demurred, and said that the reasons for placing these two states under the Foreign Department still hold good and besides, even if the wishes of the Secretary of State were carried out, no significant reduction of work would result. Most importantly:

> We should be deprived of the constant advice and help of an experienced and senior officer, which we hope to enjoy under the exciting system with regard to Tibetan affairs. Any particular question concerning Tibet could of course, even under the old system, be referred to the Political Officer in Sikkim, but in the absence of a stereotyped procedure, this would cause delay, and the officer himself would not be so competent to advice as at present, Since he would not have a full and continuous knowledge of the facts.[90]

[88] FSEP July 1906: Nos 210 – 45; Secret Desaptch to Secretary of State, 15 June 1905
[89] FEAP June 1906: Nos 1 - 6, Political Despatch from Secretary of State, 4 August 1905
[90] FSEP March 1907: Nos 6 -7; Government of India to Secretary of State, 21 February 1907

APPENDIX F

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND TIBET, 1904

Signed at lhasa on the 17th September 1904.
Ratified at Simla on the 11th November 1904

Whereas doubts and difficulties have arisen as to the meaning and validity of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, and the Trade Regulations of 1893, and as to the liabilities of the Tibetan Government under these agreements; and whereas recent occurrences have tended towards a disturbance of the relations of friendship and good understanding which have existed between the British Government and the Government of Tibet; and whereas it is desirable to restore peace and amicable relations, and to resolve and determine the doubts ad difficulties as aforesaid, the said Governments have resolved to conclude a Convention with these objects, and the following articles have been agreed upon by Colonel F.E. Younghusband, C.I.E., in virtue of full powers vested in him by his Britannic majesty's Government and on behalf of that said Government, and Lo-Sang Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-Den Ti-Rimpoche, and the representatives of the Council, of the three monasteries Se-ra, Dre-pung and Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the National Assembly on behalf of the Government of Tibet:-

I.

The Government of Tibet engages to respect the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and to recognize the frontier between Sikkim and Tibet, as defined in Article I of the said Convention, and to erect boundary pillars accordingly.

II.

The Tibetan Government undertakes to open forthwith trade marts to which all British and Tibetan subjects shall have free right of access at Gyantse and Gartok, as well as at Yatung.

The regulations applicable to the trade mart at Yatung, under the Anglo-Chinese Agreement of 1893, shall, subject to such amendments as may hereafter be agreed upon by common consent between the British and Tibetan Governments apply to the marts above mentioned.

III.

The question of the amendment of the Regulations of 1893 is reserved for separate consideration, and the Tibetan Government undertakes to appoint fully authorized delegates to negotiate with representatives of the British Government as to the details of the amendments required.

IV.

The Tibetan Government undertakes to levy no dues of any kind other than those provided for in the tariff to be mutually agreed upon.

V.

The Tibetan Government undertakes to keep the roads to Gyantse and Gartok from the frontier clear of all obstruction and in a state of repair suited to the needs of the trade, and to establish at Yatung, Gyantse, and Gartok, and at each of the other trademarts that may hereafter be established, a Tibetan Agent who shall receive from the British Agent appointed to watch over British trade at the marts in question any letter which the latter may desire to send to the Tibetan

or to the Chinese authorities. The Tibetan Agent shall also be responsible for the due delivery of such communications and for the transmission of replies.

VI.

As an indemnity to the British Government for the expense incurred in the dispatch of armed troops to Lhasa, to exact reparation for breaches of treaty obligations, and for the insults offered to and attacks upon the British Commissioner and his following and escort, the Tibetan Government engages to pay a sum of pounds five hundred thousand – equivalent to rupees seventy-five lakhs – to the British Government.

The indemnity shall be payable at such place as the British Government may from time to time, after due notice, indicate whether in Tibet or in the British districts of Darjeeling or Jalpaiguri, in seventy-five annual instalments of rupees one lakh each on the 1st January each year, beginning from the 1st January 1906.

VII.

As security for the payment of the above-mentioned indemnity, and for the fulfillment of the provisions relative to trade marts specified in Articles II, III, IV, and V, the British Government shall continue to occupy the Chumbi Valley until the indemnity has been paid and until the trade marts have been effectively opened for three years, whichever date may be the later.

VIII.

The Tibetan Government agrees to raze all forts and fortifications and remove all armaments which might impede the course of free communications between the British frontier and the towns of Gyantse and Lhasa.

IX.

The Government of Tibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British Government, -

(a) no portion of Tibetan territory shall be ceded, sold, leased, mortgaged or otherwise given for occupation, to any Foreign Power;
(b) no such Power shall be permitted to intervene in Tibetan affairs;
(c) no Representatives or Agent of any Foreign Power shall be admitted to Tibet;
(d) no concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining or other rights, shall be granted to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power. In the event of consent to such concessions being granted, similar or equivalent concessions shall be granted to the British Government;
(e) no Tibetan revenues, whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to any Foreign Power, or to the subject of any Foreign Power.

X.

In witness whereof the negotiators have signed the same, and affixed hereunto the seals of their arms.

Done in quintuplicate at Lhasa, this 7th day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and four, corresponding with the Tibetan date, the 27th day of the seventh month of the Wood Dragon year.

LHASA CONVENTION, 1904

LHASA CONVENTION, 1904

DECLARATION SIGNED BY THE VICEROY OF INDIA ON THE 11TH NOVEMBER 1904, AND APPENDED TO THE RATIFIED CONVENTION OF 7TH SEPTEMBER 1904

His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor-General of India, having ratified the Convention which was concluded at Lhasa on 7th September 1904 by Colonel Younghusband, C.I.E., British Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Matters, on behalf of his Britannic Majesty's Government; and by Losang Gyal-Tsen, the Ga-den Ti Rimpoche, and the representatives of the Council, of the three monasteries Sera, Dre-pung, and Ga-den, and of the ecclesiastical and lay officials of the National Assembly, on behalf of the Government of Tibet, is pleased to direct as an act of grace that the sum of money which the Tibetan Government have bound themselves under the terms of Article VI of the said Convention to pay to His Majesty's Government as an indemnity for the expenses incurred by the latter in connection with the dispatch of armed forces to Lhasa, be reduced from Rs. 75,00,000 to Rs. 25,00,000; and to declare that the British occupation of the Chumbi Valley shall cease after the due payment of three annual instalments of the said indemnity as fixed by the said Article, provided, however, that the trade marts as stipulated in Article II of the Convention shall have been effectively opened for three years as provided in Article VI of the Convention: and that, in the meantime, the Tibetans shall have faithfully complied with the terms of the said Convention in all other respects.

APPENDIX G

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA, 1906

Signed at Peking on the 27th April 1906.
Ratified at London on the 23rd July 1906

Whereas His Majesty the King of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of China are sincerely desirous to maintain and perpetuate the relations of friendship and good understanding which now exist between their respective Empires;

And whereas the refusal of Tibet to recognize the validity of or to carry into full effect the provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 17th March 1890, and Regulations of the 5th December 1893, placed the British Government under the necessity of taking steps to secure their rights and interests under the said Convention and Regulations;

And whereas a Convention of ten articles was signed at Lhasa on 7th September, 1904, on behalf of Great Britain and Tibet, and was ratified by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India on behalf of Great Britain on 11th November, 1904, a declaration on behalf of Great Britain modifying its terms under certain conditions being appended thereto;

HIS MAJESTY THE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN AN IRELAND:

Sir Ernest Mason Satow, Knight Grand Cross of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, His said Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to his Majesty the emperor of China;

AND HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR OF CHINA:

His Excellency Tong Shoa-yi, His said Majesty's High Commissioner Plenipotentiary and a Vice-President of the Board of Foreign Affairs,
who having communicate to each other their respective full powers and finding them to be in good and due form have agreed upon and concluded the following Convention in six Articles:-

Article I.

The Convention concluded on 7th September, 1904, by Great Britain and Tibet, the texts of which in English and Chinese are attached to the present Convention as an annexe, is hereby confirmed, subject to the modification stated in the declaration appended thereto, and both of the High Contracting Parties engage to take at all times such steps as may be necessary to secure the due fulfillment of the terms specified therein.

Article II.

The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibetan territory or to interfere in the administration of Tibet. The Government of China also undertakes not to permit any other foreign state to interfere with the territory or internal administration of Tibet.

Article III.

The concessions which are mentioned in Article 9 (d) of the Convention concluded on 7th September, 1904, by Great Britain and Tibet are denied to any state or to the subject of any state other than china, but it has been arranged with China that at the trade marts specified in Article 2 of the aforesaid Convention Great Britain shall be entitled to lay down telegraph lines connecting with India.

Article IV.

The provisions of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and Regulations of 1893 shall, subject to the terms of this present Convention and annexe thereto, remain in full force.

Article V.

The English and Chinese texts of the present Convention have been carefully compared and found to correspond, but in the event of there being any difference of meaning between them the English text shall be authoritative.

Article VI.

This Convention shall be ratified by the Sovereigns of both countries and ratifications shall be exchanged at London within three months after the date of signature by the Plenipotentiaries of both Powers.

In token whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed and sealed this Convention, four copies in English and four in Chinese.

Done at Peking this twenty-seventh day of April, one thousand nine hundred and six, being the fourth day of the fourth month of the thirty-second year of the reign of Kuang Hsü.

APPENDIX H

CONVENTION BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND RUSSIA, 1907

Signed at St. Petersburg on the 18th (31st) August 1907.

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, animated by the sincere desire to settle by mutual agreement different questions concerning the interest of their States on the Continent of Asia, have determined to conclude Agreements destined to prevent all cause of misunderstanding between Great Britain and Russia in regard to the questions referred to, and have nominated for this purpose their respective Plenipotentiaries, to wit:

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, the Right Honourable Sir Arthur Nicolson, His Majesty's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians;

His Majesty the Emperor of All the Russians, the Master of his Court Alexander Iswolsky, Minister for foreign Affairs;

Who, having communicated to each other their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed to the following:-

* * * * * * * * *

Arrangement concerning Thibet

The governments of Great Britain and Russia recognizing the suzerain rights of China in Thibet, and considering the fact that Great Britain, by reason of her geographical position, has a special interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the external relations of Thibet, have made the following arrangement:-

Article I.

The two High Contracting Parties engage to respect the territorial integrity of Thibet and to abstain from all interference in the internal administration.

Article II.

In conformity with the admitted principle of the suzerainty of china over Thibet, Great Britain and Russia engage not to enter into negotiations with Thibet except through the intermediary of the Chinese Government. This engagement does not exclude the direct relations between British Commercial Agents and the Thibetan authorities provided for in Article V of the Convention between Great Britain and Thibet of the 7th September 1904, and confirmed by the Convention between Great Britain and China of the 27th April, 1906; nor does it modify the engagements entered into by great Britain and China in Article I of the said Convention of 1906.

It is clearly understood that Buddhists, subjects of Great Britain or of Russia, may enter into direct relations on strictly religious matters with the Dalai Lama and the other representatives of Buddhism in Thibet; the Governments of Great Britain and Russia engage, as far as they are concerned, not to allow those relations to infringe the stipulations of the present arrangement.

Article III.

The British and Russian Governments respectively engage not to send Representatives to Lhasa.

Article IV.

The two High Contracting Parties engage neither to seek nor to obtain, whether for themselves or their subjects, any Concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, and mines, or other rights in Thibet.

Article V.

The two Governments agree that no part of the revenues of Thibet, Whether in kind or in cash, shall be pledged or assigned to Great Britain or Russia or to any of their subjects.

Annex to the arrangement between Great Britain and Russia concerning Thibet.

Great Britain reaffirms the declaration, signed by His Excellency the Viceroy and governor-General of India and appended to the ratification of the Convention of the 7th September 1904, to the effect that the occupation of the Chumbi valley by British forces shall cease after the payment of three annual instalments of the indemnity of 25,00,000 rupees, provided that the trade marts mentioned in Article II of that Convention have been effectively opened for three years, and that in the meantime the Thibetan authorities have faithfully complied in all respects with the terms of the said Convention of 1904. It is clearly understood that if the occupation of the Chumbi Valley by the British forces has, for any reason, not been terminated at the time anticipated in the above Declaration, the British and Russian Governments will enter upon a friendly exchange of views on this subject.

The present Convention shall be ratified, and the ratifications exchanged at St. Petersburgh as soon as possible.

In witness whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Convention and affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate at St. Petersburgh, the 18th (31st) August 1907.

CHAPTER IV
THE PROBLEM OF BHUTAN

Curzon's Tibetan Policy and the chain of events that followed the Expedition to Lhasa had, as indicated above a profound impact upon Bhutan, ultimately bringing that Himalayan country within the orbit of British colonial system. In Colonel Younghusband's confabulations in Khamba and finally at Lhasa, and indeed in the entire episode since the announcement of the mission and its transformation into a full-fledged military expedition, Bhutan and more precisely the Governor of the eastern province, the Tongsa Penlop, played a not inconsiderable role. This was in marked contrast to the Government of India's attitude and the policy towards that state it had followed since long. A brief account of the country, its government and India's relations with her in the past will put the new development in clearer perspective.

The process of state formation in Bhutan, as in neighbouring Sikkim, it will be recalled, began with the arrival in large numbers of Tibetans from the thirteenth century onwards. These were largely Buddhist missionaries who established various branches of the Kargyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism[1] but they also exercised a measure of political control. In 1616 the head of the Drukpa Kargyupa suppressed all rival sects and established himself as the theocratic ruler with the title "Shabdung Rimpoche," or as he is known in eatern India, Dharma raja. The country came to be known as Drukyul, land of the Druk schools of Buddhism.[2] For the general administration of the country, he

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[1] For details see R. A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilisation*, London 1972, pp 70-82; also David Snelgrove and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, Boston, 1982, Chapter 4, pp 111 -143.

[2] The school of Buddhism established in Bhutan was the Lho (Southern) Drukpa Kargyupa. Druk takes its name from the monasteries of Tibet, literally "dragon", and hence, if accurately, the reference to Bhutan as the Dragon Kingdom. Bhutan is derived from two compound words, both Sanskrit, "Bhot" (Sanskrit for Tibet) and "anta" (end) i.e. Bhotana or Bhutan, at one end of Tibet or the Bhot country.

appointed a regent or Desi, the Deb Raja to Indians, the Penlops or chiefs of provinces and dzongpons, or heads of districts or dzongs, on the Tibetan model. Between them the Dharma and Deb Rajas ran the country with considerable uthority, but from about the middle of the nineteenth century their powers weakened.[3] By the turn of the century the governor of eastern Bhutan, the Tongsa Penlop Ugyen Wangchuk emerged as the most powerful figure in Bhutan.

Bhutan came into contact with the East India Company as a result of a border conflict with the Indian state of Cooch Behar during 1771 – 73. On an appeal from the latter against Bhutanese threats Cooch Behar was taken under British protection on payment of a tribute in April 1773 and troops were sent for its defence. When he received communications from the Tashilhunpo monastery's Panchen Lama writing on behalf of Bhutan, Warren Hastings, anxious to promote trade[4] with that country, and having lost the Kathmandu route[5] at once responded. The upshot of this development was peace with Bhutan and a mission , under George Bogle to Tashilhunpo, the seat of the Panchen Lama.[6] Neither this mission nor that under Samuel Turner, despite the friendliness of the Panchen, saw any significant improvement in the Company's trade across the Himalaya. Interest in Bhutan as a channel to Tibet remained only sporadic.

During the forties of the nineteenth century trouble with Bhutan surfaced over the lawlessness prevailing in the Assam Duars. The problem were sorted out by the annexation of the Duars during 1841 – 42 and the payment to Bhutan Rs. 10,000 annually as compensation.[7] Twenty years later trouble occurred in the Bengal Duars. An envoy

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[3] A useful summary will be found in Ram Rahul, *The Himalayan Borderland*, Delhi 1970, pp. 53 - 66

[4] Alistair Lamb: *The Road to Lhasa. Britain and Chinese Central Asia*, London 1960, Chapter I, pp 1 – 31.

[5] D.R. Regmi, *Modern Nepal*, Calcutta 1961, pp 1 – 42; F. Ludwig Stiller, *The Rise of the House of the Gorkha*, Patna, 1973, B.J. Hasrat, *History of Nepal*, 1970, pp 134 – 143. The conquest of the Kathmandu Valley by the Gorkha ruler Prithvinarayan Shah blocked the traditional trade between Tibet and India

[6] Lamb, *op cit*, for details.

[7] H.K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North east Frontier*, Vol. I Gauhati 1970, pp 166f. The compensation money was by all the principal men of Bhutan and the share of the Tongsa Penlop, whose financial loss from the British annexation of the Assam duars was enormous, was less than what he would have liked. It was because of this that he had harboured a hatred for the British.

sent to Bhutan returned humiliated by the Tongsa Penlop. War[8] followed (1864) and the British imposed a Treaty, at Sinchula on 11 November 1864 known to the Bhutanese as the "Ten Article Treaty of Rawa Panji" by which Bhutan (Article II) surrendered,

> The whole tract known as the Eighteen Duars bordering on the districts of Rangpur, Cooch Behar and Assam together with the Ambari Falakata and the hill territory on the left bank of the Tista upto such points as may be laid down by the British Commissioner appointed for the purpose.

By Articles III, VI and VII Bhutan agreed to surrender all British subjects as well as those of Sikkim and Cooch Behar who were detained against their will and agreed to the extradition of criminals. The VI article raised the subsidy or compensation for the loss of the duars to Rs. 25,000, to be doubled within three years. Other articles related to trade. Article VIII which later came in for discussion and amendment, stated:

> The Bhutan Government hereby agree to refer to the arbitration of the British government all disputes with or cause of complaints against the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, and to abide by the decision of the British Government and the British Government hereby to engage to enquire into and settle all such disputes and complaints in such manner as justice may require and to insist on the observance of the decision by the Rajahs of Sikkim and Cooch Behar.[9]

The Dharma and Deb Rajas and some of the principal chief such as the Paro penlop, accepted the Treaty with good grace. Not quite the Tongsa Penlop, and a military demonstration was needed to force his acquiescence.[10] He remained sullen. It was during the Younghusband Mission that Bhutan finally came closer to the British. By then the old Tongsa Penlop was dead and important changes had taken place in Bhutan.

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[8] See Ashley Eden, *Political Mission to Bhutan.* Bengal Secretariat, Calcutta 1865, Reprint, Bibliotheca Himalayica, 1970, Also Surgeon Rennie, *Bhotan and the Story of the Dooar War*, London 1865, Reprint, New Delhi, 2005.

[9] Arabinda Deb, *India and Bhutan a Study in Frontier Political Relations* (1977 – 1865) Calcutta 1976, pp 179 – 183, Kapileshwari Labh, *India and Bhutan*, New Delhi 1974, Chapters II & III, pp 52 – 100.

[10] *Ibid.* p. 157

Tongsa Penlop, Ugyen Wangchuk: Relations with the British

By the end of the century Ugyen Wanchuk, son of the successor of the tormentor of Sir Ashley Eden in 1864, had emerged as the single most important factor in Bhutanese politics. The transition of the country from a theocratic to a feudalistic state had a major role to play in the rise of the Tongsa Penlop. Owing to the lack of adequate communications between different administrative centres and the scantiness of resources of the Central Government preventing the establishment of a standing national army allowed the Penlops and Dzongpons by and large to assert themselves against the country's time honoured usages and conventions. They also took over from the Lamas most of the political functions as well. For instance the Deb Raja used to be elected by the State Council but in later years he became merely a nominee of the most powerful of the Penlops. Similarly in the past the Deb Raja appointed both the Penlops and Dzongpons. However, with a change in the state organization the Penlops who owed their position to the power to the Deb Raja soon appointed the Dzongpons from among their own followers. But it was the series of three wars, in 1868 -69, in 1877 and the last in 1884 - 85 which saw the emergence of the Tongsa Penlop to Supreme authority in Bhutan.

The first civil war broke out as a result of a dispute between two Dzongpons. The Government of India was careful not to be involved in these disputes. The contestants or their adherents were forbidden to collect recruits and arms to prosecute their wars from British territory, and those who were granted political asylum in British territory were removed far from the frontier and located in areas where a strict watch could be maintained over them. The second strife commenced when the powerful Punakha Dzongpon and his adherents took up arms against the authority of the Deb Raja. Once again the Government of India enjoined strict non-intererence in the internal squabbles of the Bhutanese. The Government of Bengal was cautioned that there should be no room for the Deb Raja to accuse the British of deviating from its established policy of having nothing to do with the internal affairs of Bhutan. The third civil war began in October 1884, when the Tongsa and the Paro Penlop together with some Dzongpons

turned against the Deb Raja supported by the Thimphu and Punakha Dzongpons. The cause of the turmoil was said to be the anger of the Tongsa Penlop at the Thimphu Dzongpon's withholding his share of the British subsidy paid to Bhutan for the loss of her Duars.[11]

The significance of these civil wars lies in the fact that with the exception of the Tongsa Penlop all the leading Dzongpons emerged exhausted from it. The Paro Penlop was his relative. In the civil war, and in its immediate aftermath the Tongsa Penlop Ugyen Wangchuk established himself so firmly that no significant civil or internecine strife occurred in Bhutan again. Wangchuk to whom the share of the subsidy was an important source, understood that if it were withheld by the British he would be worse off. Thus motives of self interest and a correct appraisal of the advantages of a connection with the British determined his outlook and his relations with the Government of India. Equally on its part both Bengal and the Government of India recognized Ugyen Wangchuk's unrivalled authority in Bhutan.

Upto the end of 1903, as Lord Minto reminded Secretary of State John Morley, "practically no advance has been made in opening up of the country and removing the distrust and even hostile aloofness of the Durbar."[12] There was even a doubt whether Bhutan could be treated as one of the Native States in India, a doubt which was not removed by the description of the State as such in Sir William Hunter's *Imperial Gazetteer*.[13] When the Younghusband Mission was preparing to enter Tibet, there was some anxiety about the possible reaction of the Bhutanese. In September 1903 Colonel Francis Younghusband recommended that the Bhutanese should be induced to declare their intentions. He suggested that if they were approached at once they might be willing to adhere to the British cause, as they would imagine that a refusal to British overtures would result in the loss of subsidy and also the possibility of strong measures by the

[11] For details, Labh, *op cit*, pp 116 - 117

[12] FSEP March 1907: Nos. 6 – 7 Menlo to John Morley, 21 February 1907.

[13] *Ibid.* This question of Bhutan's status arose when the British Minister in Siam (Thailand) sought a clarification on the Bhutanese in that country, and was told that "there is no doubt that Bhutan is a Native State in India under the suzerainty if His Majesty." This of course was not true.

British to secure the safety of the Mission's line of communications. An additional reason for establishing good relations with Bhutan was found in the fact that there was every reason to suppose that a practical road could be made up the Amo Chu or Di Chu to the Chumbi valley , and Younghusband though it desirable to obtain the consent of the Bhutanese Government to the dispatch of a survey party to explore the route. He would use the Maharaja of Cooch Behar to secure the neutrality if not active assistance of the Bhutanese.[14]

The Government of Bengal was more solicitous.. British relations with Bhutan was conducted through this Local Government and the Commissioner of Rajshahi was the channel of communication with the Bhutanese authorities. The Political Officer of Sikkim who functioned directly under the Commissioner was not yet concerned with Bhutan. In October 1903 Bengal obtained the approval of the Government of India to dispatch a letter to the Tongsa Penlop inviting him to meet the Commissioner at Buxa or Kalimpong, whichever was convenient. The letter stated that the Government of India was "desirous of obtaining the good offices of the Government of Bhutan" in order to secure a satisfactory solution of its difficulties with Tibet. Along with the letter was sent a gold watch and a gold chain for Ugyen Wangchuk.[15] A month later Bengal proposed a series of concessions to Bhutan, including raising the subsidy of Rs. 25,000 if that Government would consent to the construction of a road through its territory into Tibetan territory. The Government of India was cautious; all it wanted was Bhutan's neutrality if not active friendship. They wanted no reference to the road as this might rouse Bhutanese suspicious, but if a reference was made to only a small part of Bhutan through which it might passes they were willing to approve.

After the British occupation of the Chumbi valley in December 1903 the political management of Bhutan was transferred from the Government of Bengal to the Commissioner for Tibet Frontier Affairs, Colonel Younghusband, under the direct control of the Government of India. Consequently, the correspondence with the Tongsa Penlop

[14] FSEP November 1903: Nos 159 – 234.
[15] FEAP, March 1904, Nos. 66 -125

passed through Younghusband. On 25 December Younghusband wrote to both the Tongsa and Paro Penlops asking them to meet him at Chumbi and informing them that a survey team had been sent to Bhutan to explore a route through the Chumbi valley. This, Younghusband explained to the two Bhutanese, was an urgent matter and there were no Bhutanese representative to consult.[16] Ugyen Wangchuk sent his cousin, the Trimpuk Dzongpon, in February 1904 assuring Younghusband of Bhutan's friendship with the British and permitting him to construct the road. While a guest of the Mission in Chumbi the Trimpuk had an interview with the Lhasa delegates who were present there, and it is said did his best to pave the way for a settlement between the Indian and Tibetan Governments. Before he left the British camp on his return to Bhutan, the "most friendly relations were established between him and the British officers with whom he came into contact." The Tongsa Penlop arrived in June, and in the words of the Government of India to the Secretary of State "the moment of the advance into Tibet contributed the turning point in our relations with Bhutan".

The Tongsa Penlop too tried to bring about a peaceful settlement to the Tibetan problem. He had been present at the engagement in Gyantse, the largest Tibetan masonry fort on the route to Lhasa. Its easy fall to the British forces was to leave a lasting impact upon the future Maharaja of Bhutan. Ugyen wrote to the Viceroy at the end of the Expedition that he would "henceforth" look to the Government of India for "protection and justice" in the event of an invasion of Bhutan by a foreign power. And the only foreign power that could do so was China-Tibet.

The Government of India acknowledged the services of the Tongsa Penlop by conferring upon him the Order of Knight Commander of the Indian Empire (KCIE). In April 1905 Claude White, who as Assistant Commissioner for Tibet Affairs to Colonel Younghusband was also directly concerned with Bhutan, went to Punakha along with A. W. Paul to present the Penlop with the insignia of the Order.[17] This was followed up by

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[16] *Ibid*

[17] White, *op cit*, P. 105. The deputy Commissioner of Darjeeling A W Paul, who had established a close friendship with Ugyen Wangchuk also on the latter's invitation.

an invitation to Ugyen Wangchuk to visit Calcutta on the occasion of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India. This was White's idea. The Knighthood had an important bearing upon Bhutan's relations with India: it contributed to the prestige and power of Ugyen Wangchuk and at the same time ensured British influence in the Himalayan State.[18] The Political Officer's visit, or mission as he called it, so interestingly described in his *Bhutan and Sikhim*, gave him an opportunity to develop a close friendship with the Bhutanese strongman, and a mutual regard developed that was to come very handy in the years ahead. The reception White and Paul received in Bhutan was in sharp contrast to the hostility shown to Ashley Eden some forty years ago. White stayed on in Bhutan for some time after the investiture ceremony to see the country and the people, and his descriptions of Bhutan is equally in sharp contrast to earlier accounts.[19] A visit to India by Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, White felt, would have great advantages; a pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya would dispel any suspicions the Buddhist people of the Himalaya might have entertained against the British.[20] While still in Bhutan, in April, White approached the Government of India. The latter was reluctant, but when White again wrote in May, they relented, [21] but Bhutan was to be treated as any other Indian State.

Sir Ugyen Wangchuk arrived in Calcutta at the end of 1905 to a 15 – gun salute. Both he and the Maharaja of Sikkim were received in audience by the Viceroy and the Prince of Wales, and were even allowed to make presents to the latter. For Wangchuk and Namgyal the Calcutta trip had been more than a memorable one: it showed them the reality of British power in India. The visit was a watershed in British relations with Bhutan, the beginnings of which can be seen in the Younghusband Expedition. The Bengal Government not inaccurately sums up the result of the past few years thus:

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[18] FSEP June 1905; Nos 734 -54. The Deb Raja and the numbers of the Bhutanese Council wrote to the Viceroy expressing their gratitude for the honour shown to Ugyen Wangchuk and imploring him to regard them "with parental kindness and affection equaling the love of a mother for a child," in Labh, *India and Bhutan, op cit*, P. 151.

[19] FEAP February 1907: Nos 40; See also White, *Bhutan and Sikhim*, especially pp 105ff.

[20] FSEP April 1905; No 44.

[21] FSEP May 1905; No 89 - 90.

> The effect of the Mission to Tibet both upon Sikkim and Bhutan is very marked. The relations into which these states have been brought with the British government are much more than intimate than has hitherto been possible, and the friendship with them has been cemented by the recent visit paid by the Maharaja and Maharaj Kumar of Sikkim and the Tongsa Penlop of Bhutan to Calcutta, where they had the privilege of making the acquaintance of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.[22]

The letter from the Deb Raja which the Tongsa Penlop handed over to the Viceroy, however, said it all for Bhutan in characteristic flowery language:

> Henceforth His Most Gracious Majesty the King – Emperor and His Excellency the Viceroy are as the sun and moon, and we the minor chiefs under the Supreme Government as the stars. As the stars and the constellations must never fail in loyally attending on the sun and the moon, so do we the entire Bhutanese nation resolve to do likewise to the Supreme Government, hoping that as the sun and the moon are like the parents of the whole world, we also will enjoy the blessings of their beneficent rays for ever and ever till the cessation of worldly existing.[23]

Chinese Threat: White's Recommendation

Meanwhile important developments were taking place in Tibet which would result not only in the orientation of White's ideas about Bhutan but also bring in a new significance to the Gangtok Agency. The Lhasa Convention, it will be recalled again, was not only whittled down by the British Cabinet but by the Adhesion Agreement with China (1906) and the Anglo Russian Convention (1907) Britain surrendered all the gains of the Younghusband Mission.[24] China took advantage of this to transform her suzerainty to actual sovereignty. O'Connor, though only a minor official, very perceptibly wrote of the new situation in March 1908 from his vantage point Gyantse:

> It is clear, I think, that one of the principal results of our intervention in Tibetan affairs since 1903 is the more complete establishment of Chinese influence in Tibet than has ever been the case before. Before our mission

[22] FEAP May 1906: Nos. 159 – 162; Chief Secretary, Bengal to Foreign Secretary, India, 9 January 1906.
[23] FEAP May 1906: Nos 84 – 86; in Labh, *op cit*, P. 154.
[24] See Alistair Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia, op cit*, Chapter X, pp 275 – 317, also by the same author, *The MacMahon Line*, London 1966, vol I, pp 117ff; vol II, pp 271 – 358; H. K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier*, Vol III, Gauhati 1981, pp 191 – 213.

> to Lhasa Chinese suzerainty was a very shadowy affair and the Tibetans openly flouted the Amban. But after the through thrashing we gave them and the flight of the Dalai Lama, they were a good deal cowed and much more amenable to reason and discipline. The Chinese naturally took advantage of the state of things and stepped into place which we had helped to prepare for her.[25]

White was no less perceptive than O'Connor about the Tibetan situation after Younghusband's withdrawal from Lhasa. He regarded the Chinese threat to Bhutan, just as it had been to Sikkim more than a decade earlier, as real. Almost immediately after his retirement and after twenty years experience of the political conditions in the Himalayas, White wrote:

> In the case of Bhutan, Government should utilize this unique opportunity of a new *regime* in that country to enter into a new treaty and to increase the inadequate subsidy that we now dole out as compensation for the annexation of the Duars, the most valuable tea district in India. If this is not done soon China will acquire complete control in Bhutan, and demand from us, as she did in the parallel case of Sikhim, the retrocession of the Bhutanese plains. Further any political disturbance in this frontier would seriously affect the supply of labour on the tea gardens in the duars, and so cause great loss to the tea industry.[26]

The Treaty of 1865 provided that Bhutan's disputes with Sikhim and Cooch Behar should be settled by reference to the Government of India. It did not allow British intervention in any of Bhutan's disputes with Tibet and China. White felt that this shortcoming in the Treaty made the Government of India helpless in the face of Chinese or Tibetan intervention in Bhutan. This was no imaginery fear, for, after all, the Amban's intervention in the Tongsa and Paro Penlop's dispute with the Deb Raja was of recent memory. White, therefore, felt that it would be very desirable to revise the Treaty while the British still administered the Chumbi valley and while the Bhutanese attitude was extremely favourable to the Government of India. Before laying down his office White had suggested to the Government of India that Article VIII might be modified by the addition of the words "and any other neighbouring states" after "Sikkim and Cooch

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[25] FSEP March 1910: Nos 385 – 510, See Note, P. 5
[26] White, *op cit*, pp 283 – 84.

Behar", and that the annual subsidy to Bhutan be revised to Rs. 1,00,000 if Bhutan agreed to the modification.[27] White also considered it desirable to add certain clauses in the Treaty similar to those in the 1861 Treaty with Sikkim by which the Government of India would be empowered to keep its military forces in Bhutan, build roads, prevent the cessation of any Bhutanese territory and allow no hostile force from entering into that country. He would not insist on these if Bhutan were unwilling to accept them, but he would carry out the revision of Article VIII at all costs.

With the imminence of British withdrawal from the Chumbi valley, scheduled for 1908, White's anxieties about Chinese threat to Bhutan increased. There had been reports from the Residency at Kathmandu that the Amban at Lhasa had directed the Tibetans to send military officials to Nepal to familiarize themselves with that country's military. The Amban was also reported to have declared that Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan owed allegiance to China and that they should act together against any British designs. The only security against such developments, White said , was the revision of the Treaty as he had suggested. Article VIII, altered, would thus read:

> The Bhutan Government hereby agree to refer to the arbitration of the British Government all disputes with, or cause of complaint against, all neighbouring states, and to abide by the decision of the British Government: and the British hereby engage to enquire into and settle all such disputes and complaints in such manner as justice may require, and to insist on the observation of the decision by the neighbouring state.[28]

In April 1907 The Bhutanese chiefs unanimously decided to install Sir Ugyen Wangchuk as their hereditary Maharaja. White was invited by Wangchuk as a guest and as a representative of the British Government at his installation on 17 December.[29] He

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[27] FSEP June 1907: Nos 635 - 649

[28] *Ibid*, White to Government, 8 April

[29] Their decision was set out in a document which in translation reads: "There being no Hereditary Maharaja over the state of Bhutan, the Deb Rajas being elected from amongst the Lamas, Lopons, Councillors and the Chiolals of the different districts, we... with all the subjects, having discussed and unanimously agreed to elect Sir Ugyen Wang-chuk, Tongsa Penlop, the Prime Minister of Bhutan, as Hereditary Maharaja of the State, have installed him, in open Durbar, on the Golden throne... We now declare our allegiance to him and his heirs with unchanging mind, and undertake to serve him and his

left Gangtok for Punakha on 25 November with an impressive retinue. Till then he had been constantly urging upon the Government of India on the revision of the treaty, and the importance of closer relations with Wangchuk. He wanted his Government to recognize the new Maharaja and accord, as in the case of Sikkim, a salute of 15 guns.[30] Five days before he proceeded to Bhutan White wrote to Minto's Private Secretary to impress upon the Viceroy the need for the revision of the Treaty that he had earlier suggested.[31] White's views became a conviction with the reception he received at Punakha. Once again he makes this point on his *Bhutan and Sikhim* while describing the Maharaja and his people and the aid that should be given to Bhutan. Long though it is, his words deserve to be quoted in full:

> The aid is required now, not in the distant future, and I hope the fact that I am no longer on the spot or able to press the matter on Government will not mean that the proposals made will be allowed to fall into abeyance, but that the Indian Government will give, and generously, what is required.

And further that:

> I cannot pass over the fact that the present time is a critical one for relations between India and Bhutan, and that if we do not support the new Maharaja openly and generously, grave complications may be the result. At the present moment Bhutan and its people are thoroughly and entirely friendly to the English, and wish beyond everything to enter into close relationships with them, but since the withdrawal of the Lhasa Mission Chinese influence is more active than ever on this frontier, and Bhutan, from lack of active help and sympathy on our part, may, against her will, be thrown into the hands of the Chinese by sheer force of circumstances, for China, as we know, is not likely to lose an opportunity, when the expenditure of a few thousand rupees will gain her end, and such a departure is to be most highly deprecated from all point of view.[32]

The Government of India could not have been totally complacent about a possible Chinese threat to Bhutan, but as yet there was no pressing need to impose on that country a new treaty. To do this when Ugyen Wangchuk was being installed as Maharaja would

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heirs loyally and faithfully to the best of our ability. Should anyone not abide by this contract, by saying this and that, he shall be altogether turned out of our company" In White, *op cit*, pp 226 – 227.

[30] *Ibid*

[31] FSEP October 1907: No 206; FSEP January 1908; Nos 488 – 515. See Notes, P. 18

[32] White, *op cit*, pp. 230 -31

have seemed that it was the guarantee of British protection that has brought about the political change in Bhutan. Above all, the Secretary of State, John Morley, was too sensitive about the Himalayan frontier to accept the proposed changes in the Treaty.[33] After all, he had in May 1907 expressed himself against raising the question whether British Government.[34] Whatever may have been the merits of White's recommendations, it was not at all likely that they would have received a favourable hearing with the Government of India. The Viceroy, Lord Minto, like Curzon before him, did not entertain, as mentioned earlier, a favourable impression of White. The fact that the Maharaja of Sikkim wrote to the Government of India for an extension of White's services as Political Officer led Minto to suspect that there had been "a great deal of disagreeable wire-pulling on the part of White on his own behalf both in Sikkim and Bhutan."[35]

Bell's Recommendations

In October 1908 Charles Bell succeeded Claude White as Political Officer, Sikkim, in a substantive capacity. The Agency had not been upgraded into a Residency, nor was Cooch Behar added to the functions of the Political Officer. Bhutan and Sikkim remained his principal charge. But is as adviser to the Government of India on Tibet that made the chief demand on his abilities and vision as India's most important frontier officer in the north-east.

A member of the Indian Civil Service, he had a wider administrative experience than his predecessor. A series of illness in the plains had taken him to the hills, and during 1901 and 1903 he was at Kalimpong where he successfully carried out land settlement. This work involved the measurement and classification of lands, fixing of rates of rent or revenue, settlement of disputes, arrangements regarding grazing grounds and fuel reserves, enquiry into the agricultural system, in short, "all the arrangements,

[33] *Ibid*
[34] FSEP August 1907: Nos 300 -03
[35] Quoted in Kapileshwar Labh, *op cit*, P. 160

which belong to a land settlement in India".[36] This brought him for the first time into close contact with the hill people, such as those of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and those of the Tibetan borderland. During the Younghusband Expedition, from March to May 1904 he was put in charge of a small pioneer party, his duty being to find a route suitable for a railway from India to Tibet. Thereafter, till October when White was with Younghusband, the administration of Sikkim was placed in his hands. Between September 1904 and December 1905 he held charge of the Chumbi Valley and from September 1906 to January 1907 and again in the following year when White had proceeded on furlough he was back in Gangtok. It was during this time that the political relations of the Government of India with Tibet as also with Bhutan was added to the functions of the Sikkim Political Agency. Charles Bell was thus no stranger to this part of the country and when he assumed charge as Political Officer in a substantive capacity, he was fully aware of the problems of Tibet and the frontier states.

Bhutan loomed large in the frontier environment when he assumed charge, and he was to pick up the threads of an evolving policy left over by White. Bhutan lay some two hundred and twenty miles along the northern border of Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam. Her hills bordered on tracts occupied by British capitalists and by prosperous villages where "almost every acre of land is fertile and capable of high cultivation". In both Sikkim and Bhutan the Nepalese population was rapidly increasing. In Sikkim it had already amounted to more than three-fourths of the entire population. Bell considered it "of first importance to keep the entire Nepalese population of these parts under control."[37] But it was the fear of Chinese control over the Bhutan hills that was his

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[36] FEAP, December 1908: Nos 16 – 19. Bell could speak Tibetan and Nepalese, having lived on the frontier for six years. Nepalese, he picked up during the two year's settlement work in Kalimpong and also on district work elsewhere in the Darjeeling district and Sikkim. Seeking confirmation of his appointment as Political Officer in August 1908 (when White was on leave preparatory to retirement) Bell wrote, "Sikkim involves a larger amount of administrative work, for the detailed administration will continue to be worked by the Political Officer for a considerable time owing to the backwardness of the Maharaja and the need for British control over this mixed frontier population, three-fourths of whom are Nepalese. This administrative work comes most naturally to a person who, while knowing Sikkim conditions, has had administrative experience especially in the Darjeeling district, where the country and people resemble those of Sikkim." See also *Tibet. Past and Present*, London 1924, Introductory, pp 1 – 4.

[37] FSEP May 1910: Nos. 208 – 262, Bell to foreign Secretary.

principal concern and which was to absorb him in the next several years. The reason, in Bell's words:

> Bhutan is a very fertile country and when developed is capable of supporting about one and a half million persons by agriculture. It could then feed a large army of Chinese troops without difficulty. Stories were current sometime ago that China threatened to post 20,000 troops in Bhutan. There are at present no British troops and only two companies of native infantry near this frontier on our side. But if modern drilled Chinese troops were posted in Bhutan, tea gardens and villages over three hundred miles of border country would become untenable, except at great military expenditure and by posting troops in the adjoining plains country, which is one of the most unhealthy tracts in India. Tibet, on the other hand, being infertile, can never support many troops. The Chinese soldiers are rice eaters and would have to import this from Bhutan. The Chinese would naturally therefore have selected Bhutan as the best place for stationing Chinese troops, both on account of its climate and on account of cheapness of supplies there."[38]

There was danger, Bell continued to say, "which cannot be regarded as a mere chimera that Bhutan might later on be a field for Chinese colonisation." It was well known, he said, that strenuous efforts were being made to populate the inhospitable tracts around Batang with Chinese colonists and it appeared that China had begun to look towards South Eastern Tibet which is not very far from Bhutan with the same object in view. "Bhutan has an ideal climate for Chinese from Southern and Central China", and travelling through Bhutan one could not fail to be impressed by the amount of fertile

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[38] *Ibid.* That Bell considered these reasons extremely valid is borne out by what he wrote, in the same vein, in his *Tibet, op cit,* pp 100: "Possessed of a temperate climate and a fertile soil, less than a quarter of which was occupied by the Bhutanese themselves, it offered a tempting field for Chinese penetration. Not immediately, but later on by degrees, Chinese colonists might well have followed, for the climate and soil would have been appreciated no less by the Southern Chinaman than the plains of Mongolia are by the Chinese of the North.

"It would have been natural for China to have sought this relief for her overflowing population for she appears to regard the Mongolian people that border on her own and the Tibetan frontiers, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and even Burma as within her natural sphere. And with Bhutan inhabited by people of Tibetan stock and revearing the Dalai Lama as their spiritual head, past centuries had given her a connection which might well have been magnified into a suzerainty of the shadowy Chinese type though any such claim at the present day would be unwelcome to the Bhutanese. And Bhutan garrisoned by Chinese troops, peopled more and more by Chinese colonists and overhanging the tea gardens of Assam and Jalpaiguri would have been a new and very disturbing factor on the Indian frontier."

uncultivated land, which exceeded by five or six times that at present under cultivation and which would quickly respond to the touch of the Chinese agriculturists. And, finally:

> That the Chinese designs on Bhutan were real admits of no doubt. Mr. Chang's utterance as to the blending of the five colours (China, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan) and the resemblance between Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim as the molar teeth lying side by side in a man's mouth showed the views of one who after being High Commissioner for Tibet was made the member of the Chinese Foreign Office in charge of Tibetan affairs. The Amban subsequently wrote to the Maharaja and the Chiefs of Bhutan, that Bhutan was under the Chinese suzerainty and sent Mr. Ma Chi Fu, a Chinese Papon, to Bhutan to endeavour to establish the claim.[39]

In April 1908 when he was in Gangtok, the Government of India had sought his advice on the course of British action that ought to be followed in Bhutan. On going through White's proposal for the revision of the Treaty, it appeared to him that it would not counter the Chinese advance. For "we should have the right to intervene only in case of disputes. If Bhutan, at any time in the future, agreed to Chinese intervention in her affairs, e.g. by receiving Chinese agents in Bhutan, we could have done nothing."[40] Bell was fully conscious of the fact that Bhutan, following the same religion as Tibet, venerated the Tibetan hierarchy and exchanged gifts with the Tibetan authorities. There was a natural sympathy of Bhutan, as of all Oriental countries, with their co-religionists, a fact that could cause inconvenience in the future. The Chinese were now in control in Tibet.

Bell accordingly advised that the Government of India should endeavour to persuade Bhutan to place her foreign relations under the British Government.[41] This of course was no new concept, it had been the focal point of arrangements for the defence of the North-West frontier. It was on these lines that Abdur Rahman, it may be recalled, was placed on the Afghan throne, when it was decided as a solution to the imperial problem of defence against a Russian advance, to build a strong, friendly and united

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[39] *Ibid.*
[40] Bell, *Tibet, op cit*, P. 101
[41] *Ibid.*

Afghanistan, which would serve as a buffer state between India and the Russians. By means of an annual subsidy, together with gifts of arms and ammunition a successful attempt was made to form a closer and more intimate alliance with the Amir of Afghanistan. "At the same time" says C. Collin Davies, long regarded as an authority on the North West Frontier problem, "the frontiers of Afghanistan were strictly defined by international agreement; and as long as we controlled her foreign affairs, any violation of the Amir's northern frontier by Russia would be tantamount to a declaration of war."[42] Bell was developing such ideas for the North East Frontier problem.

Bell at the same time was emphatic that, as in the Afghan case, the British Governemnt should agree to abstain from interference in the internal administration of the country. This promise, Bell insisted, was "of prime importance", as, he added, from his long residence in the frontier had convinced him of both the "justice and expedience of Home Rule wherever such was possible".[43] Ardent administrators usually with the best of motives, he went on to say, introduced changes in the government of what are somewhat arrogantly termed backward races. Such changes, unless desired by the people themselves, do more harm than good in the long run. On this vulnerable section of the frontier they would promote resentment against the British.

Recommendations Approved: Treaty Revised

Bell's ideas and proposals were accepted by the Foreign Department headed by Harcourt Butler. On 1 October 1908 the Government of India addressed the Secretary of State proposing in their long dispatch that in view of the policy pursued by China in Tibet, negotiations should be opened with Bhutan for a secret Treaty by which the external relations of the state should be placed under British control.[44] A draft revised treaty was submitted for consideration. The proposals were that Bell should proceed to Bhutan for the purpose at an early date. The Political Officer should commence by discussing the question of the industrial development of the districts of Bhutan and the

[42] C. Collin Davies, *The Problem of the North West Frontier 1890 – 1908*. Cambridge 1932, Second revised and enlarged edition, London 1975, P. 17
[43] Bell, *Ibid, op cit*, P. 101
[44] FSEP October 1908; Nos. 116 – 197.

adjoining British territory and that if a satisfactory understanding was arrived at on this point he should proceed to open negotiations for a treaty on the lines of the draft. The first article, which proposed that "the external relations of Bhutan shall be controlled by the British Government." The others provided that Bhutan shall not, without consent of the British Government either enter any agreement with a Foreign Power, or permit the residence of the Agent of a Foreign State or part with land to the representative of a Foreign State. These, the Government of India's letter said, would be left to the discretion of Bell to secure, if Bhutan were willing. It was further proposed that the Political Officer would be authorised to add to the treaty a guarantee against aggression should this be insisted upon. The existing subsidy of Rs. 50,000 would be increased if necessary to two lakhs.[45]

Lord Morley was in no particular hurry and it was not before another ten months when he finally replied to these proposals. Meanwhile India Office discussed the problem with the Foreign Office. In April 1909 the Secretary of State addressed his colleague the British Foreign Secretary on the subject.[46] It was pointed out that in the past the Government of India had no reason to concern themselves actively with the relations of Bhutan and Tibet, which had not been of a nature to cause serious trouble between the two countries. A clear necessity alone, said Morley, could justify a departure from the policy of non intervention in the affairs of regions as distant and inaccessible. That justification was now provided, as the Government of India had shown by the gravity of change that had taken place in the political situation in this section of the Indian border owing to recent developments of Chinese policy. In April 1908 for instance, the Chinese Amban made an attempt to assert sovereign rights in Bhutan, and the circumstances in which the Dalai Lama left Peking in December (1908) on his return to Lhasa, clearly indicated that the attitude of the Tibetan Government towards the adjoining states of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal would be governed in future by considerations of Chinese policy. "The time has therefore come," Morley told the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey:

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[45] *Ibid.*

[46] FSEP May 1910 Nos. 208 – 262; A Godly to Under Secretary of State, Foreign Office, 22 April 1909

> to take such steps as may be practicable to maintain Bhutan in its present state of independence as regards China and Tibet. The establishment of effective Chinese suzerainty in Bhutan might not only necessitate expensive arrangements in the immediately adjoining British districts for the protection of the valuable tea estates situated along the frontier from Jalpaiguri to Tejpur, but would produce a disturbing effect on the mind of the Nepalese Government. Our present friendly relations with Nepal, which it is of utmost importance to maintain, would certainly be shaken if the Durbar had reason to think that we are indifferent to the absorption by China of their neighbor Bhutan.[47]

Morley pointed out that the friendly attitude of the Maharaja of Bhutan was clearly shown by the part he played as the Tongsa Penlop in the latter stages of the Younghusband Mission to Tibet. And this was confirmed by his dealings with the Government of India since his installation as the hereditary ruler of Bhutan in December 1907. He had sought the assistance of the Government in opening up the resources of the southern portion of his state adjoining the British border. More recently on the occasion of the dispute at Phari, which was settled to Bhutan's satisfaction, the Maharaja wrote spontaneously to the Political Officer, Sikkim, that the Bhutanese were encouraged , by the favour they received in the past from the British Government to hope that "consideration will be bestowed on whatever reasonable prayer we shall be obliged to make." The present state of affairs thus afforded a suitable opportunity of approaching Bhutan for an agreement as to the external affairs of the State.[48]

Relations with Bhutan, Morley said in justification of the Government of India's proposal, was governed by the Treaty of Sinchula, 1865, the provisions of which conclusively established the right of the State to enter into diplomatic engagements, and their effect was to vest in the Government of India a certain measure of control over the external realtions of the State, limited, however, to those interests which were more immediately of concern to the Government of India."[49] The Secretary of State also ruled out complications, if the new treaty were concluded, in British relations with China.

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[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Ibid*
[49] *Ibid.*

There was no evidence of the existence of any definite Chinese rights of which the conclusion of a treaty of the suggested kind by Bhutan would contravene, while the history of past relations clearly hold the right of the State to enter, if it chose into such a treaty with the British. This would be no more than extending the right they have given the British under the existing Treaty of controlling a portion of its foreign relations. Lord Morley had agreed with the Government of India that any treaty that may be concluded must be kept secret, unless circumstances made it necessary for Bhutan to invoke British aid under the provision. It may be that no questions involving risk to the status of Bhutan as against China and Tibet would arise. In that case there will be no reason to disturb the existing state of affairs under which Bhutan itself deals with the affairs of that portion of the frontier. Should encroachment necessitate British intervention, the Government of India would be in a better position to deal with the questions if its actions was based on a formal agreement with Bhutan. Besides, the Maharaja himself was desirous of British support against Chinese encroachments.[50]

In these circumstances the Secretary of State said he agreed with the Government of India and told the Foreign Office that Bell should be allowed to proceed to Bhutan on an opportunity presenting itself to discuss with the Maharaja the question both of the industrial development of Bhutan and the external relations of the state. If the Maharaja agreed to place his foreign relations under British Government, Bell would be authorised to affirm non-interference in Bhutan's internal administration and a promise to increase the subsidy to two lakhs. The Treaty would substitute a fresh Article VIII of that Article of the Treaty of 1865, and could run thus:

> The British Government undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part, the Bhutanese Governemnt agrees to be guided by the advice of the British Government in regard to its external relations. In the event of disputes or causes of complaint against the Rajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, such matters will be referred for arbitration to the British Government which will settle them in

[50] *Ibid.*

such manner as justice may require, and insist upon the observance of its decision by the Rajas named.[51]

The Foreign Office raised no objections, and three months later the sanction of the Secretary of State for India was conveyed to the Government of India.[52]

In October Bell was authorised to proceed to Bhutan to negotiate with the Maharaja the substitution of the new Article VIII for the old one in the Treaty of 1865.[53] He was told that if he found the maharaja and his advisers inclined to agree to place Bhutan's external relations under the direction of the Government of India to assure them of the Government of India intention of strict non-interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom. The implications of placing the country's external relations under the British, that without the consent of the British Government he could not enter into any agreement with any foreign power or permit their agents or representatives to reside in Bhutan or part with land to any foreign state, explained to the Maharaja. Bell was also to promise an increase to the subsidy upto one or even two lakhs of rupees in the event of the Maharaja agreeing to the new treaty stipulations; that the British Government would help in the development of his resources. A stand of one hundred Martini-Henry rifles was to be presented to the Maharaja along with expensive personal gifts. Bell was cautioned that in the event of the Maharaja declining to accept the Government of India's new treaty terms he was to refrain from expressing an option or in any way committing himself but to report to the Government the Maharaja's objections for consideration.[54]

Bell on his own decided to sound out the Maharaja before proceeding to Bhutan. Just as Bengal did during the Tibetan difficulty Bell decided to utilize the services of Ugyen Kazi.[55] As the Vakil of the Bhutan Government the Kazi was close to the

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[51] *Ibid.* See Appendix I.
[52] *Ibid.*
[53] *Ibid.* No. 212
[54] *Ibid.*
[55] *Ibid.* No. 235. Bell like White before him, but unlike Curzon, entertained a favourable opinion of Ugyen Kazi. In 1906 when he was merely officiating for White, Bell recommended him for the award of the title of Rai Bahadur. He had said that Ugyen had served the British in the past, and if treated graciously would continue to serve the Government of India.

Maharaja. Bell briefed him in detail about the British proposals, and held out the hope that should he succeed his pay would be increased. In the following month Ugyen Kazi was on his way on what can be described as his Bhutan Mission, and on 15 December conveyed the Maharaja's acceptance of all the terms the British had offered.

Within a fortnight, on 28 December, Charles Bell, accompanied by Captain Kennedy, the Medical Officer of Gyantse left Sikkim, reaching Punakha on 7 January.* On arrival he had a series of meetings with the Bhutan Council, but found most of them were reluctant to place their external relations under the Government of India. A guarantee of British non-interference in the internal administration of Bhutan soon won them over. The doubts of the Council thus overcome Bell that night rested easy prepared four copies of the Treaty in Bhutanese and in English. The following day, on 8 January 1910, the four copies of the Treaty were duly signed and sealed. The Bhutanese seals included those of the Maharaja, each member of the Council and the ecclesiastical representatives. At the head of them all was put the Seal of the Dharma Raja, who presided over Bhutan as the Dalai Lama did over Tibet, but with the differences that the former was confined to spiritual functions, though his seal was necessary for Government actions of prime importance. Thus with the consent of all and with the blessings of its powerful priesthood Bhutan became a part of Britain's Imperial system. After the treaty was signed the Maharaja announced that Bhutan was entirely satisfied with the terms.

The Treaty and China

The importance of the new arrangement with Bhutan, in particular its timing, can be seen in the tum of events in Tibet where China began to pursue an unusually active policy with a view to establishing effective dominion. In the early part of 1908 Chao Erh Feng, whom the Tibetans feared and hated on account of the severity with which he suppressed the rebellion in the Batang and Litang districts in 1905, was appointed

* Interestingly, near Punakha Bell noticed a spot which he thought would have been ideal for a hill station had it been in British territory. Bell also wrote about five Chinese spies who were on the road ahead of him. They were not encountered, but Bell thought it necessary "to push on by double stages and in three days arrived within six miles of Pu-na-ka", where he was received by the Maharaja's escort and band.

Warden of the Tibetan Marches and Minister Resident in Tibet.[56] His instructions were to prepare plans for the training of troops, the promotion of education, mining and industries, the improvement of the means of communications, and the increase in the number of officials and the form of government. He began to display great military activity; the garrison in Lhasa was increased and considerable additions were made to the Tibetan army, the new recruits being placed under direct Chinese instructors. Chao Erh Feng, who was acting Viceroy of Szechuan was relieved of his duties about the middle of the year when he was free to take up his new duties.

Tibetan attempts to prevent Chao from moving towards Lhasa failed, and by the close of 1909 it was obvious that the Chinese control over Tibet would soon be consolidated. Friction between the Chinese and the opposing Tibetans turned in open hostility. The Dalai Lama, who after five years exile in Chinese territory during Younghusband expedition, was obliged once again to flee, this time towards the south into British territory. At the end of January 1910 he was over the border, and finally in Darjeeling. Thus the flight of the Dalai Lama followed within days of the signing of the new Treaty with Bhutan. "We have fortunately negotiated our treaty with Bhutan just in time."[57] said the Government of India's new Foreign Secretary, Harcourt Butler, but that was not the end of the problem. The Paro Penlop had not quite reconciled himself to the new treaty, and was more inclined towards the Chinese. Butler even toyed with the idea of sending Bell to Bhutan to prevent the growth of a "Chinese party" headed by the Paro Penlop. The whole problem was brought out by him in a note for the Viceroy, Lord Minto, on 24 February 1910:

> In any case we must assume that China will consolidate her position in Tibet. What we have to consider now is how to consolidate and strengthen our position along the frontier. Bhutan is the most vulnerable point, because it is quite likely that China will not recognize our treaty,

[56] FSEP September 1908: Nos. 113 – 34; Encl to No 114

[57] The documentation on Chao Erh Feng 's activities in Tibet and India's reaction is fairly complete. See Alistair Lamb, *The MacMahon Line*, London 1967, Vol I, Chapter XIII, pp 181ff.Parshotam Mehra, *The MacMahon Line and After*, New Delhi 1974, chapter 6, pp. 67 – 79; W D Shakabpa, *Tibet. A Political History*, New Haven, 1967, 2nd Print 1973, Chapter 14, pp 224 -245, for the Tibetan point of view; and H E Richardson, *Tibet and its History*, London 1962

> because the Paro Penlop is Chinese in his proclivities and only signed the treaty for fear of the Maharaja who has him under his thumb, and because the treaty is quite new and the force of the Chinese and the flight of the Dalai Lama will no doubt impress the people.[58]

In the event China did not accept the Treaty. Though outwardly there was no opposition or even comments, there followed a series of events suggesting attempts on their part to subvert its terms. In June 1910 the Chinese Amban reportedly sought an explanation from the Maharaja for allowing certain followers and the property of the Dalai Lama to pass through Bhutan on the way to India. The Maharaja was also said to have asked to ensure the circulation of Tibet – Chinese currency in his Kingdom. The Secretary of State, when informed, directed that the Maharaja, in the event of receiving such letters from the Chinese should hand them over to the Political Officer in Sikkim who would either draft a reply in consultation with the Maharaja or refer them to the Government of India for instructions.[59] Bell was instructed to inform the Chinese that since the external relations of Bhutan were controlled by the British Government all letters intended for Bhutan should be routed through the Political Officer in Sikkim.

Far from being chastised, the Amban in August again sent a letter to Bhutan in tone and language that amount to a Chinese claim of suzerainty over the country. The letter was in fact addressed to the Deb Raja, an office which had become defunct on the establishment of the hereditary monarchy, clearly indicating that China had not recognized the political change of 1907. The Government of India protested, but to their protest note the Chinese Government vindicated their Amban's actions on the grounds that Bhutan was a "vassal state of China."[60]

In December 1910 the Secretary of State took up the matter with his colleague at the Foreign Office and reminded him of the circumstances and the implications of the Treaty. Bhutan had concluded it on her own free will and this was communicated to

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[58] FSEP March 1910. Nos 385 – 510, Note, Butler 24 Feb 1910, P. 30
[59] Letter dated 8 July 1910 from Secretary of State to Viceroy, quoted in Kapileshwar Labh, *op cit*, P. 176.
[60] FSEP January 1911 1 Nos. 124 – 207 (No. 131)

Peking which therefore had no reason to ignore the relations so established between the Government of India and Bhutan. This relationship was no different from that which governed British relations with Sikkim. The Government of India was firm that it was not prepared to allow China to extend its influence over Bhutan, which was remote from direct Chinese interest but in close relationship with India. The Governor General in Council rejected the claims of China of suzerainty over Bhutan, and made it clear that it would resist any attempt on its part to impose its authority on or in any way to interfere with Bhutan.

India's firm stand had the desired effect in the attempted intrigues of the Chinese in Bhutan. But it was soon transpired that the Himalayan Kingdom was not the only area over which they had their covetous eyes.

APPENDIX I.

TREATY BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND BHUTAN, 1910.

Signed at Punaka, Bhutan, on the 8th January 1910
Ratified at Calcutta on the 24th March 1910.

Whereas it is desirable to amend Articles IV and VIII of the Treaty concluded at Sinchula on the 11th day of November 1865, corresponding with the Bhutia year Shing Lang, 24th day of the 9th month, between the British Government and the Government of Bhutan, the under mentioned amendments are agreed to on the one part by Mr. C. A. bell, Political Officer in Sikkim, in virtue of full powers to that effect vested in him by the Right Honourable Sir Gilbert John Elliot-Myurray-Kynynmound, P.C., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., G.C.M.G., Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor-general of India in Council, and on the other part by his Highness Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, K.C.I.E., Maharaja of Bhutan.

The following addition has been made to Article IV of the Sinchula Treaty of 1865.

'The British Government has increased the annual allowance to the Government of Bhutan from fifty thousand rupees (Rs. 50,000) to one hundred thousand rupees (Rs. 100,000) with effect from the 10th January 1910'

Article VIII of the Sinchula Treaty of 1865 has been revised and the revised Article runs as follows:-

'The British Government undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part, the Bhutanese Government agrees to be guided by the advice of the British Government in regard to its external relations. In the event of disputes with or causes of complaint against the Maharajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, such matters will be referred for arbitration to the British Government, which will settle them in such manner as justice may require, and insist upon the observance of its decision by the maharajas named'

Done in quadruplicate at Punaka, Bhutan, this eight day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ten, corresponding with the Bhutia date, the 27th day of the 11th month of the Earth-Bird (Sa-ja) year.

CHAPTER V

CHARLES BELL AND THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

While in India in exile from 1910 the Dalai Lama and his ministers wrote continuously to the Government pleading for assistance against the Chinese. These letters, forwarded through Bell are interesting as they give a long history of Tibet's relations with the Manchus in an attempt to show that Tibet was never under the political control of the Peking Government[1]. A Tibetan uprising seemed imminent. And Bell warned that it might be necessary to strengthen the guards at the Trade Agencies. The Secretary of State enjoined strict neutrality in the Tibetan problem. All the while Tibetan representations continued. On 15 June the Tibetan ministers while submitting another letter to Bell told him that several of the "Tibetan gentry' and officials were constantly urging them "to appeal to Russia, to Japan, to France or a powerful neighbour to the South east of Tibet, or to Germany, but we (the ministers) have always abstained from doing so". They wished, they said, to stand in the same relation to the Government of India as Nepal. If the Government of India did not approve of this, Bell should tell them "how the British Empire and Tibet should be connected." If nothing of this sort was possible, then their stand would be, that in accordance with Article IX of the Lhasa Convention (1904) China must be considered as a "Foreign Power", and "we are entitled to contract a new treaty without considering the Chinese, since the latter have broken the treaties relating to Tibet." And finally:

> If the Government of India accedes to our request, we will respond by giving land free at Gyantse and in future, whatever the Government of India acquire from us, whether land in Tibet or anything else, we will give it. Tibet will be like a dog chained outside the door of India, which will prevent marauders from coming in. Even if a weak man asked a powerful

[1] FSEP August 1910: Nos 58-246: Bell to Foreign Secretary

> neighbour for help, the latter always affords it. It is against custom that a country in distress should appeal to a powerful neighbour and receive no help.[2]

Tibetan argument so forcefully, if sentimentally put forward considerably moved Bell. Unhappy with the refusal of the Government of India and the Home Government to rescue the Tibetans he pleaded for a reconsideration of the policy of non-interference. The Dalai Lama, and the entire Tibetan Government were seeking British assistance. "According to Tibetan ideas, a request of this kind is not refused except from fear", he told the Indian Foreign Secretary a week later, and "The Tibetan Government would be willing to make Tibet into a British protectorate with freedom in internal administration". Bell gave reasons why the British should help the Tibetans.

> If the Chinese get control over Tibet, later on they will pay special attention to the development and colonization of the present thinly populated but warm and fertile districts on the south east of Tibet, which are not far from Assam and from which districts when developed a considerable army could be fed. The Tawang district borders directly on Assam. The Chinese moreover are likely to intrigue with Indians for the undermining of British rule in India. Tibet will be hostile to us, and will work against us in every way in Tibet as well as in Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. [3]

Bell also alluded to the possibility of the Tibetan Government offering protectorate over Tibet to "some other power" that does not recognize Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. The Political Officer, therefore, suggested that the Chinese Government be told (i) to restore the Dalai Lama to his former religious and secular position (ii) not to interfere in the internal administration of Tibet and (iii) to reduce the number of Chinese troops in Tibet to the number employed before 1904.[4]

To these proposals and to the Dalai Lama's representation the Government of India remained non-committal, non-intervention was not to be set aside. "In view of the

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[2] Ibid. Bell to Secretary, 'Foreign Department, 10th June 1910
[3] Ibid. Bell to Foreign Secretary, 17th June.
[4] Ibid. Bell to Foreign Secretary, 18th June.

policy deliberately directed by the Majesty's Government," went a note in the Foreign Department, "I think the only course open to us is to make the best of the impending position, viz. the absorption of Tibet as a province of China, in fact, if not in name, and do our utmost to assist on the maintenance of treaty obligations".[5] The Viceroy, Lord Minto even remarked, "Bell's suggestions as to policy are entirely opposed to the policy of his Majesty's Government and are altogether beside the mark'.[6] The only concern India had at this time was the safety of the Trade Agencies.

The Agency: Proposed Expansion

In this new and disturbing situation that was allowed to develop across the frontier Bell saw certain administrative requirements for the Agency. His primary functions, it will be recalled, related to Sikkim and Bhutan. In the former state the work involved the supervision of revenue, police, judicial, excise, education, public works, both of the Government of India and the State, and forests. As regards the last, forests were being demarcated for the first time and rules for felling timber, grazing, fodder and fuel were being framed and put into force. Though the Maharaj - Kumar was incharge Bell had to control his work carefully in view of its being an unpopular reform. A census for the first time was underway. The operations were most difficult in Sikkim than in the neighbouring districts of Darjeeling, which, though it had a larger population, was much smaller and less extensive. Finally, there was the necessity of guarding against Chinese intrigues in Sikkim in consequence of the non-interference policy in Tibet. In Bhutan, now that friendly relations had been established there were several new responsibilities: the development of the country by Nepalese cultivators along the borders of India, the adaption of new methods of administration and the requirements of the new Treaty.[7]

In addition to all these was Bell's advisory functions in matters relating to Tibet affairs. Apart from the Trade Agencies, there were political questions raised by the presence of the Dalai Lama in British territory (in Darjeeling), the care of his party, and

[5] *Ibid.* See Note by E. H. S. Clarke
[6] *Ibid.* Note by Minto, 20 June.
[7] FEBP September 1910: Nos 268-69; Bell to Foreign Secretary, 2 August 1910.

the arrangements on the security of the Sikkim-Tibet frontier. Bell listed three matters of importance by which his work had vastly increased:

(1) By work in connection with the appeal of the Dalai Lama to the Government of India.
(2) By questions connected with the posting of troops on the frontier, matters of transport, roads, sanitation and camping grounds which had to be arranged both in Sikkim as well as in Tibet, and
(3) By the Chinese forward movement and the numerous important and related questions to which it had given rise.

In addition to all the work in Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet Bell pointed out that:

> New and very important questions of policy have arisen in consequence of the Chinese forward movement in Tibet and their intrigues along our Indian frontier. The situation requires to be watched much more carefully than before, and these new questions need to be thought out. The whole frontier between Tibet and India-cum-cis-Himalayan states is affected, a distance of some 1,400 miles. The portion from Sikkim to the Khampti country, east of Assam, at any rate is very vulnerable. We are now in fact confronted with a real North East frontier problem, where formerly we were concerned with nothing beyond the occasional raids of petty border tribes.[8]

For all the vast work Bell wanted an Assistant added to the Sikkim Agency. At Gangtok, the state engineer and the civil surgeon were his only assistants, for the Trade Agents had nothing to do with Sikkim, Bhutan or even Tibetan affairs. His complaint was that he had to do a considerable amount of work himself.

Bell detailed the kind of work an assistant would be required to discharge for Tibet: routine correspondence, such as returns of the Trade Agents at Gyantse and Yatung for correction, bills and accounts incorrectly prepared- "this will mean but little work". As regards Bhutan, these were petty matters between Bhutan and the British

[8] *Ibid.*

districts bordering on Bhutan and between Bhutan and Sikkim, such as judicial and police cases. The assistant would be required to tour in Bhutan, at least for three months of the year, to guard against Chinese intrigue or to set the Political officer free for such touring when that became necessary. It may also be necessary to make arrangements soon to raise Bhutanese levies, for constructing new roads, and such proposals which will have to be examined on the spot in Bhutan. [9]

For Sikkim itself Bell saw four important duties for the proposed assistant:

(i) trial of those original cases, civil and criminal, in Sikkim, except serious cases like murder. Appellate cases and serious original cases would continue to be tried by the Political Officer. At present owing to his frequent and lengthy absences from Sikkim (at that time he had been away for over seven months) it was not possible for him to examine the evidence in ordinary cases himself.

(ii) Census work in Sikkim. This would necessitate prolonged touring in the interior of Sikkim, which it was unlikely that he could undertake with so many duties elsewhere.

(iii) Routine administrative work, connected with land revenue, excise, police, judicial, European tourists and the like.

(iv) Transport, camping grounds, etc, for the new troops posted to Sikkim.[10]

Bell suggested the appointment of a "quite junior officer" of the Political Department. The duties which he proposed to hand over to an assistant were simple and mostly of a routine nature and it would therefore be quite unnecessary to depute an officer of more than two or three years service in the Political Department. An officer of greater seniority than he now proposed would find such a work irksome and would be less ready to fall into ways of the work in this part of the frontier, which was different from the work elsewhere. Such an assistant could relieve others in similar postings when required, or be posted to Bhutan if necessary. He would acquire an experience that may later be useful to the Government of India. He could also be interchanged with the British Trade Agent at

[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*

Gyantse and would thus have an opportunity of learning something about the Sikkim and Bhutan work and so increase his sphere of usefulness.[11]

A careful examination of the proposal would show what Bell sought was relief from his work in Sikkim and to a lesser extent in Bhutan. It was his job as adviser to the Government of India for Tibet affairs that seemed to interest him and which he considered, despite the declared non-intervention policy, the most important functions of the Sikkim Political Agency. Behind this was the problem of the Chinese.

Chinese Encroachments: Bell's August 1910 Memorandum

"The treaty with Bhutan secured our needs over this portion of the frontier", Bell later wrote in his *Tibet Past and Present*, but, "it had always seemed to me that his was not enough".[12] Bell's book published in 1924, is rather thin on the details of the Tibetan difficulties and the consequent North-East Frontier problem covering just two pages, but in his official communications he gives full expression to his fear's of China. East of Bhutan lay the extensive hills, seventy to hundred miles in depth inhabited by diverse tribes in various stages of development. The danger that he foresaw to Bhutan loomed equally, if not more ominously over these hills. "The present position in Tibet has made it more necessary to see these border tribes", he noted to the Foreign Department on 9 March 1910, and:

> If we wait till Chinese presses on them, our difficulties will be greatly increased, and we may be too late to avert Chinese designs. In Bhutan we were only just in time. If my recent mission had failed, it is probable that we should never have had another chance and that an effective Chinese control over Bhutan would have followed before long and a very serious menace would have been established on our north-eastern frontier.

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[11] *Ibid.*

[12] Bell, *Tibet, op cit*, pp 107f. Bell went on to say: " I feared Chinese intervention and influence - and eventually a measure of control in these tribal territories. They cover seven hundred miles of the Indian frontier, a hundred miles farther than from London to the Orkney Islands. The Indian Government had constituted me their adviser on Tibetan affairs. It seemed to me therefore that although these tribal areas lay outside my own charge-Tibet, Bhutan, and Sikkim-I ought to point out the danger.

> Tibetans and Bhutanese look on these tribes as parts of Tibet, and as being included in the Tibetan province of Pe-ma-ko-chen, Lho and Dza-yul, thought it appears clear that in the places near India at any rate there is no attempt at control by Tibet.
>
> What we want at present is to find out more about these tribes, as our information at present is not enough for our purpose.[13]

By the middle of 1910 it became increasingly certain that Bell's worst fears about Chinese encroachments in the tribal areas of the Assam or North East Frontier were beginning to be real. In May the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam informed the Government of India that a thousand Chinese troops had arrived in Rima, across the Mishmi hills. They had demanded taxes from the Tibetans of that place and had issued orders to the Mishmi chief of Pangun to "cut a tract from Tibet to Assam broad enough for two horseman"[14]. The chief had declined, saying that he was a British subject, a claim that the Lieutenant Governor was at pains to point out, was made "without authority". The Mishmis, he explained, however were not subjects of the Tibetans, and still less of the Chinese, but that the British Government was entitled to hold the tribes under its protection and prevent the Chinese and Tibetans from interfering in any way in their internal affairs. Bell learned of all this, and more. Dr. Gregorson, a medical officer of a tea company in Upper Assam, who was to lose his life along with the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya , Noel Williamson at the hands of the Abors a year later, had told Bell during a visit to Darjeeling of Chinese activities in these remote hills.

Greatly alarmed by these reports Bell submitted a lengthy memorandum to the Government of India on 20 August drawing their attention to the situation in the North East Frontier.[15] He once again pointed out how in the last five years China had relentlessly pushed forward in Tibet, and during the last few months had gained an

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[13] FSEP January 1911: Nos 211-240; Note Bell, 9 March 1910

[14] For details, H. K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes : North East Frontier*, Vol.III Gauhati 1981, p157, also Alistair Lamb, *The Mc Mahon Line*, *op cit*, Vol II pp 324-333; Parshotam Mehra. *The Mc Mahon Line and after*, *op cit*,; chapter 8, pp86-99, Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan Frontiers*, London 1969, see especially Chapter 5 and 6.

[15] FSEP January 1911: Nos 211-240; Bell to Foreign Secretary, 20 August 1910, Very Confidential.

effective control on the country: "our policy of non interference in Tibetan affairs has removed the last obstacle to Chinese control", he had lamented. Until Younghusband and the resulting growth of Chinese power in Tibet it was not considered necessary to pay much attention to the 1800 mile long Indo-Tibetan frontier. China had very little power and there were no signs of her being aggressive on the Indian frontier. That position had now completely changed. China was becoming every year more formidable as a military power; she had seized the power in Tibet and was increasing her military strength there more and more. Only a narrow stretch of territory intervened between her conquest and the plains of India. Over 800 miles of the frontier there were but few troops. "It is of vital importance to keep China and all foreign powers out of the narrow stretch of territory". Bell wrote and:

> By our Tibetan policy we do not endeavour to prevent China from establishing herself strongly in Tibet. It is the natural corollary of that policy that we should maintain inviolate the narrow zone of country that still intervenes between India and China. Two things are essential as regard this zone. The first is to keep China out of it. The second is to keep British and Indian vested interests out of it as far as possible, and to avoid the responsibilities in its internal administration....by allowing British and Indian vested interest to grow in the zone, at any rate with anything that could be construed into a Government guarantee for the security of those interests, we destroy our buffer states and create those very difficulties which we should endeavour to remove. Moreover, what these border states prize above all is the right to manage their own affairs. We need, therefore, something as near as possible to that which we have recently obtained in Bhutan, namely, the control of their external relations, coupled with our guarantee of non interference in their internal administration.[16]

"We cannot avoid this North East frontier problem", Bell added. To emphasise the vulnerability of this frontier Bell repeatedly referred to what had been achieved in Sikkim and Bhutan. "In Sikkim we are firmly established", British capital has been allowed into the country and Nepalese settlers have been encouraged to settle there and look to the Political Officer for protection.

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[16] *Ibid.*

In this respect Sikkim's position was different to that of a real buffer state, where the British Government had some responsibilities as regards internal administration. Important advantages, however, had been achieved, and "we hold Sikkim as a watch-tower across Tibet, a place where information can be obtained and influence exercised, where such are shown to be necessary". As regards Bhutan the Treaty had removed the danger of Chinese aggression on the most vulnerable portion of the frontier. The tribal areas of the North-East frontier bordering on Tibet were less fertile, but those closer to the plains of Assam could support large bodies of Chinese troops. This being so, Bell said it was necessary to protect these territories from coming under the power of China, especially as they border on the fertile rice-fields and tea gardens of Assam.

To drive home his arguments Bell drew the attention of the Foreign Department to a military report on Assam prepared by the Chief of Staff's Division at Army Headquarters[17] showing how vulnerable the frontier was and quoted extensive passages from it in his letter. The main burden of that Report was to emphasise that since it have never been considered likely that Assam should ever be invaded by a "civilized military power" it defences had not been attended to.[18] As a result:

> There exists at the present moment no strategical scheme for the defence of Assam against a civilized enemy, no plan for organising supply and

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[17] This was the Military Report on Assam, Chief of Staff Intelligence Division, Calcutta 1908. See also "Memorandum by the General Staff Regarding our Military Policy on the North East Frontier of India from the Bhutan Border to the East of Burma". (1911)

[18] *Ibid.* As the Report pointed out: "That Assam would ever stand the slightest chance of being invaded by a civilized military power has never been contemplated, and in consequence no strategic plan, no defences, no organization whatever exists to repel a serious invasion. All these would have to be elaborated in haste and under extreme pressure, that is to say, under the worst possible conditions for achieving any satisfactory results. Even with many months of previous warning, it is idle to imagine that the province could be put into a state of defence, which would even faintly approach the favourable conditions under which the defenders would meet an enemy attacking the North-Western Frontier.

"The hypothesis of the invasion of Assam by a civilized power requires consideration in some detail, because as long any danger appears remote or improbable it is a popular fallacy to conclude that it is impossible. If, however, the possibility of any given contingency is admitted, it may be laid down as a certainty that its probability is merely a question of time, circumstances, or favourable opportunity. If we wait until the contingency arises to guard against a danger which requires not months but years of previous preparations, in order adequately to meet the requirements of the case, the probability of a complete breakdown, followed by a disaster of unparalleled magnitude, will no longer be a matter of academical speculation, but a portentous fact which will tax the utmost resources of the Empire to cope with."

> transport on the scale which would be required, no permanent defence works which could resist even the feeblest artillery, no arrangements of fixed sites for the concentration of large bodies of troops: most of its main roads are unmetalled and to a great extent unbridged, the Assam – Bengal railway has only a single track and is of limited capacity, and finally, the weak garrison of the province is limited to the smallest dimensions compatible with maintaining security against risings or raids of the wild tribes both within and without the border. With the exception of a few police battalions, there is only one local regiment which possess any extensive practical knowledge of the country, and even that regiment is likely to be removed within the next two years, if not sooner.

Assam's one and only protection, the Report continued, "is the chain of hills surrounding her frontier;" even this could be breached, in which case it would lead to border uprisings all over India's northern frontier and so on.[19]

Having thus given a clear exposition of the problem on the North-East frontier Bell suggested that control somewhat on the lines of the treaty with Bhutan would secure the region. This would prevent "forever" the establishment of Chinese agents or the stationing of Chinese or Tibetan troops. "It would in fine" he said, "prevent any Chinese menace on this part of our frontier, a part, which in years to come is certain to be of much greater importance than at present". Before a definite policy was formulated or arrangements made with each of the tribes he felt detailed information was necessary on several points:

(a) How far the territory of the tribe stretched towards Tibet from the Indian frontier.

(b) How far the country was cultivable, *i.e.* how far it would be able to support troops, if and when the lands were fully cultivated. It was probable, as was in Bhutan, that there were large areas of good land and under cultivation.

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[19] *Ibid.* Bell also quoted the *Englishman* of 1 August: "incessant watchfulness, inflexible determination, and a clearly settled policy is required. There has, so far, been a conspicuous lack of these. Nor must this energy and alertness be confined to Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, and our frontier lands west of the Chumbi valley. There is a vast region of forests, hills and rolling downs inhabited by the Daflas, Miris, Abors and Mishmis through which access can be had into the Assam valley without too much difficulty. It will not be long before Chinese activities manifest themselves in that region at present practically unregarded by us."

(c) To what extent the tribal territory could act as a barrier to invaders, *i.e.*, its physical difficulties, the breadth to be crossed and the supplies (when the lands were cultivated as fully as possible) obtainable *en route*.

(d) Whether the tribe had in any way recognized the suzerainty of Tibet or China. The claims of these countries to suzerainty were often so shadowy that it would be well to clear up the point as far as possible.

(e) The possibility of inducing the tribe to agree to the treaty. Bell understood that the use of the bazaars in the plains provided a good hold over the tribes, and there were other measures of bringing pressure to bear on them. It needed to be ascertained for each tribe how far it had any central authority or separate chiefs with whom satisfactory arrangements could be made. Of these only the Khamtis seemed to Bell to have a certain amount of central authority.

If no treaty on the lines of that with Bhutan was possible some other arrangements would still be necessary, for "to let things remain as they are is to invite serious trouble." The tribes should not be left to the control of the neighbouring deputy commissioners who were always liable to frequent transfers and may not be familiar with the kind of work expected of them. Bell suggested that the tribes should be grouped, perhaps two groups would suffice, each being placed under a political officer directly under the Government of India's Foreign Department. They could, just as he did in the case of Sikkim and Bhutan, be in direct contact with the deputy commissioners on matters of local importance. Bell would have liked the two political officers be placed under the control of the Political Officer in Sikkim. But the "Chief point is to remove these tribes from the control of the Local Government in the interests of the tribes and of ourselves." The Government of India was aware of how great an improvement there has been not only in British relations with Sikkim and Bhutan, but also on the power of control over the latter country, since they had been brought under the Foreign Department. If, however, this was considered too great a change, the political officers could remain under the Local Government, but "now that China has stepped in" matters of Imperial policy should be referred to the Government of India as soon as they arose with the least possible delay.

Bell concluded with the observation that: "Experience has shown in recent years that Local Governments have not the knowledge and the grasp of political conditions requisite for dealing with the political problems that have now arisen in connection with these border tribes."[20]

Loose Political Control

Meanwhile, reports of Chinese activities in the Mishmi hills kept pouring into Calcutta. In July another Mishmi Chief told the Assistant Political Officer at Sadiya, Noel Williamson, that a party of Chinese from Rima had recently come down the Lohit river to just below Walong and planted boundary markers at the Yepak river, a tributary of the Lohit. In October Mishmis visiting Sadiya said the Chinese had forbidden all trade between the Mishmis and the Tibetans. To the Local Government there appeared, as Alistair Lamb points out, three alternatives:[21] the first was to leave the Mishmis as they were, "Savage and independent tribes between British territory and Tibet", the second was to take the Mishmis under British protection. This latter had its problems, the Tibetan border was one hundred and fifty miles further from Sadiya, and so, the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government pointed out on 20 Spetember:

> It is clear that if we extend our territory upto the Tibetan frontier we must advance our posts many miles beyond our present situation and locate them in a sparsely inhabited and mountainous country. Further, though we know something of the route to Rima, it is difficult to see how we could define our boundary to the north or south of Rima, or protect our marches when defined. On the other hand, Rima must be far from the Chinese base, and it is doubtful whether the Chinese would venture to disregard a definite pronouncement that we would not tolerate any advance beyond the western boundary of Tibet. [22]

The third alternative was that the British could decide that "the Chinese should be allowed to absorb the Mishmis if they wish to do so". But this would, the Local Government said, "allow the Chinese to extend their influence right down to the foot of

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[20] *Ibid.*
[21] See Alistair Lamb, *Mc Mahon Line*, op cit, pp. 334 ff; also D.P. Choudhury *The North East Frontier of India* 1865-1914, Calcutta 1978, esp Chapter III, pp 50-79.
[22] Quoted in *Ibid.*

the hills bordering on the valley of the Brahmaputra, (which) might be productive of serious administrative inconvenience". The Lieutenant Governor, Sir Lancelot Hare, therefore, had little doubt that the British should assume sovereignity over the Lohit valley even if this involved an addition to the burden of British administration.[23]

When the Viceroy, Lord Minto, decided to take up the matter so forcefully argued by Hare, with the India Office Bell's memorandum of 20 August was already in his hands. Two months earlier the Army authorities, whose advice had been sought, had suggested much the same course. In June the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Douglas Haig pointed out how from every point of view a mountain chain was most suited for defence. "If masters of the defiles, the defenders can menace the communications of the assailant and by an obstinate struggle can sometimes compromise his position;" [24] but these advantages passed on to the enemy if he in turn controlled the mountain ranges and the passes. And this advantage the Chinese would obtain if the British remained on its existing frontier about Sadiya. General Haig further noted:

> If (as Mr Bell assumes) the tribal territories contain large areas of cultivable land, our policy should further be such as to prevent the Chinese from obtaining possession of these territories and forming an advanced base from which to advance to the invasion of Burma or Assam. Without some such base invasion becomes impossible because before commencing active operations, supplies for an army must be collected in its immediate rear. But even without actually preparing the tribal territories to serve as an advanced base, the mere presence of Chinese officials with their guards in those districts, seems likely to cause unrest amongst the inhabitants of north eastern India. For these reasons Chinese influence ought to be altogether precluded from the "tribal territories".[25]

With the Army's views on the importance of obtaining a strategic frontier in the North-East and Bell's arguments for turning them into a buffer before him, Minto sent a telegraph to the Secretary of State on 23 October "we are inclined to think that the best

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[23] FSEP January 1911: Nos 211-240; B.C.Allen to Foreign Secretary, 20 September.
[24] Ibid, Note by Lieutenant General Sir Douglas Haig, 2 June 1910.
[25] *Ibid*

policy to pursue would be to gain a buffer by extending the outer line[26] so far as may be necessary and by arranging that the tribes within or beyond it have no intercourse or relations with any foreign Power than ourselves."[27] This was of course Bell's recommendation. The alignment roughly proposed was what the General Staff had suggested:

> Our influence should run approximately from the east of the wedged-shaped portion of Tibetan territory, known as the Tawang district, which runs down to the British Frontier north of Odalguri in a north easterly direction to latitude 29° longitude 95°; then along latitude 29° to longitude 96°; thence in a south easterly direction to the Zayul Chu, as far east and as near as possible to Rima, thence across the Zayul Chu to the Zayul-chu-Irrawaddy divide; and thence along that divide until it joins the Irrawaddy-Salween divide. In this area the tribes for the most part are believed to be independent and some of them are already under our influence.[28]

The India Office, where Morley was being replaced by the Marques of Crewe, was uneasy about this policy. Minto himself was to hand over the Viceroyalty to Lord Hardinge and the new Secretary of State for India preferred to wait till then before committing himself to any definite reply. Harding, as Sir Charles Harding, had long served the Foreign Office and was one of the architects of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. He was expected to be less enthusiastic about a forward policy in the North East frontier as Minto had become.

Before Hardinge arrived in India in November 1910 Sir Lacelot Hare was pressing upon the Government of India his views expressed in B. C. Allen's 20 September letter. Before addressing the Secretary of State the Government of India on 23 October, sought from Hare as suggested by Bell in his memorandum, information relating to:

(i) The extent and nature of the country of each tribe.

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[26] It was imagined that the so-called "Outer line" ran parallel to the "Inner line" and lying beyond the later, constituted India's external frontier. For a correct appraisal see Gondkar Narayana Rao, the *India-China Border*, Delhi 1968, pp.73-78.

[27] *Ibid*, (No 217), Telegram, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 23rd October.

[28] *Ibid*

(ii) How far, if at all, the tribes at present recognized the suzerainty of Tibet or China and

(iii)The possibility of executing new agreements with the tribes and their probable cost.

On 26 October the Eastern Bengal and Assam Government answered these queries.[29] The tribes within the territorial limits indicated by the Government of India to the Secretary of State were "ready to attom to the British Govemment", Hare wrote, and he was prepared to inform these tribes that they "need not consider themselves in any way subject either to Tibet or China". British relations with each of the tribes in the past and furtherest places visited by British officers was referred to by the Lieutenant Governor, but the point he made was that as yet very little was known of the vast majority of them. This, he emphasized, was the result of the policy to avoid entering tribal territory owing to the fear of complications and consequently, "there is no one at present serving in the province, who has much personal influence over the tribes inhabiting the hills to the north of Brahmaputra". There were difficulties, both from the attitude of the tribes and from the problem of organizing escorts and transport for exploring these hills. The advantages that would be gained, however, by entering into closer relations with the more distant tribes outweighed the risks involved. "Tact and discretion will much mitigate the risk", Hare went on to say, and the "time has come for withdrawing the absolute veto, that has hitherto been placed upon all attempts at explorations in this part of the frontier". Specially qualified officers should endeavour to penetrate the hills: "such explorations will be attended with some risk, but on the whole the probabilities are more in favour of the explorer being compelled to return than of his being treated in such fashion as to necessitate the dispatch of a punitive expedition". [30] None of the tribes owed any allegiance to the Tibetans or the Chinese.

It would be unnecessary, the Lieutenant Governor was of the view, to promise regular subsidies to the tribes. Such payments that were made to the Akas, Daflas and

[29] *Ibid.* (No 224) BC Allen to Foreign Secretary, 26 October 1910.
[30] *Ibid.*

Miris were nominally made in commutation for rights which they professed to have in the submontane tracts. It might perhaps be necessary to make presents, which be trifling, to selected headmen. Finally it was only the Mishmi hills where some emergency had arisen; all along the northern frontier there was as yet no immediate need for action, but that it was desirable to strengthen British position in these parts at a very early date.[31]

On 22 November 1910 Hare had an interview with the new Lord Hardinge who in the meanwhile had assumed office in Calcutta, but failed to convince him. A month later Hardinge, who had in the mean while gone over all the papers, let it be known to the Secretary of State that:

> any forward move of the administrative frontier was strongly to be deprecated. Chinese aggressions would, in Lord Hardinge's view, be met, not in the tribal territory bordering Assam, but by an attack on the coast of China. He was therefore, opposed to running risks or spending money on endeavours to create a strategic frontier in advance of the administrative border, and he was unable to agree to any promise of support being held out to the Mishmis or other tribes beyond our frontier who might appeal for help against Chinese aggression. [32]

And again:

> We recognize that the action of the Chinese may ultimately compel us to fix a line beyond which no further advance can be permitted, but we see no necessity at present for incurring the risks and responsibilities entailed by a forward movement into the tribal territory now beyond our control.

Frontier officers would, for the time being, confine themselves to "cultivating friendly relations" with the tribes beyond the administrative border and to carrying out the established policy of punishing outrages committed on British territory or against British subjects. Hardinge, however, was prepared.

> should it be possible to obtain further information about the country beyond the "outer line" without risk of complications, we should be prepared to authorize explorations for the purpose, but we should not permit any general increase in activity in this direction, nor can we

[31] *Ibid.*
[32] Quoted in Lamb, *Mc Mahon Line*, Opcit pp. 337 – 338.

> recommend that any sort of promise should be given to the tribes that may rely on our support in the event of Tibetan or Chinese aggression.[33]

This is a classic expression of the non-intervention policy followed in the 1860's in the North-West Frontier, associated with the name of Sir John Laurence-the 'masterly inactivity' as it was called. Just as Laurence had his critics at home and in India,[34] so did Hardinge. There had been a change at the Indian Office both in the personages and in its ideas following the departure of Morley. Sir Arther Hirtzel, Secretary to the Political and Secret Department of the Secretary of State's India Council, was one such strong critic. His letter of 11 January 1911 written privately to Sir Richmond Ritchie, Permanent Under Secretary of State for India, deserves to be quoted at length as showing what the stakes were for the British:

> The levity with which Hardinge talks about attacking the coast of China amazes me. But quite apart from that, it is a bad matter, for no attempt is made to argue the case or explain the grounds for these conclusions, and though of course the *onus probandi* lies on the other side, still the Secretary of State is surely entitled to know why the other side is overruled.
>
> If anything goes wrong in Assam, there will be very voiceful public opinion against us. There are no European industries along the North West frontier, and one fat Hindu banya more or less doesn't matter-yet! But in Lakhimpur District there are over 70,000 acres of tea gardens turning out 30,000,000 pounds of tea annually, and employing over 200 Europeans and 100,000 Indians. The European capital risk in tea must be enormous, and there are other industries as well (eg. coal, over ¼ million tons a year). These gardens lie at the foot of the hills inhabited by savages; their defence rests with one battalion of native infantry and one battalion of military police (850 men). Think of the howl the planters would let out, and the rise in the price of tea![35]

On this debate, initiated by Bell in August 1910, the death of Noel Williamson, Assistant Political officer at Sadiya, at the hands of the Abors of Komsing village in

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[33] *Ibid*

[34] See Arthur Swinson, *North West Frontier, People and Events 1839 – 1947*, London 1967, Chapter 5, pp 116-163, for a convincing argument against this policy, that made by Professor H.H. Dodwell, see his "Foreign Policy" in H.H. Dodwell (ed) *Cambridge History of India*, Vol VI.

[35] Quoted in Lamb, *Mc Mahon Line*, *op cit*, p 339-40

March 1911, made as Parshotam Mehra rightly notes, a powerful impact.[36] Williamson and Gregorson, the tea garden doctor referred to earlier, made an unauthorized tour of the Abor hills when they were set upon by the Abors and killed.[37] On 25 April Hare reopened the subject, urging the Government of India to dispatch a punitive expedition against the Abors.[38] Hardinge finally relented indeed the death of Williamson produced a radical change in the policy of the Viceroy. He now telegraphed the Secretary of State about how necessary the expedition was; the "exaction of reparation" and the "establishment of (British) superiority" in the estimation of the Abors.[39] Advantage was to be taken of the expedition to survey and explore the tribal areas as far as it was practicable in order to obtain full knowledge of the mountains to decide upon an Indo-Tibetan boundary. There were now reports of Chinese activities in Upper Burma and an understanding with the Chinese Government had shown the urgent necessity "about our mutual frontier". The Viceroy's telegram followed by a dispatch on 21 September, [40]also suggested that simultaneously with the Abor expedition a friendly mission should be sent to the Mishmi country to ensure that they did not combine with the Abors. "We do not prepose" the Secretary of state was assured, "that the Mishmis should be given a guarantee of protection. But we should leave them, as well as the Abors, in no manner of doubt as to their being under us or as to their having to look to us for future regard as punishment according to their conduct." After the sanction of the Secretary of State to the proposed expedition was received Lord Hardinge's policy became more fully settled. By September he was talking of the "unusual political activity" lately displayed by the Chinese. As he told the Secretary of State, that there appeared no alternative to the proposal earlier submitted by Minto and every endeavour should be made to obtain a

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[36] Parshotam Mehra, *Mc Mahon Line*, *op cit*, p 95

[37] For details, Sir Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam from 1883-1941*, Shillong 1942.

[38] FSEP August 1911: Nos. 436-51, From Secretary Eastern Bengal and Assam to Foreign Secretary, 25 April.

[39] *Ibid*, Viceroy to Secretary of State Telegram, 29 June, also Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes op. cit*, p 169-70.

[40] FSEP December 1911: Nos 450 – 523.

sound strategical boundary between China-Tibet and the tribal areas east of Bhutan upto and including the Mishmi hills.[41]

> We have (Hardinge said) on the administrative border of Asam some of the wealthiest districts of British India where large sums of private European capital have been invested and where the European population outnumbered that of any other district of India.

As to the alignment of the new frontier Hardinge followed generally the recommendations of his predecessor. The "outer line" should be advanced to that new line.[42] As regards the policy to be followed in the tribal areas within this new limit, Hardinge was categorical:

> We considered that our future policy should be one of the loose political control, having as its object the minimum interference compatible with the necessity of protecting the tribesmen from unprovoked aggression, the responsibility for which we cannot avoid, and of preventing them from violating either our own or Chinese territory, and while endeavouring to leave the tribes as much as possible to themselves, to abstain from any line of action, or inaction as the case may be, which may tend to inculcate in their minds any undue sense of independence likely to produce results of the nature obtaining under somewhat analogous conditions on the North West frontier of India.[43]

Loose political control, in other words, was to conform largely to Bell's ideas of turning the tribal area into a buffer.[44]

Simla Convention

The Secretary of State's sanction to the Abor Expedition, as the punitive measures against that tribe came to be called, was received in July 1911. Its objects, as laid down

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[41] FSEP October 1911: No 52-123; Hardinge to Crewe 21 September.

[42] *Ibid.* The Viceroy had thus explained: "We do not propose to have third or intermediate line between the existing "Inner Line" and the new external boundary, neither do we think it necessary for the latter to be regularly demarcated at present, but it will probably be necessary, to erect cairns at suitable points... to indicate the limits of our control and to explain to the tribesmen the object of such marks".

[43] *Ibid*, also Choudhury, *North East Frontier, op cit*; pp 63-64.

[44] Edwin Montague later explained, as Bell understood buffers, "Loose political control implies objection to any sort or kind of interference by foreign powers and I believe that this could best be achieved as a general rule of patrol or expeditions from a well maintained base in our own territory, and need not involve posts to tribal territory at all" Choudhury, *op cit*, pp73

in September for Hamilton Bower, now a Major – General, who was placed in military and chief political command, were several:

(i) To exact severe punishment and reparation for the murder of Williamson, Gregorson and their party, and by establishing military superiority in the estimation of the tribe to endeavour to compel the Minyong Abors to surrender the chief instigators and perpetrators of the massacre.

(ii) To visit as many of the Minyong villages as possible, and to make the tribe clearly understand that in future, they would be under British control, which subject to their good behavior, would for the present be of a loose political nature.

(iii) To visit the Bor Abors or Padam village of Damroh, which the expedition of 1893* failed to reach; provided that the Padam Abors behaved themselves, the visit to the country would not be of a punitive nature.

(iv) If in the course of the expedition, Chinese officials or troops are met, efforts should be made to maintain amicable relations; if, however, such officials or troops were met within the territory of the tribes on the British side of recognized Tibetan – Chinese limits they should be invited to withdraw into recognized Tibetan – Chinese limits and, if necessary, should be compelled to do so.

(v) To explore and survey as much of the country as possible, visiting, if practicable the Pemakoi falls and incidentally settling the question of the identity of the Tsangpo and Brahmaputra rivers, and

(vi) To submit proposals for a suitable frontier line between India and Tibet in general conformity with the line indicated in the despatch to the Secretary of State based on the recommendations of the General

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* An expedition was mounted that year against the Padams Abors. In the course of it, it was decided and a column to Damroh, further north, and while it was on its way, Abors from other villages attacked the staging post established at Bordak village, and killed several sepoys and followers. Consequently, the Damroh column returned precipately. For details, Barpujari, *op cit*, pp. 134 – 36; Reid, *op cit*. Pp. 194 - 204.

> Staff.[45] No boundary was, however to be settled on the ground without the orders of the Government except in cases where the recognized limits of Tibetan-Chinese territory are found to conform approximately to the line indicated and which followed such prominent physical features as were essential for a satisfactory strategic and well defined boundary line.[46]

On 28 October General Bower moved up from Pasighat with his troops,[47] and on the 19th of the following month the first organsied resistance was met with at a stockade in the Igor valley. It was captured in spite of the formidable Abor defences. The next day a further advance was made into the Abor country and on 9 December Kebang, the stronghold of the Minyongs, was occupied. "With the fall of Kebang", in the words of the official report on the Expedition, "active opposition of the tribes came to an end."[48]

The geographical results of the Expedition were not as impressive as was expected, largely owing to the climate and the physical difficulties of the country. Nevertheless a good deal of information had been acquired which was of great value. As the *Official Report* summed up:

> Practically the whole of the Country was surveyed accurately as far as Latitude $28^{0}40'$ N. The whole of the valley of the Yamne was surveyed up to the snow ranges, the Shimang river was mapped throughout its entire length, the course of the Siyon was roughly traced; and the valley of the

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[45] FSEP January 1911: Nos. 211 – 240; (No 239) India to Crewe, 22 December 1910; and "Memorandum by the General Staff Regarding our Military Policy on the North-East Frontier of India from the Bhutan Border to the east of Burma". D. Haig, 4 August 1910

[46] See, Reid, *History*, *op cit*, pp 225ff.

[47] *Ibid*, P. 229. The expedition was composed of 725 officers and men drawn from the Naga Hills, Lakhimpur and Dacca Military Police Battalions under the command of Major C. Bliss, Commandant of the Naga Hills Battalion; the 1/8 Gorkhas, the 32nd Sikh Pioneers, a company of the 1st King George's Own Sappers and Miners, and a detachment of 1/2nd Gorkha Rifles, and two 7 pounder mountain guns. A.H.W. Bentink and W.C.M. Dundas were Assistant Political Officers to General Bower.

[48] *Official Account of the Abor Expedition*, also in *Frontier and Overseas Expedition from India*, Vol X. *The Abor Expedition*; "The expedition resulted in the punishment of all the hostile villages and the exaction of punishment for Mr. Williamson's murder. All the men who had taken a leading part in this were tried and punished and practically all the looted property was restored. The Minyong tribe was crushed and its villages brought to submission, while the power of Kebang, which for years had terrorized its neighbours, was finally broken. This village lost a large numbr of its fighting men, and its reputation was so shattered that it will probably take years to recover", in Reid, *op cit*, P. 230

> Dihang was followed as far north as Singing, Latitude $28^{0}52'$ (approximate), a point within 25 or 30 miles of the most northern Abor village. The identity of the Dihang with the Tsangpo, though not absolutely proved, was at any rate practically established.

This was only in the Abor country, and other surveys and explorations in the Mishmi hills and in the area from the Abor hills to Bhutan[49] in the west supplemented the information already acquired for boundary making. Once the rough alignment of the new boundary had been decided, the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge proposed "a formal intimation should be made to China of the limits of the country under control." But meanwhile, a far reaching change had taken place in China that was to have an immediate impact on Tibet and India's eastern borderlands in the years immediately following.

In October 1911 the Manchu dynasty was overthrown and a republic under Yuan Shih Kai was proclaimed. The collapse of the Manchu was followed in Mongolia by the setting up of the autonomous regime in Urga.[50] The Chinese troops were expelled from Tibet and the Dalai lama who was in Darjeeling all these years returned to Lhasa and asserted his independence. On 11 January 1913 Mongolia and Tibet concluded a 9 Article treaty in Urga and recognized each other as independent countries. Yuan Shih Kai having failed to come to a settlement with Tibet, declared that Tibet, Mongolia and Turkistan (Singkiang), were integral parts of the Chinese Republic, and began to send in troops into the Tibetan country. "The Tibetan Government might well wish to follow the Mongolian lead", said Charles Bell, "and would certainly prefer the suzerainty of Russia to the domination by China. This was what we had to fear, if we stood aloof. But if we helped Tibet now, she would prefer to deal with us, for we were, near and Russia far away."[51] Tibetan autonomy was guaranteed under the Adhesion Agreement 1906, and Britain, worried of possible repercussions in the Indian borderlands, could not allow

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[49] For details see H. K. Barpujari, *Problem of the Hill Tribes*, Vol. III, *op cit*, pp 169 - 190

[50] See Ram Rahul, *Politics of Central Asia*. Delhi 1973, pp 100 -101. On 17 October 1913, the day Russia recognized the Republic of China, Yuan's regime announced recognition of Mongolia's autonomy. By an agreement to this effect, which China signed with Russia in Peking on 5 November 1913, China accepted Mongol autonomy. By the same agreement, Russia acknowledged China's suzerainty over Mongolia. Heavy pressure from both China and Russia thus reduced Mongolia's independence to mere autonomy under the suzerainty of China.

[51] Bell, *Tibet, op cit*, pp 148ff. See also Bell's *Potrait of the Dalai Lama*, London 1946.

suzerainty to be turned into a military occupation and the taking over of its administration. China was informed that Britain would not recognize the new Republic until some agreement was arrived at over Tibet. After a good deal of diplomatic activity China agreed to a tripartite conference in India.

The Conference formally opened in Simla on 6 October 1913.[52] Lonchen Shatra represented Tibet, while Chen I-fan, better known in the earlier books as Ivan Chen was the Chinese Plenipotentiary; Sir Arthur Henry McMahon, the Foreign Secretary to the Government of India presided, and in the proceedings was assisted by Charles Bell. Of the latter it has been rightly said: "With his intimate knowledge of the affairs of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, Bell not only played a significant role in the boundary agreement with Tibet but in moulding the Tibetan policy of the British Indian Government."[53]

At the Conference Lonchen Shatra sought an acknowledgement of Tibet's independence, the abrogation of the Agreement of 1906 and the revision of the Trade Regulations. He wished to have a frontier with China that included all the Tibetan people. Ivan Chen on the other hand claimed Chinese sovereignty over Tibet on the basis of its conquest by the Mongols under Chengiz Khan and sought a declaration that Tibet was an integral part of China over whose foreign and military policies she had full control. After long discussions which spread over six months both Lonchen and Ivan Chen agreed to a formula proposed by McMahon: Tibet was to be divided into two zones, "Inner" and "Outer Tibet". In the latter, in which Lhasa was located and which adjoined India (and partly Burma) was declared autonomous where China interference in the internal administration would not be permitted. In Inner Tibet which lay between Outer Tibet and China, Lhasa was to retain its existing rights, but where China could send troops and officers and plant colonies. The old Trade Regulations were to be replaced by afresh treaty governing the commercial relations between India and Outer Tibet. This

[52] The Conference is now fairly well documented; see Mehra, *The McMahon Line*, *op cit*, D.P. Choudhury, *The North-East Frontier of India* 1885 – 1914, Calcutta, 1978, Chapter V, pp 114 – 160, among others.
[53] Barpujari, P. 193.

agreement was embodied in a Convention,[54] and the boundaries, between Outer and Inner Tibet in Blue, and between Outer Tibet and China in red, was indicated on a map which was appended to the Convention, and initialed by all three Plenipotentiaries on 27 April.

Advantage had been taken of the Conference to settle the boundary with Tibet in the north-east: "It is desirable", McMahon had said, "to come to an early decision in general terms regarding the boundary line we require in order to enable us to come to an understanding on the subject with China – Tibet before the Tibetan Conference closes."[55] The surveys and explorations amassed a wealth of information on the topographical features of the frontier and there were before McMahon and Bell at Simla. On the basis of these the military had now advised that the line:

> Should follow some prominent geographical features, preferably the main watershed of the mountain system and, also that, to facilitate effective occupation... the communication up to the frontier should be such as to afford reasonable access to the line selected. A lateral communication running parallel to and at a short distance in rear of the frontier is also a considerable asset.[56]

A few gaps in the details of the proposed line which remained had been filled in by further reports as negotiation began.

The talks on the Indo-Tibet boundary did not form part of the Tripartite Conference; the discussions were between Charles Bell and Lonchen Shatra in Delhi from 15 January to 17 March 1914. They began with Bell placing before his Tibetan counterpart a map delineating the proposed frontier line. One of the most difficult problems that needed to be sorted out related to the Tawang tract east of Bhutan, which the Army authorities wanted within India. "Tawang Monastery is clearly Tibetan" said Bell, but:

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[54] See Appendix for text
[55] Note, McMahon 24 October in FSEP September 1915: Nos 76 – 101, in Barpujari, *op cit*, P. 194
[56] *Ibid. The Military Frontier on the North-East: The N.E. Salient.*

> We should... insist in getting the Tawang area south of the red line and the adjoining Bhutan though this seems undoubtedly Tibetan territory, as otherwise Tibet and Assam will adjoin each other and, if Tibet should again come under Chinese control, it will be a dangerous position for us.[57]

The Lonchen pointed out several discrepancies in the proposal, it showed tribes and areas included within India that were paying taxes to the Tibetan Government. Bell's stand was that the proposed line was based on reports of British officers who had carefully surveyed the areas, and it constituted "an equitable frontier" between India and Tibet. Nevertheless he was prepared to make adjustments in the apportionment of territory, a major concession being placing the Tibetan pilgrimage areas in what is new Migyutin in Tibet. Lonchen Shatra however, admitted that he had "no accurate knowledge of the Indo-Tibetan boundary nor did he receive any instructions from Lhasa to that effect", and therefore referred the map to his Government. On 17 March he was able to inform Bell that his Government had agreed to the boundary and the surrender of all revenue from lands that fell on the British side. Their only request was that the income and estates of private individuals might be left to them.

The discussions were finalized through an exchange of letters between Shatra and Bell.[58] The Indo-Tibetan boundary north of Assam, soon to be referred to as the McMahon Line, formed only a part of the red-line, the boundary separating Outer Tibet from China. The Convention, the initialed map and the Bell-Shatra notes were forwarded to the Secretary of State on 28 March 1914.

The Chinese, as it is now well known, repudiated the Convention and directed Ivan Chen to inform the Conference that "your action in initialing the draft is null void". What the Chinese were objecting to was the division of Tibet into Outer and Inner units and the boundary between the two.[59] McMahon informed Peking on 23 June that unless the Convention was signed before the expiry of the month, Britain would go it alone with

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[57] Bell, quoted in Dorothy Woodman, *Himlayan Frontiers*, London 1969, P. 179.
[58] See Appendix...
[59] Ram Gopal, *India-China-Tibet triangle*, Bombay 1964, P. 24. China did not object to the McMahon then, as she was to do later in the 1950s. See also Bell, *Tibet, op cit.*

Tibet, in which case China would lose "all advantages and privileges" of the Tripartite agreement, principally article two of the Convention. The Chinese Government remained adamant, and in their absence Tibet and India signed the Convention, with some slight modifications, on 3 July 1914. McMahon could only regret the failure to get the Chinese to be a part to it. But he reorganized the "most valuable asset" in the conclusion of the Indo-Tibetan frontier in the north-east:

> So long as the frontier was unknown and undefined constant friction with China was inevitable... The frontier work of the past three years and the negotiation of Tibet Conference at Simla have served to make clear the mutual rights and the responsibilities of Great Britain, China and Tibet and it may be hoped that the North-East Frontier will now be removed from the anxiety which beset the Indian Government during the last few years.[60]

* * *

The new North-East Frontier, its northern limits now settled by Treaty and under "loose political control", conformed to what Bell had in mind when he wrote in September 1910 about extending the concept of the buffer to these tribal areas. So did the administrative arrangements that followed. The entire frontier tract was divided into Eastern, Central and Western Sections. In the Eastern Section, which had proved to be extremely sensitive owing to the Chinese encroachment during 1910 – 11, a bridged cart road from Sadiya to Menilkrai in the Mishmi hills towards Rima, was sanctioned. Here a post was to be established, with at least two intermediate posts on the road. In the Central or Abor Sector posts were established at Balek, Pasighat and Kobo, together with a trading post near Kebang.

The tract from the borders of Burma (Diphu pass) to the Subansiri river was placed under a Political Officer, W.C.M Dundas, with the Assistants, and the tract from Subansiri to Bhutan under another Political Officer, G.A. Neville. Both Political

[60] Quoted in Barpujari, *op cit*, P. 206

Officers, who were to enjoy the powers of a provincial deputy commissioner, were placed directly under the Chief Commissioner and not under the Foreign Department, as Bell would have liked, but the fact that the Chief Commissioner communicated with that Department in matters relating to the frontier, it had the result he desired. A new military police battalion was raised to the duties of the North East Frontier. In 1919, Dundas' charge came to be known as the Sadiya Frontier Tract and the other, Balipara frontier Tract. This remained virtually unchanged till the end of British rule.

APPENDIX J

Convention Concluded Between the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, China and Tibet in 1914*

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India, His Excellency the President of the Republic of China, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, being sincerely desirous to settle by mutual agreement various questions concerning the interests of their several States on the Continent of Asia, and further to regulate the relations of their several Governments, have resolved to conclude a Convention on this subject and have nominated for this purpose their respective Plenipotentiaries, that is to say.

His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the seas, Emperor of India, Sir Arthur Henry MacMahon, Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order of the Indian Empire, companion of the Most Exalted Order of the Star of India, Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department.

His Excellency the President of the Republic of China – Monsieur Ivan Chen, Officer of the Order of the Chia H.O.;

His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet – Lonchen Gaden Shatra Pal-jor Dorje; who having communicated to each other their respective full powers and finding them to be in good and due form have agreed upon and concluded the following Convention in eleven Articles:-

Article 1

The Conventions specified in the Schedule to the Present Convention shall, except in so far as they may have been modified by, or may be inconsistent with or repugnant to, any of the provisions of the present Convention, continue to be binding upon the High Contracting Parties.

Article 2

The Governments of Great Britain and China recognizing that Tibet is under the suzerainty of China, and recognizing also the autonomy of Outer Tibet, engage to respect the territorial integrity of the country, and to abstain from interference in the administration of Outer Tibet (including the selection and installation of the dalai Lama) which shall remain in the hands of the Tibetan Government at Lhasa.

The Government of China engages not to convert Tibet into a Chinese province. The Government of Great Britain engages not to annex Tibet or any portion of it.

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* It was signed by the Chinese Plenipotentiary, but not ratified by the Chinese Government.

Article 3

Recognising the special interest of Great Britain, in virtue of the geographical position of Tibet, in the existence of an effective Tibetan Government, and in the maintenance of peace and order in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of India and adjoining States, the Government of China engages, except as provided in Article 4 of this Convention, not to send troops into Outer Tibet nor to station civil or military officers, nor to establish Chinese colonies in the country. Should any such troops or officials remain in Outer Tibet at the date of the signature of this Convention, they shall be withdrawn within a period of not exceeding three months.

The Government of Great Britain engages not to station military or civil officers in Tibet (except as provided in the Convention of September 7, 1904, between great Britain and Tibet) nor troops (except the Agents' escort), nor to establish colonies in that country.

Article 4

The foregoing Article shall not be held to preclude the continuance of the arrangement by which, in the past, a Chinese high official with suitable escort has been maintained at Lhasa, but it is hereby provided that the said escort shall in no circumstances exceed 300 men.

Article 5

The Governments of China and Tibet engage that they will not enter into any negotiations of agreements regarding Tibet with one another, or with any other Power, excepting such negotiations and agreements between Great Britain and Tibet as are provided for by the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Greta Britain and Tibet and the Convention of April 27,1906, between Greta Britain and China.

Article 6

Article 3 of the Convention of April 27, 1906, between Great Britain and China is hereby cancelled, and it is understood that in Article 9 (d) of the Convention of September 7,1904, between Great Britain and Tibet the term "Foreign Powers" does not include China.

Article 7

(a) The Tibet Trade regulations of 1893 and 1903 are hereby cancelled.
(b) The Tibetan Government engages to negotiate with the British Governments new Trade regulations for Outer Tibet to give effect to Articles 2, 4 and 5 of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet without delay; provided always that such regulations shall in no way modify the present Convention except with the consent of the Chinese Government.

Article 8

The British Agent who resides at Gyantse may visit Lhasa with his escort whenever it is necessary to consult with the Tibetan Government regarding matters

arising out of the Convention of September 7,1904, between Great Britain and Tibet, which it has been found impossible to settle at Gyantse by correspondence or otherwise.

Article 9

For the purpose of the present Convention the borders of Tibet, and the boundary between Outer and Inner Tibet, shall be as shown in red and blue respectively on the map attached hereto.

Nothing in the present Convention shall be held to prejudice the existing rights of the Tibetan Government in Inner Tibet, which include the power to select and appoint the high priests of monasteries and to retain full control in all matters affecting religious institutions.

Article 10

The English, Chinese and Tibetan texts of the present Convention have been carefully examined and found to correspond, but in the event of there bing any difference of meaning between them the English text shall be authoritative.

Article 11

The Present Convention will take effect from the date of signature.

In token whereof the respective Plenipotentiaries have signed and sealed this Convention, three copies in English, three in Chinese and three in Tibetan.

Done at Simla this third day of July A.D., one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, corresponding with the Chinese date, the third day of the seventh month of the third year of the Republic, and the Tibetan date, the tenth day of the fifth month of the Wood-Tiger year.

EPILOGUE

From 1889 to 1914 the Sikkim Political Agency played a significant role in the formulation of the Government of India's policy in the eastern Himlaya. During those years the distinct features of frontier management took shape and were to outlive, for all their imperfections, British rule in India itself by several years. The driving force behind the Agency was its two successive Political Agents or Political Officers as they were styled, John Claude White and Charles Bell who, despite great odds, were able to get across to the Viceroys of the day and the Government of India, their ideas on the course to be followed in Tibet and the Himalaya frontier. These wide functions which they came to exercise in the first decade of the twentieth century was, however, not envisaged in 1899. The Foreign Department of the Government of India at least considered the creation of the Agency as a temporary expedient, the Political Officer to be withdrawn after the Chogyal returned from his self-exile in Tibetan territory and resumed the administration of his kingdom. The origins of the Agency thus can be said to lie not so much in the imperial concerns of the Government of India as in the North-West Frontier, but in the more immediate and practical need to establish control over the State whose internal problems was impeding trade.

The treaties of 1817 and 1861 had given a measure of control over Sikkim's internal and external matters and, by the terms of the latter treaty, the British obtained a defined right to trade through it with Tibet. Trade did not flourish. The major hurdle to any closer relations between the British and Sikkim was rooted in the latter's peculiar polity. The Namgyal dynasty and the ruling aristocracy were Bhutia or Tibetan. And lurking behind every British endeavour to establish closer relations with Sikkim and develop trade was a hostile Tibetan faction. This was particularly evident in the mid 1850s when the pro-Tibetan faction under the Dewan Tokhang Donyer Namgyal was

virulently hotile to the British. Matters came to a head in the 1880s when the Raja, or Maharaja as he was since then referred to, Thothab Namgyal under the influence of his Tibetan wife openly flaunted the Tibetan connection, placed his kingdom in subordination to Tibet, defied British directives, and by his prolonged stay in Tibetan territory virtually abandoned his charge. It was against this background that the Political Officer was appointed to "guide and control" the Maharaja. The Political Agency thus created was little different from many of the Residencies in Indian Native States and the first Political Officer, John Claude White, functioned no differently. He took over the administration, made revenue settlement, established forest regulations and promoted immigration (of Nepalese) to develop their resources, particularly agriculture, in the State.

The system of Residencies and Political Agencies in India was by then well established. What had been said of their functions in 1825 still held true:

> There are (wrote Henry Prinsep, the Persian Secretary to the Government of India who was in charge of Residencies then) three forms in which the administration is held by or for the native states now remaining in India. First, the independent, where the prince manages his own estate with his own agents; Secondly, the ministerial, where the British Government, deeming the prince incompetent from minority, imbecility, confirmed vicious habit, or other cause of which itself only is the judge, appoints a native minister, who governs in his name; and thirdly, the residential, where the British Political functionary in person, and by officers of his selection, manages the territory for the native Prince.[1]

It was the third that is relevant to the Sikkim situation. That White belonged to Bengal's Public Works Department and not to the Political Service of the Government of India, underscored the status of the Sikkim Political Agency. Technically it was the Deputy Commissioner of the Darjeeling district who was Political Officer for Sikkim, but the man on the spot wielded actual authority.

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[1] Quoted in Michael H. Fisher, *Indirect Rule in India. Residents and the residency System 1764 – 1857*, Delhi 1991, P. 34

The loopholes in the treaties of 1817 were plugged by the Convention of 1890 which finally laid to rest the vexed question of Sikkim status not just as a protectorate of the British but in reality as an Indian Native State. It was the Trade Regulations of 1893, which followed and was a part of the Convention, that, gave the Agencies new responsibilities and ultimately changed its character. In enforcing the terms of the Regulations in respect of the Indo-Tibetan trade and of fixing boundaries, White's functions extended to dealing directly with the Tibetans. The Bengal Government understood this development, and in terms of the Regulations, suggested that White's designation should be changed from Assistant Political Officer to the proper Political Officer for Sikkim. And while conceding the importance of the office to the Government of India in the changed circumstances, Bengal was not prepared to see Sikkim removed from the control of the Local Government since its internal administration, the primary function of the Political Officer, was still and very rightfully its immediate responsibility.

Meanwhile the new functions of the Political Officer brought White into direct contact with the Tibetans and development of his ideas about British policy that was first to have their impact upon Bengal and then on the Government of India. One of them was his recommendations that the trade mart at Yatung established by the Regulation ought to be moved elsewhere, to Phari; the second was that firm action against the Tibetans was necessary if their obstruction to trade and the demarcation of boundaries were to be removed. It was now clear that the Chinese control over Tibet had declined and that it was Tibetan, or rather the monastic establishment, that was opposed to trade concessions to the British. By 1898 the removal of the trade mart to Phari became White's principal objective, emphasizing at the same time that "we should endeavour to negotiate direct with Lhasa." But so long as Elgin remained Viceroy there was hardly any possibility of the change.

It was Elgin's successor Lord Curzon who picked up White's proposals. From here Curzon was to develop his Tibetan policy. What irked the Viceroy most was the absence of any direct communication with the Dalai Lama at Lhasa. The failure to get

letters across to the Tibetan Pontiff soon acquired an ominous ring when it was discovered that there were contacts, and missions, passing between Tibet and Russia. Bengal's poor intelligence gathering, particularly when Curzon learnt about the Tibetan missions to Russia passing through British India and Indian ports about which the Local Government could provide no information, led to the Viceroy to consider the transfer of the Sikkim Political Agency to the Government of India. This was already brought out forcefully by White's stand in, Captain E. LeMesurier in September 1899, when Curzon was already more than a year and a half in office. Owing to Bengal's lukewarm response the matter was deferred. Nonetheless the idea of moving the trade mart to Phari, of direct negotiations with Lhasa, the occupation of the Chumbi to force Tibetan acquiescence, all White's suggestions at one time or the other , and finally a mission to Tibet, recommended by Darjeeling's Chaplain, the Reverend Graham Sandberg, formed the foundation of Curzon's policy. The expulsion of the Tibetans from Giaogong by White in 1902 marked the beginning of the execution of that policy.

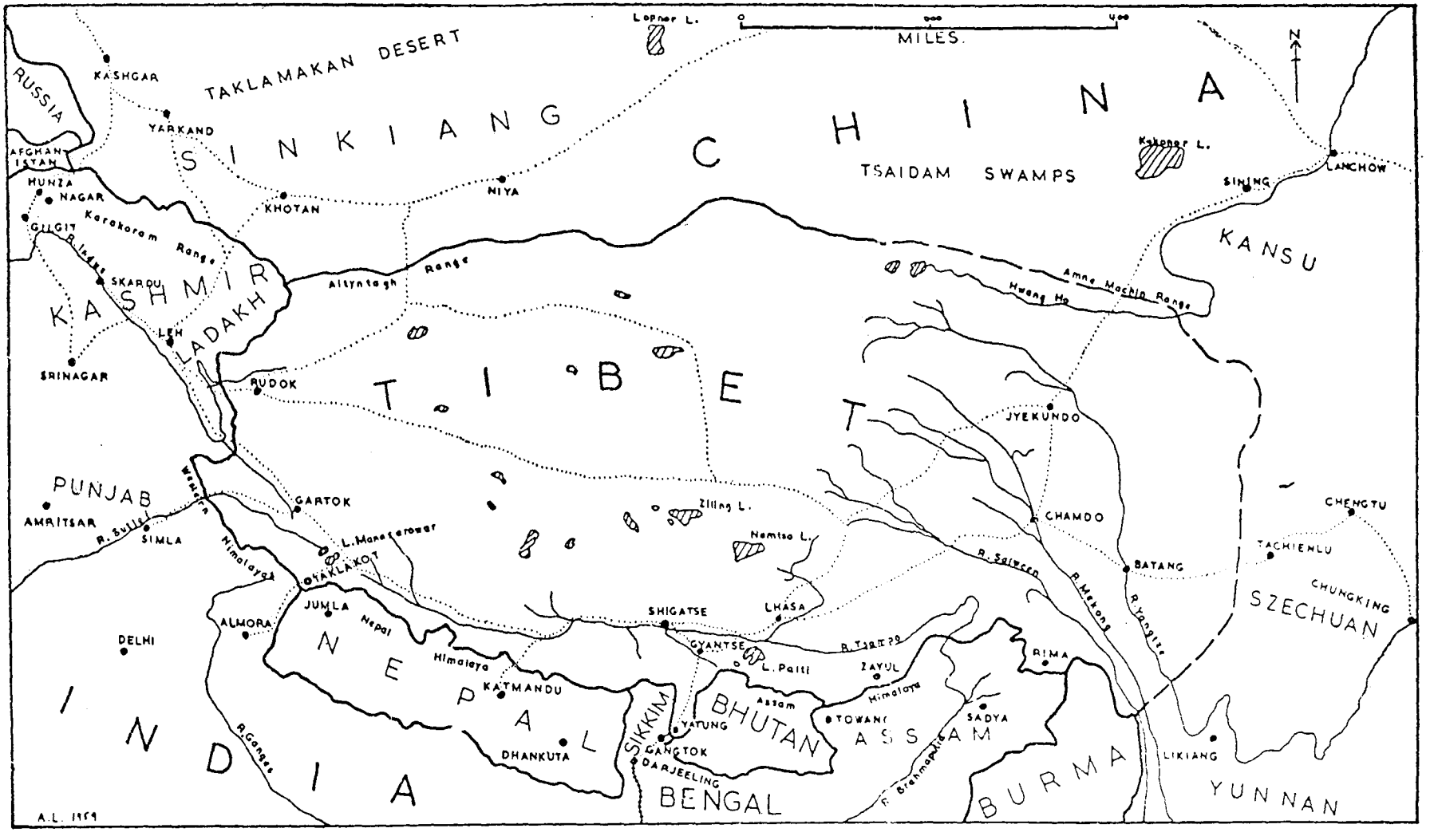
Unfortunately for White, the Younghusband Mission that followed underminded his reputation as a frontier officer. This was largely due to Colonel Francis Younghusband's unfavourable impression of him, an impression that seems to have influenced Curzon. His role in the formulation and execution of the Viceroy's Tibetan policy was quickly forgotten. He left office in 1908, but not before drawing attention to the vulnerability of Bhutan to Chinese control and paving the way for the revision of the Treaty of 1865. The only significant outcome of the Tibet episode so far as it involved the Sikkim Political Agency, was its removal from the hands of the Local Government and placing it under the Foreign Department from April 1906. The Political Officer concurrently became the Government of India's adviser for Tibet affairs. With this the Agency acquired, in addition, the character and functions of a frontier political agency – the watch dog of imperial interests on a strategic Tibet border. The Maharaja had returned to his post and was given full charge of the administration, the Political Officer becoming only a guide to him.

Charles Bell took up the threads of the Bhutan question where Claude White had left them. By now the impact of the self denying policy of the Home Government in Tibet was in full view: China was able to turn her shadowy suzerainty over the Dalai Lama's country into a sovereignty. The Dalai Lama fled Lhasa, Tibetan appeals to India for assistance was turned down at the direction of London. Worse still China began to make claims upon Bhutan itself. At Bell's advice the old treaty with Bhutan was revised to place her foreign relations under the control of the Government of India.

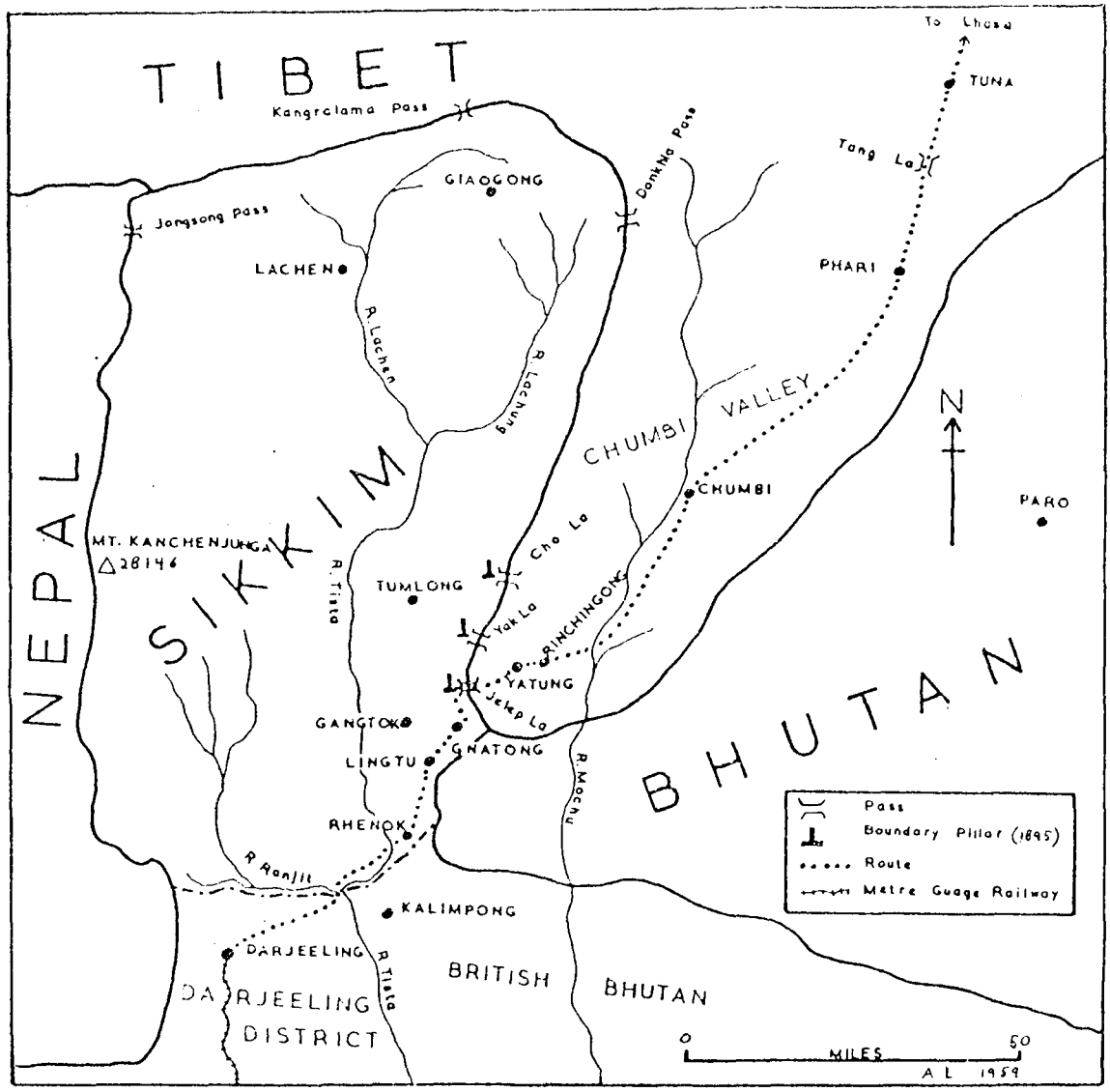
Bell was an ardent advocate of an active policy towards Tibet. His idea was to create a strong, friendly Tibet to act as a buffer against the Chinese, and the Russian, in India's northern borderlands, much in the way Afghanistan was a buffer in the North-West in the late nineteenth century. The failure to obtain this in the face of the opposition of Home and Indian Governments he fell back upon the southern Himalaya. The revised Treaty turned Bhutan into a buffer state. An indispensible ingredient of this policy was the strict non-interference in that country's internal affairs. When reports of Chinese encroachments in the tribal areas north and north-east of Assam during 1910 – 11 began to pour in Bell suggested the same policy towards this region. The October Revolution in China in 1911 and the removal of the Chinese authority in Tibet provided an opportunity to carry out the policy. The creation of an autonomous Outer Tibet fringed on the Chinese side by Inner Tibet, achieved by Sir Henry McMahon and Bell at the Simla conference during 1913 – 14, must, therefore, be interpreted in this light. Equally, the definition and delineating of the northern borders of what came to be called the North-East Frontier, and the administrative contrivance called Loose Political Control conformed to Bell's ideas of a buffer. Even the administrative set up, the grouping of the tribal area and the appointment of two Political Officers followed the recommendations made by Bell in August and September 1910.

The first twenty five years of the Sikkim Political Agency under review thus shows its importance to the future of the Himalayan States and the North-East Frontier. Much depended upon the abilities of the Political Officers: both White and Bell were

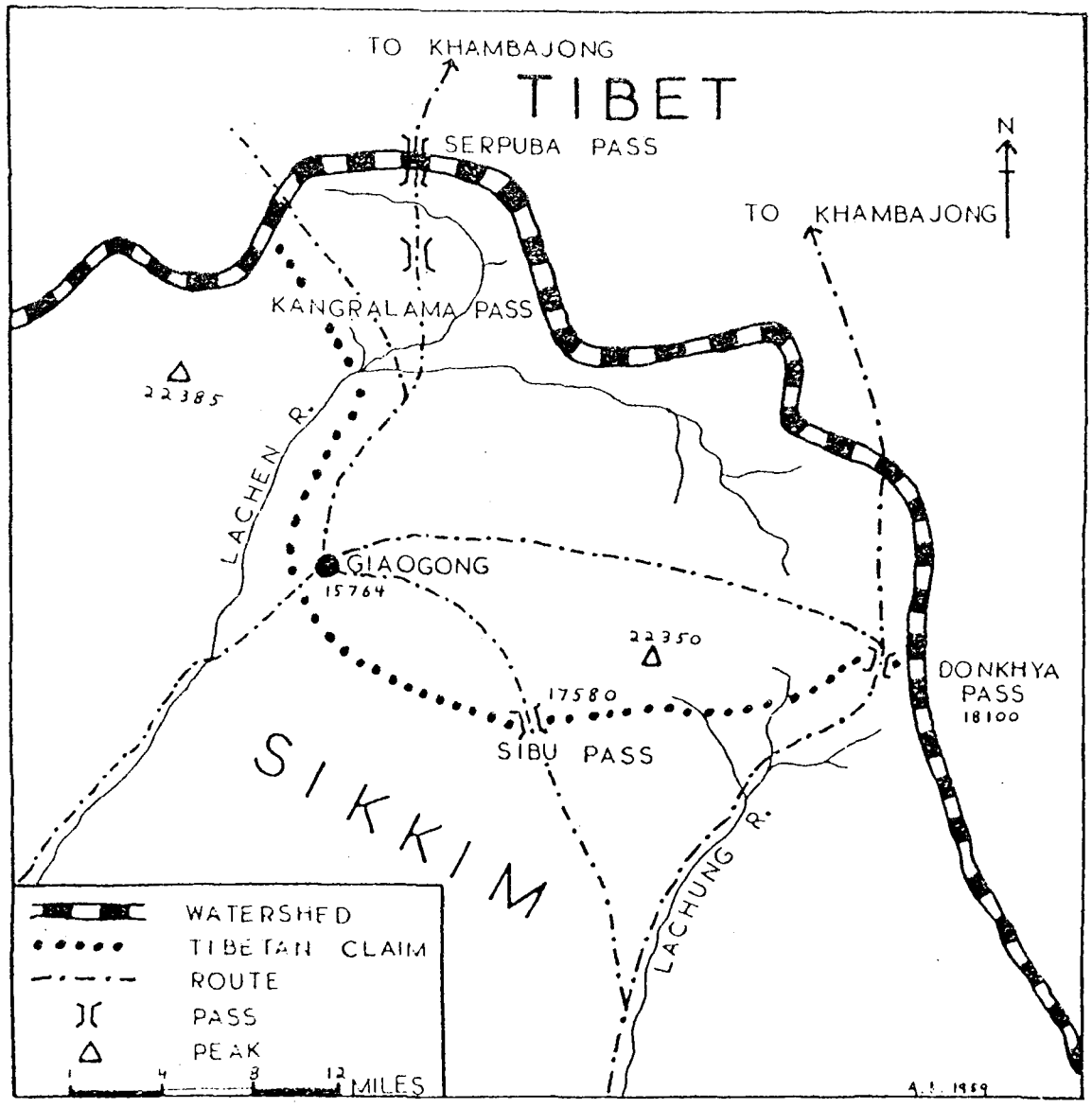
capable men. That later Political Officers like Sir Basil Gould, were unable to impress upon the Government of Assam and the Government of India on the importance of extending British administration to the McMahon Line areas shows the extent to which successful frontier policy depended on individuals. In the event it was under independent India that the old buffer policy was given up and administration of the North-East Frontier made good.



Sketch Map of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet



Sketch Map of Sikkim



Sketch map of Giaogong and the disputed portions of the Sikkim-Tibet frontier

Glossary of Terms Used

Amban:	Chinese resident at Lhasa established after Manchu rule was imposed on Tibet in the mid eighteenth century
chu:	Tibetan for river generally used as a suffix.
depon:	Tibetan official.
dewan:	Minister
dzong:	Tibetan for fort or district
dzongpon: (jongpen)	Head of a district
Garpon:	Tibetan Official
Gelukpa:	School of Buddhism to which Dalai Lama belongs.
Kazi:	Sikkimese / Bhutanese patrician.
Lama:	Teacher / preceptor. Generally used for all Tibetan monks.
mandal:	revenue officer / Surveyor.
Pahari (a):	Nepalese / Sikkimese of Nepalese extraction.
Panchayat:	Village Council
parwana:	decree / summons.
patta:	document on land holding.
Penlop:	Bhutanese Head or Governor of a region
vakil:	agent

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