



The Simla Conference October 1913 to July 1914

Ivan Chen

A. Henry McMahan

Lonchen Shatra

Frontispiece

THE EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S NORTHERN BORDERS

P. C. CHAKRAVARTI

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ISSUED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE
INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS



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Prithwis Chandra **Chakravarti** (1904 - 1969)

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Foreword

SINCE 1959, India and China have developed serious differences of opinion regarding the border between the two countries. The differences, which had earlier been largely limited to the field of cartography, developed into active fighting shortly after the departure of the Dalai Lama from Tibet. This naturally worked up public feeling in both the countries. Perhaps it was because of these heightened feelings that there has been hardly any publication on the subject that has enlarged on the merits of the case. Even the *Officials Report*, published jointly by the two governments, though free of invective, is not very instructive or illuminating. It was, therefore, with some hesitation that the Council decided to sponsor the study of the evolution of India's northern borders. This study is being published in the hope that it would enable both Indian and foreign scholars to make an objective assessment of claims to the disputed territories.

This study was entrusted to Dr. P. C. Chakravarti, Head of the International Relations Department, Jadavpur University (Calcutta). Professor Chakravarti worked on this project in an honorary capacity, for which the Council is very grateful to him.

The Council is also grateful to the Government of India for allowing Professor Chakravarti access to official records, correspondence and maps, whether in India or in the United Kingdom. Further, I would also like to put on record the Council's appreciation of the support given to its project by two Vice-Chancellors of Jadavpur University—Dr. Triguna Sen and Dr. H. C. Guha—which enabled Professor Chakravarti to spend several months outside Calcutta, examining records in Delhi and London.

The executive committee would like to record its appreciation of the financial assistance received by it for this study from the Gandhi Peace Foundation, the Ford Foundation and others.

15 September 1969
Sapru House
New Delhi

S. L. POPLAI
Secretary-General
Indian Council of World Affairs

Preface

INDIA'S LONG and sprawling northern frontier, extending over more than two thousand miles through forbidding mountainous terrain, more or less dormant for centuries, suddenly caught the headlines of the world press towards the end of the last decade and has since become a subject of acute controversy and conflict. The frontier was quiet so long as Tibet retained her freedom: the controversy and conflict were an offshoot of the forcible seizure of that country by Communist China. Since 1960, many books, monographs and articles in learned journals, apart from official reports, have been published bearing on the historical and legal validity of this frontier. In the present study an attempt has been made to recount the story of how this frontier took the shape in which independent India inherited it in August 1947.

The frontier received its present shape under the British in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Parts of it were doubtless traditional, as both the Chinese and the Indian Governments seem to agree, but parts of it were also brought within the political jurisdiction of Britain's Indian empire by agreement, treaty and occupation. I would not have emphasised this point at this stage but for the tendency on the part of some of our politicians and officials to prevaricate about it and to claim the entire frontier as traditional. If the Chinese can base their claim on conquest by their former imperial dynasties, some of which were non-Chinese, there is no reason why independent India should not stand by the borders as the British had made them and maintain in official statements.

The Indian Independence Act of 1947 defined the territories of India as those "under the sovereignty of His Majesty, which immediately before the appointed day (15th August 1947) were included in British India, except the territories which, under subsection (2) of this section, are to be the territories of Pakistan". This meant that the Dominions of India and Pakistan inherited the borders as the British had made them. Both under the provisions of this Act and as a successor state under international

law we have every right to hold on to territories and borders which we have inherited from the predecessor government. As a sovereign state India is, of course, entitled to change the boundaries by new agreements, but to be binding on her the change must be brought about by consent and agreement, not by force.

Students of political geography often make a distinction between the frontier and the boundary. While the frontier signifies a zone, a boundary, generally shown as a line on a map, represents the edge of the zone, the optimum outward limit of the growth of a particular society. I have not used these terminological distinctions in the following pages, because I felt no imperative need to do so in this study. It may be incidentally noted, however, that most former Indian Governments, including the British, preferred the concept of the frontier zone to that of the linear boundary. Throughout the nineteenth century, one of the basic principles of British Indian policy was to abstain from forcing the communities of the peripheral zone along the boundary to come under direct British rule, provided they agreed to keep out foreign influences and refrained from interfering with the British Indian territories. In pursuit of this policy, they were assisted by the nature of the terrain, poverty of communications, isolation of various communities and, above all, by the presence of a peaceful and autonomous Tibet between India on the one hand and Russia and China on the other. Even then, pressure of external events forced the British to modify this policy from time to time so that in many and extensive areas the frontier zone had narrowed into a boundary line long before they withdrew from India. The process was perforce continued by the new Government of India under the pressure of similar external developments.

I must add here a word or two by way of expressing my gratefulness to all those who have helped me in various ways while I was engaged in writing this monograph. I am in particular grateful to Saurin Roy, formerly Deputy Director, National Archives of India, who went out of his way to hunt out materials lying scattered in different offices and made them available to me when I needed them most; S.C. Sutton, Librarian, India Office Library, who helped me in laying hand on certain documents which I might have otherwise missed; Sir Olaf Caroe, who was good enough to discuss the frontier question with me on the basis of his wide first-hand knowledge and experience; Dorothy Woodman, who provided

me with xeroxed copies of records taken from the Public Record Office ; and S.L. Poplai, Secretary-General, Indian Council of World Affairs, who not only used all his powers of persuasion so that I might take up this work on behalf of the Council, but also acted as a friendly guardian and sentinel while the work was being done. Finally, I must express my grateful thanks to my own University, which not only relieved me of some of my onerous responsibilities but granted me leave from time to time while I was engaged in this study.

*8 August 1969, Calcutta
Jadavpur University*

P. C. CHAKRAVARTI

Contents

	<i>Foreword</i>	v
	<i>Preface</i>	vii
	<i>List of Illustrations</i>	xii
<i>One</i>	THE BACKGROUND	1
<i>Two</i>	EASTERN SECTOR	23
<i>Three</i>	CENTRAL SECTOR	92
<i>Four</i>	WESTERN SECTOR	104
<i>Five</i>	CONCLUSION	153
	<i>Bibliography</i>	165
	<i>Index</i>	171

List of Illustrations

The Simla Conference : October 1913 to July 1914	<i>Frontispiece</i>
<i>Maps</i>	<i>Between pages</i>
Chinese Frontiers of India (1911)	26-27
Indian Border—Assam Sector	36-37
The McMahon Line (1914)	66-67
Indian Border—Eastern Sector	76-77
Indian Border—Central Sector	92-93
Captain Strachey's Map of Ladakh Border (1848)	118-119
Col. Johnson's Travels (1865)	120-121
The Pamirs, Central Asia and India (1896)	
—Map I (North-Western portion)	
—Map II (North-Eastern portion)	
—Map III (North-Eastern portion)	144-145
Indian Border—Western Sector	150-151

One

The Background

DOWN THE ages the Himalaya has dominated the history and culture of India in a manner that no other mountain range has done in the history of the world. It has been the source of her great rivers, the inspiration of her poets and philosophers, the retreat of her *yogis* and saints and the abode of her gods and goddesses. In fact, for millenia it has conditioned the Indian mind and been inextricably linked up with Indian traditions.

It has also served as a great natural barrier between India and Inner Asia—the great divide between two great geographical and climatic zones and two peripheral civilisations. For about 2,000 miles this gigantic, unbroken wall of snow-capped peaks and yawning precipices has shut off India from continental Asia. “The Himalaya”, wrote a noted geographer, is “the grandest, the most effective, the most stupendous of all mountain barriers of the world. Not even the great oceanic divide of the Andes can rival it”. Where the Himalaya fails to serve as a barrier along India’s border, nature has provided other equally formidable mountain ranges such as the Kuen-lun, the Karakoram, the Mustagh and the Hindu Kush, which guard the northern flanks of the Indus in its wildest mountain reaches and separate, by their stupendous spurs, the valley of this river from the valley of the Yarkand in Central Asia.

From times immemorial it has been the aspiration of India’s best political thinkers to evolve some kind of political unity of this vast country extending from the northern mountains to the southern seas. Despite the diversity of her languages and races, India had succeeded in creating a distinctive cultural unity of her own long before the commencement of the Christian era. It has since been the endeavour of her politico-military leaders to evolve a counterpart of this cultural unity in the political sphere. “Monarchy at its highest”, wrote the author of the *Aitareya Brahmana* (VIII.4.1) “should have an empire extending right upto

the natural boundaries; it should be territorially all-embracing upto the very ends uninterrupted, and constitute and establish one state and administration in the land upto the seas". In *Arthashastra* (Bk. IX, Ch. 1), Kautilya defined the natural boundaries of the dominion of a *Chakravartin Raja* (supreme wielder of the wheel of law or paramount lord) as "extending North to South from the Himalayas to the sea and measuring thousand *yojanas* across". These, we must remember, were not mere copy-book maxims, but ideals which ancient and medieval empire-builders in India persistently sought to translate into political reality with varying degrees of success. The empire of the Mauryas, for instance, extended to the Hindu Kush mountains and included most of the territory now under the rule of the King of Afghanistan and the valleys of Swat, Bajaur, Kashmir and Nepal. The paramountcy of Samudragupta was recognised by Nepal, Kartripura (which probably included Kumaon, Almora, Garhwal and Kangra) and the petty chieftainships of the *Daiva-putra Shahi-Shahanushahi*—the remnants of the Kushan power still surviving in the outskirts of the Hindu Kush. The Mughal empire not only included Kashmir, but extended beyond into Ladakh.

Another significant development of ancient and medieval times was the emergence of a string of Hindu kingdoms, all along the flanks of the Himalayas from Kashmir to Nepal. Long before the beginning of the Christian era, the *Ranas* and the *Thakurs*, often called 'the barons of the hills', had established themselves as petty chieftains in these remote mountain regions; and out of these there arose in later times a whole series of mountain states extending from the Duns to the Lesser Himalayan and often beyond to the High Himalayan Ranges. Such states, to name only the more important among them, were Kashmir, Kashtavala (Kashtwar), Spiti, Trigarta (Kangra), Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Chamba, Bashahr, Garhwal and Nepal.¹

Little detailed information is now available of the northern boundaries of these great empires or of the mountain states. It is to be remembered, however, that boundary-making, in the sense in which we understand the term today, is a comparatively modern phenomenon—a by-product of nationalism and the nation-states, of growing pressure of population and technological pro-

¹ For an authoritative history of some of these states see Hutchinson and Vogel, *History of the Panjab Hill States*, 2 Vols. (Lahore, 1933).

gress the world over. In earlier times, boundaries were not usually lines but zones or border-marches ending in no-man's land separating organised states from each other. This was particularly the case in the mountainous regions where the wildness and inhospitality of the terrain and the climate provided little inducement to the neighbouring organised states to bring these areas under their nominal control. Vast stretches of such no-man's land continued to exist along India's northern frontier even in the nineteenth century in the Pamirs, the Raskam, the Yarkand valley between the Karakoram Pass and Shahidulla, along the higher reaches of the Ari region and even in the Assam Himalaya. It was only in the latter half of the nineteenth and early decades of the present century that these no-man's lands became the subjects of rival claims from peripheral states and were ultimately absorbed in one or the other.

In some sectors of the frontier, however, particularly where comparatively large dimensions of no-man's lands did not exist, certain customary boundaries seemed to have grown up between Indian states in the south and the trans-Himalayan states in the north as a result of prolonged usage over the centuries. The 19th century records provide incontestable evidence of the existence of a customary boundary between Ladakh and Tibet. Village people and traders knew where the jurisdiction of Ladakh ended and that of Tibet began. Considerable evidence also exists to show that similar customary boundaries existed between the hill-states of the Panjab and Uttar Pradesh, on the one hand, and the dominion of the Dalai Lama, on the other. In some places, a ridge, a mere bundle of stones on the mountain side, an armed guard or a customs post marked the limits of such customary jurisdiction.

It is significant that in the debate between the Indian and the Chinese officials in 1960, on the Sino-Indian boundary, both sides recognised the existence of such customary boundaries, although they held divergent views regarding their exact alignment as well as the factors which led to their evolution. The Indian officials emphasised :

It is natural that peoples tended to settle upto and on the sides of the mountain ranges; and the limits of societies and nations were formed by mountain barriers. . . . But if mountains form natural barriers, it was even more logical that the dividing

line should be identified with the crests of that range which form the water-shed in that area. Normally, where mountains exist, the highest-range is also the watershed ; but in a few cases where they diverge the boundary tends to be the watershed.²

The Chinese view of the customary line was, however, different and the Chinese officials stated :

It is well-known that the traditional customary line is formed gradually through a long process of historical development according to the extent upto which each side has all along exercised its administrative jurisdiction...As to people living in high mountainous regions, mountains do not necessarily constitute obstacles to their activities (particularly when the mountains are intersected by rivers and passes) and the administrative jurisdiction is not confined by mountains.³

There is an element of validity in both these interpretations of the processes of history. While it is true that geographical features such as the highest range or the water-shed have contributed enormously the evolution of customary boundaries, it cannot be denied that in specific cases such features have been considerably modified by the continuous exercise of political control across them. Examples of such modification in relation to India's northern frontier were: the exercise of Chinese suzerainty, albeit nominal, over Nepal from 1792 to 1911; of Tibet over Sikkim till 1890 and Bhutan till 1910 ; of the Mughals, the Dogra-Sikhs and Kashmir over Ladakh and finally the inclusion of the Chumbi valley in Tibet to this day.

Great Britain, being a sea-power, extended her dominion over the rest of India from coastal bases. The British moved stage by stage till by the middle of the nineteenth century the frontiers of their Indian empire reached the mountain systems in the north and the north-west. Inevitably, they were confronted with the problem of erecting or strengthening a defensive screen across the

² *Report of the Officials of the Government of India and People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question* : (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1961), henceforth referred to only as *Report*, p. 236.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

land-ward approaches from the north. This was by no means an easy task. As stated above, across some sectors of the High Himalayan Range the Tibetans and the Chinese had extended their suzerainty in the preceding centuries. Also, along the mountain ramparts on the north, north-west and the north-east, there existed extensive no-man's lands in some of which lived undeveloped tribes, who neither owed allegiance to any recognised authority nor had a form of government which could be recognised by any organised state. Thus, the areas where the Afridis and the Pathans in the north-west, the Kanjutis and Kazaghs along the north of Kashmir, and the Akas, Abors, Daflas, Miris and Mishmis on the north of Assam lived, belonged to the indistinct penumbra of the unadministered and undemarcated no-man's land.

The British were in no hurry to rectify these anomalies. They sought to avoid the unprofitable expense of bringing the frontier tribes under their administrative control so long as they behaved and did not permit any foreign influence to operate among themselves. It was only the pressure of events, originating beyond India's natural frontiers, that impelled them in the long run to bring the tribal belts on the Indian side of the mountain barriers under some form of loose political control, thus making the international boundary of India conterminous with her geographical boundary.

The one sector which seems to have worried the British more than any other, was the weak natural defence system in the north-west. Here the mountain barriers were not as formidable as in the north and the north-east; they were cut by easy pass-ways, through which successive waves of invaders, conquerors and immigrants, had been attracted by the wealth of the northern Indian plains. Like the great rulers of India in the past, the British came to realise that the key to India's landward defence lay in the north-west. The gateway of the north-west frontier thus became an object of anxious care and ceaseless vigilance for the best part of a century. There was no serious invasion of India since the time of Ahmad Shah Abdali, but the ghosts of old still seemed to loom over the horizon and bemuse the counsels of Napoleon of France, Kaiser of Germany and, above all the Tsars of Russia. The fear generated by the machinations of these hostile rulers had its inevitable impact on the evolution of British policy. But more

than anything else, it was the fear of the Russian advance which lay at the root of the whole gamut of British strategic thinking and policy-making in regard to the north-western and some sectors of India's northern frontier. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Russian advance through Central Asia was indeed so irresistible that it looked like the awe-inspiring progress of a glacier; to impede it by any means became for several decades the supreme concern of both Calcutta and London. It led to large-scale explorations and surveys of the intermediate zone, to manoeuvres and counter-manoevres, to threats of war and military promenades. In the end, by the close of the nineteenth century, what Lord Curzon described as a 'three-fold' frontier, emerged in the north-west extending from the Indus River to the northern boundary of Afghanistan. These three frontiers marked the limits of different degrees of claims and responsibilities of the Indian Government.

There is first the inner administrative boundary, which limits the territory for which the Indian Government is directly responsible. Next comes the Durand Line, delimited by an agreement made with Afghanistan in 1893, which marks the limits of the claims of India to authority over the border tribes and so forms the boundary of the area within which the Empire is directly responsible for the maintenance of order, though many of the tribes within it are practically autonomous. Lastly, the northern boundary of Afghanistan limits the outer strategic frontier; since it was demarcated by Britain and Russia jointly, it marks the limits between the areas respectively under the influence of these Powers. This strategic frontier, thus includes the protected buffer state of Afghanistan, and hence that country is, for some purposes, within the Indian Empire.⁴

Compared to the north-western frontier, the northern and north-eastern frontiers caused the British much less concern. Here the mountain barriers were more formidable and stupendous. Nevertheless, the advance of Russia, particularly along Kashmir's borders, could not be ruled out; and one of the chief motives of the British explorations of the Pamirs, the Mustagh, the Karakoram and

⁴ C. B. Fawcett, *Frontiers : A Study in Political Geography* (Oxford, 1898), pp. 86-87.

Tibet was the fear that there might exist a route that could be used by the Russian artillery and wheeled transport. Once this fear was laid, the northern frontier could be considered as dead and it was only necessary to keep it dead. So long as the effective presence of Russia and China could be kept out of the immediate vicinity of the Indian empire, the British could afford to remain quiescent, and diplomatic activity alone was sufficient to keep the two Powers away from areas adjacent to the Indian frontier.

Throughout the period of the British rule in India, China was in a moribund condition, more concerned with preserving what she had than with any thought of further expansion. She was passing through one of those periods of decline which have come in Chinese history after every two or three centuries of vigorous expansion. Consequently, in the second half of the 19th century, and even in the early years of this century, the British policy towards China was one of friendliness, principally because the British and the Chinese interests *vis-a-vis* the Tsarist empire appeared to be almost identical. Britain bolstered up China against Russian expansion in Central Asia, in the Tarim Basin and other neighbouring no-man's lands along Kashmir's northern boundary, and supported Chinese pretensions as a counter to Russian ambition so as to be able to fend off Russia from direct contact with the Indian frontier. To keep out Russian influence from Tibet, Britain also signed a self-denying convention with Russia (1907), by which China was declared as Tibet's suzerain, and it was made obligatory on the part of interested Powers to communicate or negotiate with Tibet only through the suzerain's Court.

While attempting to keep the Russian influence away from the Indian frontier, the British policy also aimed at removing some anomalies in the frontier. In the first place, steps were taken to eliminate all traces of Tibetan-cum-Chinese influence from cis-Himalayan areas such as Bhutan, Sikkim, Nepal and Bashahr, and to turning them into satellite states under Indian protection. In the second place, Britain discouraged the political ambitions of Indian princes in areas beyond the country's natural, geographical frontier. The Maharaja of Kashmir had substantial claims on the entire area from the Karakoram Pass to Shahidulla and the Mir of Hunza had certain rights on the Taghdumbash Pamir and the Raskam, both lying beyond the Indus watershed. Guided by geo-

political, rather than legal considerations, Britain did everything possible to dissuade the Maharaja and the Mir from pursuing their claims beyond the Indus watershed which was the natural frontier of India in this sector, and to encourage the Chinese to try and take the trans-frontier areas under their effective control. Thirdly, whereas in the areas where traditional and customary boundaries existed as, for instance, between Ladakh and Tibet or in the Ari Sector, Britain by and large recognised the need of maintaining the *status quo*, her surveyors and explorers recorded the territorial limits beyond which Tibet or China were in control; in other areas where the boundary was not clear and a fresh alignment was called for, she generally followed the principle of the watershed or the highest range, while getting the border defined through bi-lateral agreements, as for instance, in the case of the boundary between Sikkim and Tibet in 1890 and the McMahon Line in 1914. The pursuit of this three-fold policy led in the end to the fusion of India's northern boundary with the gigantic crest-cum-watershed barriers which, extending from the Hindu Kush in, the north-west to the point where India, China and Burma met on the north-east, separated India from Inner Asia. How this boundary looked to one conversant with frontier matters is expressed thus by Sir Thomas Holdich :

There is no special interest in the northern sections of the Indian frontier from the Kashmir hinterland to where it passes north of the protected states of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan to the Brahmaputra, beyond one dominant feature ; it is the finest natural combination of boundary and barrier that exists in the world. It stands alone. For the greater part of its length only the Himalayan eagle can trace it. It lies amidst the eternal silence of vast snow-fields and ice-bound peaks ; it gathers around it a soft mantle of cloud by day, and at night it is inviolable, impassable. Could you stand on the summit of one of the lower and outer ranges in Kashmir or in Garhwal, or Nepal, or at Darjeeling, and watch on some clear day the white outline of the distant snow range, you would realise that never was there such a God-given boundary set to such a vast, impressive and stupendous frontier.⁵

* Sir Thomas Holdich, *Political Frontier and Boundary Making* (London, 1916), p. 280.

This 'God-given boundary' was further strengthened by the creation of buffers along the most important sectors of the frontier. The concept of buffers as a protective cushion for the boundary originated in the 1880s during the Second Afghan War and soon became a dominant feature of Anglo-Indian strategic thinking. "A buffer", said Sir Alfred Lyall, Foreign Secretary to Lord Lytton and Lord Ripon, "is a mechanical contrivance for breaking or graduating the force of impact between two heavy bodies. In the same way, the political buffer checked the violence of political collisions, though rarely prevented them altogether." Guided by this doctrine, the British constantly adopted the policy of interposing protected or weak but friendly countries between their administered territories or actual possessions and the possessions of formidable neighbours whom they desired to keep at an arm's length. Thus, Afghanistan was made a buffer between India and the expanding Russian empire, and Tibet a buffer between India and China—two protective outworks of the peripheral system of Indian defence, or as Lord Curzon would have preferred to call them, 'the glacis to the Indian fort'. Along a considerable section of the northern frontier, an inner buffer was also created in the shape of a satellite zone, consisting of the string of semi-independent hill states such as Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. The defensive screen across the land-ward approaches from the north was thus sought to be made as secure as the one from the north-west.

But sustenance of such a buffer system was, in ultimate analysis, dependent on high military capability and diplomatic skill. When Britain withdrew from India in August 1947, leaving two states in the sub-continent—neither of them possessing the reach or the strength of British arms, and the defence orientation of both being turned inwards rather than outwards—it seemed a little doubtful whether the system could be maintained for long. The doubt deepened when in the years immediately following Indian independence, in the vast land mass of eastern and central Asia there emerged a strong, unified, centralised People's Republic of China, intent on re-establishing its sway on countries and peoples, which, in ages remote or immediate, had owed direct or indirect allegiance to the 'Son of Heaven'. One of the earliest steps that new China took in pursuance of her expansionist programme was the invasion and conquest of Tibet in 1950-51.

By this one stroke not only was the buffer between India and China eroded, but the entire balance of power in south and south-east Asia was completely transformed. One of the avowed objectives of the Chinese move into Tibet in 1950 was 'to stand guard on the frontiers of China'. They now entrenched themselves in a powerful position in relation to the northern seaboard of the Indian Ocean.

Unfortunately, at this historical juncture India had a *sinophil* as her Prime Minister. Mahatma Gandhi, writing to Chiang Kai-shek in 1942, had referred to Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to China in 1939 and then added that he (Nehru) returned from that visit 'with a love for your country excelled, if at all, by his love of his own country'. In any case, it was Nehru's conviction that in the interest of Asian peace and solidarity, India and China must act as partners, not as rivals. He, therefore, refused to take a grim view of the Chinese take-over in Tibet and with the help of the British—whose interests in India had by then become only secondary—scotched the debate on the Tibet question in the United Nations.

Undoubtedly, Nehru deplored the use of violence by China against Tibet, but he claimed that friendship and not opposition was the way to divert the Chinese 'into right channels and prevent them from going into wrong ones'. In fact, Nehru's answer to the Chinese strategy of power was the Indian strategy of friendship. Under his leadership, India became the stoutest non-communist champion of China on the international forum. Year after year, she took the lead in pressing Peking's claim to China's seat in the United Nations in the face of strong disapproval of numerous non-communist members. After the Chinese intervention in the Korean War, when a resolution was moved in the UN General Assembly in February, 1951, condemning Chinese aggression, India refused to accept the Western view and voted with the Soviet bloc against the resolution. Nehru repeatedly pleaded for the restoration of Formosa and the off-shore islands to Communist China. He initiated the exchange of a series of cultural and technical missions with China, with the view of promoting and consolidating understanding and friendship between the two countries. Finally, in April 1954, India concluded a treaty with China—'Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India'—which

proclaimed eternal friendship between the two countries on the basis of *Panch Shila* or the five principles of Peaceful Co-existence, including mutual respect for each others' territorial integrity. The treaty regulated commerce and pilgrim traffic between India and Tibet, established trade agencies and authorised trade-routes. Under its terms, India affirmed that she regarded Tibet as a part of the sovereign territory of China and undertook to give up all extra-territorial rights in Tibet, which she had inherited from the British. The treaty was regarded as a spectacular achievement of Asian statesmanship, and Nehru believed that 'all problems left behind by history between India and China had for all time been successfully solved.' Subsequent events, however, revealed that this treaty, in which most Indians saw the vision of a New Jerusalem, was in reality a blunder, its only effect being the consolidation of China's legal status in Tibet *vis-a-vis* India. The agreement reduced the bargaining counters available to India in any future discussion of her difference⁶ with China.

Having secured Indian recognition of Tibet as an integral part of China, the Chinese moved on to the next stage of their policy. They began to dig in their heels deep in the Tibetan uplands. Soon after the takeover they started on an intensive programme of road-building, joining Han China with Tibet. In 1952, a Sinkiang-Tibet highway was completed as far as Chang-tu and the whole area was taken away from Tibetan administration and placed under Chinese military control. By 1954, two military highways were well-nigh completed—one via Sinkiang (1,400 miles) and the other via Chinghai (1,310 miles)—reducing the journey from Peking and Shanghai to Lhasa from three months to twenty days. Alongwith these highways, a series of other military roads within Tibet were constructed, the most important among them being the Lhasa-Gartok highway (1,300 miles), Lhasa-Yatung highway (390 miles) and Gartok-Pulantsung highway (158 miles). Soon followed the construction of another highway from Gartok northward to Sinkiang, through the Indian territory of Aksai Chin (which has since been occupied by China under the pretense of a dispute). About the same time, China declared her intention to build a railway from Langchow to Lhasa, across the oil-rich Chinghai Province, and announced the inauguration of the

⁶ Francis Watson, *The Frontier of China* (London, 1966), p. 93.

Peking-Lhasa air service, on a ten-hour schedule. Besides these, a number of other measures were taken to tighten Chinese control over Tibet. Very large numbers of Chinese settlers were brought into Tibet, the size of the Chinese army was enormously increased, large and permanent camps were built at strategic places, military air-fields and bases were constructed at various points on the Tibetan plateau, and the Dalai Lama's authority was steadily eroded. By 1956, Tibet found herself in the grip of such a Chinese strangle-hold that the Dalai Lama, who had come to India that year in connection with the celebration of the 25th centenary of the *Maha-parinirvana* of Lord Buddha, was almost persuaded by his court not to return to his unhappy country. But Pandit Nehru dissuaded him from adopting this course and he went back to Tibet.

With Tibet having been transformed into a base of operations, the Chinese began their first onslaughts against Indian borderlands. The earliest of these incidents took place at the extreme northern end of Uttar Pradesh, at what we call Bara Hoti, but the Chinese called Wu-je. Bara Hoti was a grazing ground about 16,000 feet above sea-level, two miles south of the Tun Jun La, a border pass between Uttar Pradesh and Tibet. It soon became a disputed area, both sides complaining that the other had illegally trespassed into it. There was an exchange of notes between the two Governments and it looked as though there was no agreement between them even about the geographical location of Bara Hoti/Wu-je. Whereas the Indians maintained that it lay two miles to the south of the Tun Jun La, the Chinese thought that it was 12 kilometres to the north of the pass. It was then agreed that the officials of the two Governments would inspect the place and if it was found to be located to the north of the pass, it would be regarded as Chinese territory, and if to the south, it would be treated as Indian territory. Later, however, the Chinese went back on this understanding and stuck to their claim to the area, irrespective of whether it lay to the north or the south of the border pass.

While the question of Bara Hoti/Wu-je was being debated, the Chinese began to push across other points of the Indo-Tibetan boundary. Reports reached New Delhi of Chinese transgression at Damzan (November, 1955), Niland (April, 1956), Hupsang Khad (September, 1956), Khurnak Fort (July, 1958) and Laphal

and Sangcha Malla (October, 1958). Notes of protest were sent to the Chinese Government : some of these were not answered ; in reply to others the Chinese claimed the intruded areas as Chinese territory. Nehru seems to have thought at the beginning that these intrusions were being made by the local Chinese frontier guards with mistaken notions about the precise alignment of the Indo-Tibetan border and without the knowledge and support of the Chinese Central Government. The Indian notes, therefore, began to supply to the Chinese Government essential historical and geographical data with precise co-ordinates regarding the disputed areas. The Chinese, however, ignored the evidence which the Indian notes contained, made no comment on the historical and geographical details furnished by the Indian Government and sought generally to confuse the issues in a haze of vague counter-claims. Nehru, nevertheless, kept back all information about these intrusions from the Parliament and the people of India in the belief that he would be able to settle the matter with the Chinese Government without being stampeded into hasty action by public excitement.

While Nehru and Chou En-lai were exchanging letters and notes regarding the intrusions which had already taken place, the Chinese troops, with the help of local labour, completed in 1956-57 a military road from Gartok to Sinkiang through Aksai Chin in north eastern Ladakh. Aksai Chin is a vast, barren, uninhabitable plateau about 17,000 feet above sea-level. Some years earlier the Chinese Communists had declared Sinkiang as a closed area and the earlier lines of military intelligence which Britain had maintained in Central Asia were closed. The Government of India, therefore, did not know anything about the construction of this military high-way, until a small-scale map showing the road was published in a Chinese periodical *People's China* in 1958.

In the summer of 1958, the Indian Government sent two reconnaissance parties to ascertain whether the road actually crossed through Indian territory. One of these parties was arrested and kept in custody by the Chinese for at least five weeks ; the other returned unmolested and submitted a report which showed that the new military road had cut deeply through the north-eastern salient of Ladakh. The Government of India protested to the Chinese Government that it was "a matter of surprise and regret that the Chinese Government should have

constructed a road through indisputably Indian territory, without first obtaining the permission of the Government of India and without even informing the Government of India." The Chinese reply was that the area through which the Sinkiang-Tibet highway passed belonged entirely to China. Sometime later, Chou En-lai, writing to Nehru, gave the additional information that the area of Ladakh which India claimed as her territory, belonged to the "southern part of China's Sinkiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, and that it had always been under Chinese jurisdiction".

As Chinese tightened their grip over Tibet and as relations with India worsened, their transgressions tended to become more frequent and more violent and their notes to India assumed more assertive and truculent overtones. The year 1959 witnessed a series of transgressions extending from Ladakh to Assam, one of the most significant among them being that at Longju to the south of the McMahon Line. On August 25, the small Indian post at Longju was suddenly fired upon by a strong Chinese detachment. One person was killed on the spot and another seriously wounded. On the following day the Chinese completely outflanked the Indian post, overwhelmed the small Indian force of eighteen men of the Assam Rifles and compelled them to withdraw. When the Government of India made a strong protest against this unprovoked firing on a static post within Indian territory, Peking replied; "Longju is indisputably part of Chinese territory" and claimed that the Indian personnel who were there were guilty of violating Chinese territorial integrity. The Chinese reply added: "No section of Sino-Indian boundary has been formally delimited... the so-called McMahon Line was set forth in the past by the British imperialists unilaterally and has never been accepted by the Chinese Government; it, of course, cannot be regarded as legal." The reply closed with a sombre warning: "No violation of Chinese territory will be tolerated. All armed provocations will certainly meet with the Chinese frontier guards' firm rebuff."

The time was now apparently 'ripe' for Chou En-lai to show his hand. In less than two weeks after the Longju incident (September 8, 1959), he addressed a long letter to Nehru, intimating China's refusal to accept the Sino-Indian boundary as

⁷ *White Paper*, No. i, 44; No. ii, pp. 3-5.

shown in Indian maps or as understood by the Indian Government. The boundary between India and China, he said, had never been delimited ; the Chinese Central Government did not participate in the conclusion of the Tibet-Kashmir treaty of 1842, nor did it ratify the treaty afterwards, and therefore this treaty could not be used as the foundation to ask the Chinese Government to accept the unilateral claim of the Indian Government regarding this section of the boundary. The section of the boundary consisting of the area of Sang and Tsungha, south-west of Tsaparang Dzong in Tibet, was "30 to 40 years back gradually invaded and occupied by the British" ; and finally, the so-called McMahon Line, which has been the Indo-Tibetan boundary in the north-east for well-nigh half a century was dubbed "a product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet Region of China" and hence illegal.

The main land-marks of the Indo-Tibetan boundary which the new Government of India had inherited from the old were thus sought to be obliterated and new landmarks set up in their place. The Chinese, in effect, demanded India's withdrawal from extensive tracts along her northern boundary, following the latter's withdrawal from Tibet. A border-dispute involving some 40,000 square miles of territory, was thus created.

The Chinese view of the frontier question was further elaborated in the Note given by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Indian Embassy in Peking on December 26, 1959. Although more detailed in arguments, the Note put forward few additional facts ; its main thesis, repeated *ad nauseum* since then, was that the entire boundary between the two countries had never been delimited.⁸ As against this the Government of India stated :

The Sino-Indian boundary, based on custom and tradition, follows natural features, and for the major part this customary and traditional boundary is also confirmed by treaty and agreement. This boundary throughout has been fixed and well-known for centuries. According to international usage and practice, a customary boundary which follows well-known and unchanging natural features like main watersheds stands defined and does not require further and formal definition.⁹

⁸ *White Paper*, No. iii, pp. 60-82.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

In the meanwhile, under pressure of public opinion, the Government of India published all the Notes, Memoranda and letters bearing on border transgressions as well as the claims and counter-claims of the two Governments, in the form of *White Papers* so that the Parliament and people of India should know the facts of the situation. Indian feeling, shaken by these revelations, was further inflamed by another border incident in October, 1959, when an Indian patrol party, on routine duty near Kongka Pass in Chang Chenmo Valley in Ladakh, was subjected to a ruthless attack by the Chinese forces with rifles, mortars and hand grenades. Nine Indians were killed, one seriously injured and others imprisoned. Attempts were, however, still made to find ways and means of easing the growing tension and settling the dispute by means of negotiations. The Prime Ministers of India and China met in Delhi in April 1960, but basic disagreement on historical and actual facts stood in the way of the emergence of any acceptable solution. Nevertheless, the two Prime Ministers agreed to the appointment of a joint committee of government officials and advisers, which was empowered to examine, check and study all historical documents, records, accounts, maps and other material relevant to the boundary question, on which each side relied in support of its stand, and to submit a report to the two governments. The two teams of this committee exchanged their respective records and views in the following months and reported to their governments at the end of 1960. An account of their deliberations and findings was published by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, as *the Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question* (February, 1961).¹⁰ This Report, along with the *White Papers*, mentioned above, constitute an invaluable source of information regarding the origin, nature and development of the dispute and the evidence and arguments put forward by the two sides in support of their respective claims.

One need not go into the subsequent history of the dispute, apart from referring to one staggering development, for by 1960 the claims and counter-claims of India and China had become well-known. The staggering development was the large-scale Chinese invasion of Indian border areas in October-November,

¹⁰ The Government of China, however, did not publish this Report until April, 1962.

1962. The invasion came in the wake of steadily deteriorating relations between the two countries, and China, which had made adequate preparations in the meanwhile, launched it with a view to forcing India to accept a settlement on her own terms. It is, however, interesting to note that throughout the ensuing fighting, China, which posed to be acting in sheer self-defence referred to its troops involved in the action, who were regular units of the People's Liberation Army, as 'frontier guards', just as she had described regular Chinese divisions fighting in Korea a little over a decade ago, as 'volunteers'. In the war, for which India was not at all prepared, she suffered a general debacle, more particularly in the NEFA area. But for reasons, about which we can at best speculate but cannot be certain, the Chinese suddenly halted their advance on November 21, 1962, announced that their troops would observe a cease-fire, and from December 1, would start to withdraw to positions 20 kilometres behind the line of actual control existing on November 7, 1959. As this left the Chinese in possession of 14,500 square miles of territory in Ladakh which in Indian opinion lawfully belonged to India, Nehru was not willing to let the matter rest there and asked for restoration of the *status quo ante* of September 8, 1962, in all sectors of the boundary as a condition precedent to a mutually-agreed cease-fire. In the event of Chinese not agreeing, Nehru offered to refer the whole dispute to the International Court of Justice. The Chinese rejected both these proposals outright and a stalemate ensued.¹¹

At this stage, six Asian countries (Ceylon, Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia, U.A.R. and Ghana) made an attempt to break the stalemate and provide a basis for agreed cease-fire arrangements and future negotiations. They met at Colombo and formulated certain proposals for this purpose. India requested some clarifications and when these were offered, she accepted them in toto. China, however, refused to accept them without reservations.

A number of other attempts were made to break the stalemate. In a note dated April 3, 1963, and a letter of the Indian Prime Minister to the Chinese Premier, dated May, 1963, India put forward a number of specific proposals for resolving the dispute in a peaceful manner. The Chinese Government, not only

¹¹ Letter of January 1, 1963, in *White Paper* No. viii, pp. 48-51.

rejected them but also accused India of having put them forward 'to make negotiations impossible by setting up an array of obstacles'.¹² In 1964, on the basis of a suggestion from Mrs Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Ceylon, Lal Bahadur Shastri made a public declaration that India would be happy to initiate negotiations with China if China would only agree to make a token gesture and withdraw from the seven civilian posts which she had constructed in the demilitarised zone in Ladakh in clear contravention of the Colombo proposals. The Chinese Prime Minister gave a formal reply to this proposal in the State of the Nation report to the Third National People's Congress, held in Peking from December 21, 1964 to January 4, 1965 :

'We will not withdraw from a single one of these posts, and at the same time the Indian Government has to be reminded that 90,000 sq. kilometres of territory south of the so-called McMahon Line are Chinese territory, over which China has never relinquished its sovereignty . . . we can wait.'

Before we conclude this introductory note, it may be pointed out that there is a large element of ambiguity, evasiveness and hide-and-seek in the way the Chinese created this boundary dispute. For years after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the new regime did not question the validity of India's northern boundary as shown in our official maps or categorically stated by the Indian Prime Minister in public declarations. As early as May 4, 1949, Nehru stated that the McMahon Line was India's north-eastern frontier, 'map or no map'. He repeated the same statement on November 20, 1950. The Chinese did not say a word against these assertions. In fact, there are reasons to assume that in 1950, the Chinese themselves regarded the McMahon Line as the international frontier between India and China. The units of the Chinese People's Liberation Army had moved into Tibet in 1950 with the avowed object of 'defending the frontiers of China' and 'consolidating national defences on China's western borders'. While the Chinese armies moved about in all parts of Tibet and established military stations, they kept away from NEFA. When some troops strayed over the extremities of the McMahon Line boundary, they withdrew as soon as it was pointed out that they had trespassed

¹² *White Paper.*

into Indian territory.¹³ On March 22, 1951, Lhasa was officially informed of the Indian Government's intention to extend 'regular administration' upto the international frontier. Once again the Chinese saw nothing irregular or objectionable in it. On September 27, 1951, Chou En-lai informally assured the Indian Ambassador, Sardar K. M. Panikkar, that China intended in every way to safeguard Indian interests in Tibet, adding that 'there was no territorial dispute between India and China.'¹⁴ In fact, until the conclusion of the so-called *Panch Shila* treaty in April, 1954, China never gave any hint to the Government of India that there was a territorial dispute between the two countries.

Some maps were indeed published in China which did not conform to the Indian conception of the boundary. In October, 1954, when Nehru went to China, he mentioned to the Chinese leaders that he had seen some maps which showed a wrong boundary alignment between the two countries, and then added that 'he was not worried about it, because the boundaries of India were quite clear and not a matter of argument'. Chou En-lai's reply on that occasion was that these were reproductions of old maps produced in the time of the Kuomintang regime and that they had not been corrected because of other pre-occupations of the new regime. In 1956, when Chou En-lai visited India, the Chinese maps again came up for discussion between the two Prime Ministers. An informal minute taken by Nehru of this discussion ran as follows :

Premier Chou En-lai referred to the McMahon Line. He had gone into this matter in connection with the border dispute with Burma. Although he thought that this line, established by British imperialists, was not fair, nevertheless, because it was an accomplished fact and because of the friendly relations which existed between China and the countries concerned, namely, India and Burma, the Chinese Government was of the opinion that they should give recognition to the McMahon Line. They had not, however, consulted the Tibetan authorities about it yet. They proposed to do so.¹⁵

¹³ *The Frontiers of China, op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹⁴ Statement made during the debate in Parliament on November 21, 1961.

¹⁵ *White Paper No. 1.*

It is to be remembered that the above discussion came up in connection with the Sino-Burman Frontier, where Chinese claims gave the Burmese Government considerable worry, and about which Nehru talked with Chou En-lai at U Nu's request. In the course of conversation Nehru did not ask for any assurance regarding the Indian frontier, for in his view the basis of the Indian boundary from the north-eastern tip of Bhutan to the tri-junction between India, Burma and China was secured by international agreement, had been repeatedly affirmed and had never been openly challenged.

Another interesting point to be noted is that at least for five years after their transgressions in the border areas began, the Chinese did not claim any precise boundary line for themselves. After every intrusion they claimed the intruded areas as belonging to them. Their claims thus grew step by step. Even then they did not put forward any claim to areas adjacent to the transgressed area. For instance, when the Chinese laid claim to Bara Hoti/Wu-je, and this area started a prolonged controversy between the two Governments, they said nothing about other neighbouring Indian posts near the Niti Pass such as Lapthal and Sangchamalla. Later, however, they laid claim to all the three areas separately. In 1960, during the discussions of the two Officials' Teams, they went a step further and claimed Bara Hoti, Lapthal and Sangchamalla not as separate units of territory but as forming one composite area of 300 square miles without any intervening wedges of Indian territory.¹⁶ Another instance may be cited. When the Government of India in a letter dated July 24, 1959, took the precaution of informing the Chinese Government of their intention to drop a doctor by parachute at Longju and supplied to the Chinese Government the exact co-ordinates including grid references, the Chinese Foreign Office stated that it was unnecessary to bring activities over Indian territory to their notice. But five weeks later, when the Chinese troops attacked Longju and the Government of India lodged a strong protest, Peking had no hesitation in claiming Longju as Chinese territory. Chinese attitude towards their own maps betrayed the same inconsistency. As stated above, for almost a decade after the Communist take-over, Peking did not defend the spurious maps

¹⁶ *Report*, p. 262.

which were then circulating in China. On the contrary, these were described as 'pre-liberation' maps, which the new government had not yet been able to revise. As the Chinese grip on Tibet tightened and new factors of tension between India and China developed their whole attitude towards these 'pre-liberation' maps was rapidly transformed. In September, 1959, Chou En-lai upheld the validity of the Sino-Indian frontier as shown in these maps and found fault with the Indian maps, which he claimed had 'unilaterally altered the way the Sino-Indian boundary was drawn'.¹⁷ When it was pointed out that the alignment of the frontier was shown differently in the so-called 'pre-liberation' maps, Chou En-lai told Nehru in December, 1959, that 'the Chinese map published in 1956 correctly shows the boundary between the two countries'.¹⁸ And yet in 1960, when the two Officials' Teams met, the Chinese put forward yet another map, which pushed the Indo-Tibetan boundary in the western sector still further to the south and west and included a few thousand square miles of additional territory in China. Instances of this nature can be multiplied; but enough has been said above to warrant the conclusion that the Chinese were far from clear in their own mind about the history or topography of the Indo-Tibetan boundary and their claims grew in direct proportion to the success with which they intruded upon one border area after another. This conclusion is further confirmed by the fact that as late as 1960 at the exchange of description of the boundary by the two Officials' Teams, the Chinese team left many Indian questions unanswered and generally was far less specific in its clarification of topographical details than the Indian team.

But whatever the strength or weakness of the Chinese case and the *modus operandi* of the Chinese leadership, is India justified, historically and legally, in claiming the boundary alignment as shown in her official maps and claimed by her Government? Answer to this question requires an examination of the historical evolution of India's northern boundary, particularly during the last hundred and fifty years. This is precisely what the present study attempts to do in the chapters that follows. It has relied principally on archival materials, the accounts left behind by past surveyors, explorers and travellers in border regions and the

¹⁷ *White Paper II*, p. 30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, III, p. 53.

records of administration available in the Government files. Maps produced in different periods and in different countries are also helpful to some extent. In the border dispute between India and China, both parties have relied on their own, each other's and neutral maps to support their contentions. During the 1960 meetings of the Official's, the Indians quoted 36 official Indian and 8 official Chinese maps and the Chinese side referred to 13 official Indian maps. It must be emphasised, however, that maps are at best secondary evidence. In determining the location of a boundary, international and national tribunals have rightly been reluctant to place much evidentiary value on maps, regardless of their number or designation. All maps are not based on proper survey. Until the middle of the last century, and in some sections until the second decade of this century, cartographers lacked reliable geographical data concerning many features of the Himalayan regions. Early map-makers, therefore, sometimes made bad blunders when they depicted the territorial limits of particular states. Recent experience has, moreover, shown that maps may sometimes portray the aggressive territorial ambitions or pretensions of a state. Maps cannot, therefore, be regarded *ipso facto* as conclusive proof unless their evidence is corroborated by the results derived from an examination and analysis of documents. In other words, they may at best be treated as secondary, and not as primary, evidence. It is safe to conform to the spirit behind Article 29 of the Treaty of Versailles of June 28, 1919, which says: 'In case of any discrepancies between the text of the Treaty and this map or any other map which may be annexed, the text will be final.' Nevertheless, when a map forms the basis on which an agreement is negotiated and concluded, or when it is attached to a treaty as a part of the instrument, or is incorporated by reference in a treaty and becomes an integral element of the settlement, it naturally acquires a special significance.

Two

Eastern Sector

The Land and the People

THE TERRITORY which the Chinese claimed in the north-east of India roughly corresponds to what is shown in Indian maps as the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). In area almost as large as England without Wales, extending in length for about 300 miles and in depth between 70 and 150 miles, it is a tangled mass of high mountains and impenetrable forests, intersected by numerous rivers too swift to be fordable or navigable and which are fed by rainfall as high as any in the world. 'Traversing such a country', wrote Butler in 1847, 'where the route follows the course of the rivers must naturally be difficult in the extreme. The hills are characterised by excessive steepness, and as the greater portion of the route winds round them at some height above their bases, marching is excessively fatiguing, difficult and dangerous. In many places a false step would be attended with fatal consequences ; precipices must be crossed at a height of hundreds of feet above the foaming bed of a river, the only support of the traveller being derived from the roots and stumps of trees and shrubs, and the angular character of the face of the rock. The paths are of the worst description, always excessively narrow and overgrown by jungle in all directions. In very steep places the descent is often assisted by hanging canes which afford good support ; but no attempt is ever made to clear the paths of any obstruction ; in fact, the natives seem to think that the more difficult they are, the greater is the security against foreign invasions.'¹ This general description is not, however, equally applicable to all areas comprised in the region. In the western part of the region, for instance, now called the Kameng Division of NEFA, the configuration of the land, the character of the soil,

¹ S. Butler, *A Sketch of Assam* (1847).

vegetation and the climate are somewhat different from that found further to the east or north-east. Through this area ran one of the shortest Indo-Tibetan trade routes of the pre-British and the early British days, more or less regularly used, although on a small scale and only for a few months in the year.² There were only two other available routes into NEFA, the first down the valley of the Siang—one of the main tributaries of the Brahmaputra—and the second the so-called Rima route in the extreme east. Both were dangerous in many parts but were traditionally used for whatever small traffic there was in those days.

The number of people living in these wild, mountainous regions was rather small—less than 336,000, according to a recent estimate—spread over an area of 31,438 square miles and fragmented into a multiplicity of communities. On ethnic grounds, twenty-two major tribes are listed. The more important of these, from west to east, were :

- (1) The *Monbas* in Tawang, Damkho and Dupla valleys.
- (2) The *Akas* in the Tenga and the lower portions of the Bichom river valleys.
- (3) The *Mijis*, who occupied the upper valley of the Bichim river.
- (4) The *Daflas* in the areas east of Aka and Monba territories and between the Kameng and Subansiri rivers.
- (5) The *Apa Tanis* who lived in an isolated part in the valley of the Kali river.
- (6) The *Miris* who lived to the north east of the Dafla country near the Kamla river (a branch of Subansiri which flows into the Brahmaputra at about lat. 27°, long. 40°).

(7) The *Abors* (now called Adis) who occupied the territory

² Pandit Nain Singh, who travelled from Ladakh to Lhasa and thence through Tawang to Udalguri on the the border of Assam in 1873-75, calculated the distance between Lhasa and Udalguri as approximately 306 miles. This route, however, gradually went out of use after the opening of the Sikkim route, which was about 50 miles longer ; but in 1959 it suddenly caught the headlines of the world press when the Dalai Lama, fleeing before the Chinese army, arrived at Tezpur in Assam, traversing along it.

to the east of the Miris between the Subansiri and Dihong river valleys.

- (8) The *Mishmis* who lived in the area between the Dibang and the Lohit valleys along the Indo-Tibetan frontier.

Of these tribes, the Monbas alone were good Buddhists. Ever since the foundation of the Tawang monastery about the middle of the eighteenth century as a daughter house of Drepung at Lhasa, they had come under considerable Tibetan influence and adopted the Lamaist faith. They were, however, distinct from the Tibetans in many ways—in the nature of the country they inhabited, their customs, language, dress and methods of house-building. In fact, as Nevill reported in 1914, they were more akin to the inhabitants of Bhutan and Sikkim than to the Tibetans. The other tribal groups (apart from a few Akas) were non-Buddhist, each following its own tribal faith. They were, moreover, divided and sub-divided into numerous sub-tribes and clans. The Akas, for instance, consisted of eleven clans such as the Kutsur (Hazarikhoa in Assamese), Karatson (Kapachor in Assamese), Karan, Golu, Nyrbin, Tepun, Pushing, Khosakhium, Gugeria and Miri Aka. Similarly, the Abors or Adis were sub-divided into Miniyongs, Padams, Pasis, Punggis, Shimongs, Boris, Ashings, Tangams, Gallongs, Ramos, Bokars and Pailibos. Most of the other tribes also were split into a number of smaller clans, each with its distinctive characteristics. There were, again, some small tribes who did not belong to any of the large tribal groups and had their own distinctive languages, traditions and politico-economic set-up. In fact, there was little in common among the tribes and sub-tribes except perhaps their wildness and the profound antipathy towards the outsider. They spoke no common tongue, wore no common dress, followed no common customs or beliefs, owned no common organisation and acknowledged no common authority. More often than not, clans and villages were entirely separate or independent of each other, and intra-tribal feuds were as frequent among them as inter-tribal warfare.

Their Early Relations with Tibet and Assam

Little is known about the early history of the tribes. Their origin and ethnographic extraction is largely a matter of conjec-

ture, although the majority of them seem to belong to a cultural tradition which had affinities to the east with Burma, and to the south-east with the Naga Hills and the adjacent areas.³ Sir Robert Reid, Governor of Assam from 1937 to 1942, stated with reference to these tribes that 'they are not Indian in any sense of the word, neither in origin, nor in habits, nor in outlook; and it is only a historical accident that they have been tacked on to an Indian province'.⁴ It is important to remember, however, that it they were not 'Indian', neither were they Chinese or Tibetan. In their racial or linguistic affinities, the tribes were set as far apart from the Chinese as from the plainsmen of India. The Tibetan called them *Lhopas*; and *Lhopas* meant to them what the barbarians meant to the Greeks, the heathen to the Christians, and the 'lesser breeds without the Law' to Kipling and his ilk.

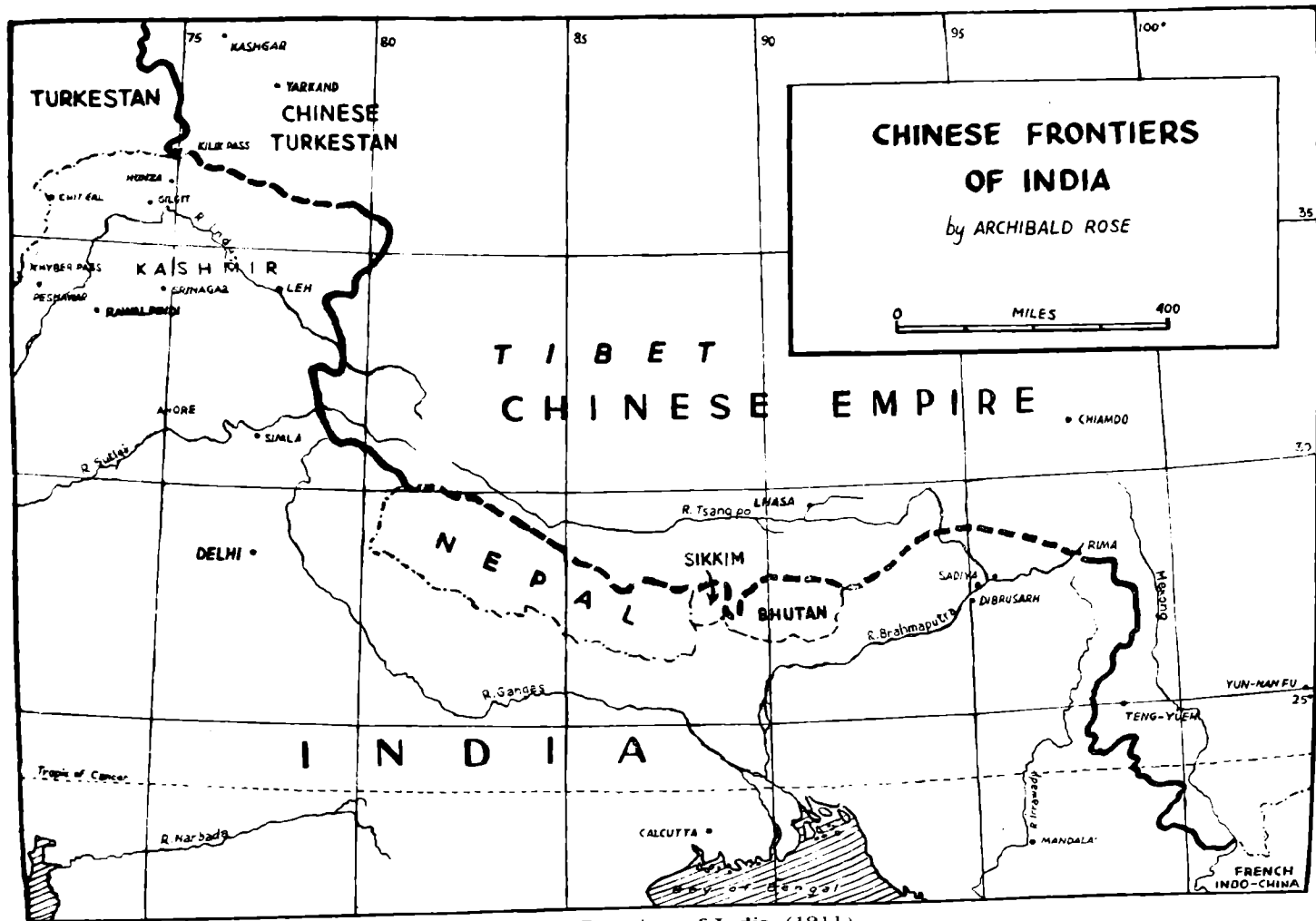
Most geographical accounts of the area coming from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, make it clear that the tribal terrain of the southern slopes of the Assam Himalaya was traditionally outside the Tibetan jurisdiction. Thus Ippolito Desideri of Pistoria, the Italian Jesuit missionary who spent five years in travelling west to east from one end of Tibet to another, describes the eastern areas of Tibet, called Long-bo, as marching with 'the people called *Lhoba*'. 'These *Lhoba*', he adds, 'are proud, uncultured and wild. They generally live in the forests and shoot wild animals with bows and arrows, which they eat raw or roasted. . . . Not even Tibetans, who are close neighbours and have many dealings with them, are allowed to enter their country, but are obliged to stop on the frontier to barter goods.'⁵ Horace Della Penna, who visited Tibet in 1730, returned with the impression that the tribal area under discussion lay beyond the bounds of Tibet.⁶ R. Wilcox, who had carried out some surveys in Subansiri in the years following 1826, stated that the tribal people whom he met 'did not acknowledge any acquaintance with countries of the north'; he described them 'as uninhabited wild tract of hill and jungle'. Other reports of

³ See Gerald D. Berraman, *Asian Survey*, June 1963, p. 301.

⁴ *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol. 31, 1944, p. 174.

⁵ See *An Account of Tibet: the Travels of Ippolito Desideri of Pistoria, 1712-1727*, edited by Filippo de Fillipi (London, 1937), p. 145.

⁶ C.R. Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and of the journey of Thomas Manning to Lasha* (London, 1879), p. 314.



Chinese Frontiers of India (1911)

individual explorers, missionaries and political agents indicate that to the tribes the border of Tibet lay far to the north of these tribes, more or less coincident with the great Himalayan Range. That the Sino-Tibetan jurisdiction did not extend into the territory inhabited by the Lhopas is also shown by early Chinese maps such as the *Atlas of the Chinese Empire*, published in London by the Chinese Inland Mission in 1906, the *Postal Atlas of China* published by the Government of China in 1917, and *China in the days of the Ching dynasty* (that is, before 1911) published by the University of Peking in 1925. All these depict the southern boundary of Tibet as following an alignment not unlike the crest-cum-watershed McMahon Line established at the Simla Conference in 1914.

Another map, drawn by a British officer in 1911, is equally revealing. Mr. Archibald Rose had served for some years as the British Consul at Tengyuch and had made extensive journeys in the hills and valleys of Yunnan bordering on Assam and Burma. He was a great friend of the Chinese: 'It is impossible to live amongst these industrious, law-abiding peoples' he wrote, 'without learning for them a liking and respect'. He also looked forward to see India and China meeting along a common 'boundary of Nature's making, a well-marked range of mountains or an unchanging river, which will serve as a buffer to break the shock of varying customs and advances of self-seeking man'. 'The Chinese' he added, 'should prove the best of neighbours for us and there is, I think, every reason to welcome their administrative advance.' In 1911, he submitted a Report on the Chinese frontiers with India and appended with it a map showing the frontier as it existed in the first decade of this century.⁷ A cursory glance at the map shows that the alignment of this frontier was not materially different from what was agreed upon between McMahon and Lonchen Shatra three years later. The sub-montane tract, where the tribes lived, lay to the south of the frontier.

This does not mean that the tribes were cut off from all contacts with the Tibetans. As the tribal area did not produce salt, there was a great demand for the Tibetan rocksalt among the tribesmen. They went into some of the border points of Tibet such as Rima, Mipi and Migyitun, taking with them madder, dye, skins, tobacco, long lengths of cane and some

⁷ F.O. 371/1065. See also *Geographical Journal*, 1912.

honey, which they exchanged for salt, blankets, woollen cloth, bells, cymbals, white or blue beads, goats and sheep, swords and iron. Business was done by barter, 'as not only do they (Lhopas) not understand money, but they are afraid of it'. Nevill noted that the usual custom followed in the Tsangpo valley or the valley of Rongto Chu or at Rima was that the Lhopas were not permitted to go into the Tibetan villages, except in the day time, even for purposes of business. It is also significant that the Tibetans seldom crossed the passes into the Lhopa country even for purposes of trade. They did so only in one particular area, the Tsari district bordering on Migyiun, in connection with their pilgrimages. On these occasions the Tibetan Government used to bribe the Lhopas, who lived near the pilgrim route, with tsampa, swords, salt, etc., with a view to ensuring the safety of the pilgrims. Even then the pilgrims were not always free from molestation. They were often robbed, and sometimes captured and enslaved.

It may be added here that the Lhopa-Tibetan trade, referred to above, was actually handled by a few small tribal groups living near the Tibetan frontier and most of the major tribes living in the sub-montane tract did not have any direct access to it. E. T. Dalton noted in his famous *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, published in 1872, that although there was abundant evidence of indirect contact between Abors, Miris and Daflas on the one hand, and the Tibetans, on the other, in the shape of such objects as brass vessels, bronze bells, glass beads, iron knives and swords, it was well-nigh impossible to find one among the tribes who had actually visited the lands beyond the high peaks whence these things originated. The Padam Abors, for instance, Dalton notices, 'for some reason throw a veil of mystery over their intercourse, and always repudiating direct trade with Tibetans, tell you of the existence of barbarous tribes on the high snow ranges behind them, and you meet with no one of the clan who will acknowledge to have passed this barrier of savages.'⁸ Dalton had the same experience with the Miris and the Daflas, who always spoke of wild tribes who lived to the north between them and the Tibetans. The obvious explanation of this lies in the fact that the tribal groups living along the Tibetan frontier jealously guarded their control over this trade so as to monopolise the profits arising out of their acting as the middlemen

⁸ Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* (Calcutta, 1872), p. 28.

between the Tibetans and the tribes in the hinterland. In spite of their wildness, the tribes shared the normal trader's instinct the world over.

Assam seems to have had a much longer history of contacts with the tribes than Tibet. Available historical evidence indicates that at the height of their power in the seventeenth century, the Ahoms extended their authority deep into the tribal territory to the north. The famous Muslim chronicler, Shihabuddin, poetically called Talish, who had accompanied the Mughal army under Mir Jumla into Assam in 1662, wrote :

Although most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills pay no tax (*baj*) to the Raja of Assam, yet they accept his sovereignty and obey some of his commands. The Dafla tribe alone does not place its feet in the skirt of obedience, but occasionally encroaches on his kingdom.⁹

That the Daflas were more turbulent than the other tribes and proved to be a source of frequent worry to the Ahom kings, is also evidenced by the Assamese chronicles (*buranjis*), which speak *inter alia* of the numerous primitive expeditions which had to be sent into the fastnesses of the Dafla territory, e. g., in 1646, 1670-73, 1717, 1758, etc., to curb the turbulence of the tribe. Occasionally, it would appear, the tribes were also compelled to pay an annual tribute by way of punishment. In 1665, for instance, as a measure of reprisal against the Miris, who had carried out a raid on the plains and killed two Ahom subjects, an Ahom force was sent into the Miri territory, and is said to have 'defeated with considerable loss a body of three hundred Miris and burned twelve of their villages', with the result that the tribe offered its submission and agreed to pay an annual tribute of bisons, horses, tortoises, swords and yellow beads (probably amber).¹⁰ In regard to the Mishmi tribes, it has been noted by Butler that they 'were formerly obedient to the Assam Governors, the Suddesh Khowa Gohains; if they were not totally dependent, they at least gave small presents as

⁹ *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, 1915, Vol. I, p. 184. Another Muslim historian, Muhammad Kazim, wrote: 'The Daflas are entirely independent of the Assam Rajas and, whenever they find an opportunity, plunder the country contiguous to the mountains.'

¹⁰ Gait, *History of Assam* (Calcutta, 1906), p. 124.

token of submission'.¹¹ Writing in 1883, Michell noted: 'Before we took possession of Assam, the Mishmis were obedient to the orders of the Assam Government and paid tribute to the Sadiya Khowa Gohains'.^{11a} Available evidence also indicates that the Ahom kings sometimes employed Miris and other tribesmen as soldiers and their services were considered of special value when punitive expeditions had to be sent into the mountains. It would thus seem that in the centuries preceding the establishment of British rule in Assam, particularly when the Ahom kingdom was still intact and strong, there had grown up a kind of quasi-political relationship between the mountain tribes and their southern neighbours, memories of which were not completely obliterated after the British take-over.

Apart from this quasi-political relationship, trade appears to have been another factor which brought the tribesmen into frequent contact with the plainsmen in the south. The fertile belt of land along the foothills produced abundance of rice, cotton and other staples valued by the neighbouring hillmen, and they came down to barter their goods through certain well-known and recognised passes. Markets and fairs grew up in consequence along the foothills. Hamilton (quoted by Pamberton in his report on the North-East Frontier) refers to one such trade mart at 'Geegunshur'. A more important one was at Udalguri within the present Mangaldai sub-division of the Darrang district, where besides tribesmen traders from Tibet and Bhutan flocked in thousands annually for trading purposes. There was still another mart, Sadiya, near the eastern end of Assam, where the Mishmis and other eastern tribesmen came down to exchange their goods with those which they needed from the plains. It would seem, however, that as in the north so in the south, frontier tribesmen who were involved in this trade did their best to prevent remoter clans from visiting the plains, as they made profit out of the hillmen and the plain traders by acting as intermediaries.

One result of these contacts between plainsmen and hillmen was that a section of the latter came to learn the Assamese language which enabled them to act as interpreters. Rev. M.

¹¹ Quoted by V. Elwin, *India's North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century* (Bombay, 1959), p. 328.

^{11a} Michell, *Report on the North-East Frontier of India*, 1883, p. 97.

Bronson in his letter dated November 13, 1854, to James Holiday, Lieut. Governor of Bengal, regarding the question of language to be introduced in the courts and schools of Assam, urged :

The Assamese language is the common medium of intercourse with the mountain tribes that surround the valley. The Bhutias, the Mishmis, the Abors the Miris, the Khamptis, the Singphos, the Nagas and various other tribes compose a vast population, all of whom, if ever reached at all, must be reached from the valley and through the medium of the Assamese. From the days of the Ahom Kings, some among them can speak Assamese very well. Everywhere such may be found active as interpreters and forming a medium of communication.¹²

Some tribesmen, it would also appear came under the influence of the *Vaishnava Gosains* of eastern Assam and adopted the Vaishnavaitic beliefs and customs.

The pattern of Ahom-tribal relationship, outlined above, underwent a marked change when the power of the Ahom kings began to decline in the latter part of the eighteenth century. With growing internal dissensions and increasing paralysis of the government in the valley, the bordering tribes, which were hitherto generally submissive, not only achieved a considerable measure of independence but also began to press down upon the plainsmen from all directions. The Khamptis, who occupied the rich valley east of the Dephabum, advanced westwards into Tengapani, then crossed over to Sadiya, expelled the local representative of the Ahom kings and took possession of the neighbouring region. The Maomaris established themselves in a part of Lakhimpur, which was called Matak. Other tribes such as the Daflas, Miris, Akas and the Bhutias commenced an indiscriminate campaign of rapine and aggression against their lowland neighbours, kidnapping large numbers of men and women and consigning them to perpetual slavery. In some cases their depredations were such that the villagers near the foothills left their villages and moved away to remoter regions where they

¹² Quoted by Satyendranath Sharma, *United Asia*, Vol. XV, 1963, p. 362.

would be out of the reach of the marauders. The Ahom kings were quite unable to cope with this situation, and in fear and desperation worked out an arrangement with the tribal leaders, in consequence of which the tribes obtained what has been described as the right of *posa* from frontier areas along the foothills. *Posa* was a sort of protection money, a kind of subsidy paid by the lowlanders to the marauding tribes in return for immunity from plunder and slavery; and all available evidence suggests that it had become an almost established practice before the British annexation of Assam. Among the tribes, the Abors alone do not appear to have had a right to *posa* although they were by no means the least powerful. Their inability to extract *posa* was largely due to their comparatively remote situation, cut off as they were by the river Dihong from the cultivated areas along the Brahmaputra valley. They had, however, rights of a different kind. They claimed an absolute right to all the fish and gold in the Dihong river and some undefined rights over the Miris who had settled in the plains.

Early British Relations with the Tribes

When the British acquired Assam by the Treaty of Yandaboo (February 24, 1826), they also inherited some of the worries and cares of its old rulers. The problems of the valley were indeed difficult and baffling. This might have been one of the reasons why the British were reluctant to take up direct responsibility for this newly-acquired territory, and for several years experimented with administering it through local rulers. This experiment, however, did not succeed; and between 1838 and 1842, they converted Assam into a Non-Regulation Province of British India. But they were soon confronted with the tribal problems of the north and the north-east. They knew very little about the tribes; hearsay reports about them, as the early British notings show, were often confusing and based on ignorance. The entire sub-montane tract to the north of Assam, where the tribes lived, was *terra incognita* to the British. It is not surprising, therefore, that the British were averse to the idea of bringing even the bordering tribes within the administrative limits of their Indian empire. In fact, they would have been perfectly happy to leave the tribes alone, if the tribes were only prepared to leave them alone. But

the tribes were in no such mood. Long accustomed to *posa* and periodic raids on the plainsmen, they were in no hurry to give up what they had come to regard as their customary rights, just to suit the taste of the new rulers of Assam.

How did the British deal with the problem? To avoid making a difficult situation worse by any hasty action, they decided to maintain intact, at any rate at the initial stage, the arrangements of their predecessors. D. Scott, the British Governor of Assam for some years after annexation, was extremely cautious in dealing with the tribal rights, fancied or real. He explicitly conceded to them the right of realising their respective shares of *posa* from the lowland cultivators. But the practice of hordes of tribesmen descending annually upon the cultivated lands in the plains for collecting dues from each household could not be allowed to go on indefinitely—more so because outrages were the natural concomitants of such a practice. Not long afterwards, therefore, orders were given to invite the hillmen to surrender their rights of direct collection in lieu of an annual payment. In some instances no difficulty was experienced in introducing the change; in others, pressures of different kinds had to be employed before it was accepted. Whether voluntary or otherwise, however, the change was effected through agreements solemnly entered into by the tribal leaders with the representatives of the British Government. Thus, in 1836 the tribes called the Rooprai Ganw (Sherdukpen) Bhutiyas living along the Char Duar agreed to accept Rs. 2,526-7 annually as compensation for the annual revenue which they had exacted from the neighbouring plainsmen. In 1844, the Kapachor Akas entered into a similar agreement; the amount to be distributed to them was fixed at Rs. 360 per annum. The claims of the Havarikhoas were similarly commuted for a yearly sum of Rs. 175. On concluding the agreement, the Akas took an oath 'on the skins of tiger and bear, on elephant's dung, and by killing a fowl', and made the solemn declaration :

We will apply to the British courts for redress of our grievances and never to take the law in our hands. . . . We also engage never to join any parties that are, or may hereafter be, enemies of the British Government, but pledge ourselves to oppose them in every way in our power. We will also report any intelligence we may get of any conspiracy against the British Government,

and act upto any order we may receive from their authorities. Should it ever be proved that we have participated in any conspiracy, we shall have forfeited our privilege of coming into British territories.¹³

Similar arrangements were concluded between 1862 and 1866 with the Abor *Khels* (communities or villages) commuting the *posa* to money payments aggregating Rs. 3,312 a year. These agreements included *inter alia*, the following stipulations :

The British Government will take up positions on the frontier of the plains, will establish stations, post guards, and construct forts, or open roads as may be deemed expedient, and the Meyong Abors will not take umbrage at such arrangements or have any voice in such matters (Art. 3). The communication across the frontier will be free both for the Meyong Abors and for the British subjects going to the Meyong villages for the purpose of trading or other friendly dealings, (Art 6). In the event of any grievance, or any dispute taking place between the Meyong Abors and the British colony, the Abors will refrain from taking the law into their own hands, but they will appeal to the Deputy Commissioner for redress and abide by his decision (Art. 10). To enable the Meyong Abors of the eight khels or communities, who submit to this engagement, to keep a police force for preventing any marauders from resorting to the plains for sinister purposes and to enable them to take measures for arresting any offenders, the Deputy Commissioner on behalf of the British Government agrees that the communities referred to shall receive the following articles... (Art. 11) (The articles are enumerated in the text of the agreement).¹⁴

More or less identical agreements were concluded with other Abor groups in 1862.¹⁵ It was made clear in all cases, however,

¹³ Aitchison, C.U., *Collection of Engagements, Treaties and Sanad* (Calcutta, 1929, henceforth referred to only as Aitchison, CXIII, 292 and CXIV, 293).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, CXV, 294-95.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, CXVI-CXVII, 297-300. The dues in kind stipulated in these Agreements were commuted in 1877 to money payments aggregating Rs. 3,312 a year.

that the payment of *posa* was contingent on the behaviour and faithful adherence by the tribes to the Agreements, and that reprisal would follow any kind of violation or misbehaviour. At the same time when tribesmen, because of conditions of insecurity in the hills, wanted to settle in the plains under direct British administration, they were encouraged to do so, with the result that the whole communities of border tribes came down to the plains and settled as peaceful tillers of the soil. It was these hillmen, settled in the plains, who were of immense assistance to the British in the following decades, in exploring and surveying the difficult mountain areas or as guides to the expeditions sent to penalise the refractory tribes.

Although these treaties do not justify any claim to assertion of British territorial rights in the tribal country, they doubtless gave the British certain rights over the tribal people. The tribal leaders had in a sense become British pensioners and agreed to abide by the conditions laid down by the pension-giver. The first loose Anglo-tribal political strings were thus forged. In other words, these treaties signalled the beginning of the process of penetration, albeit veiled, which led in the end to the inclusion of the entire tribal belt south of the High Himalayan Range in Britain's Indian empire.

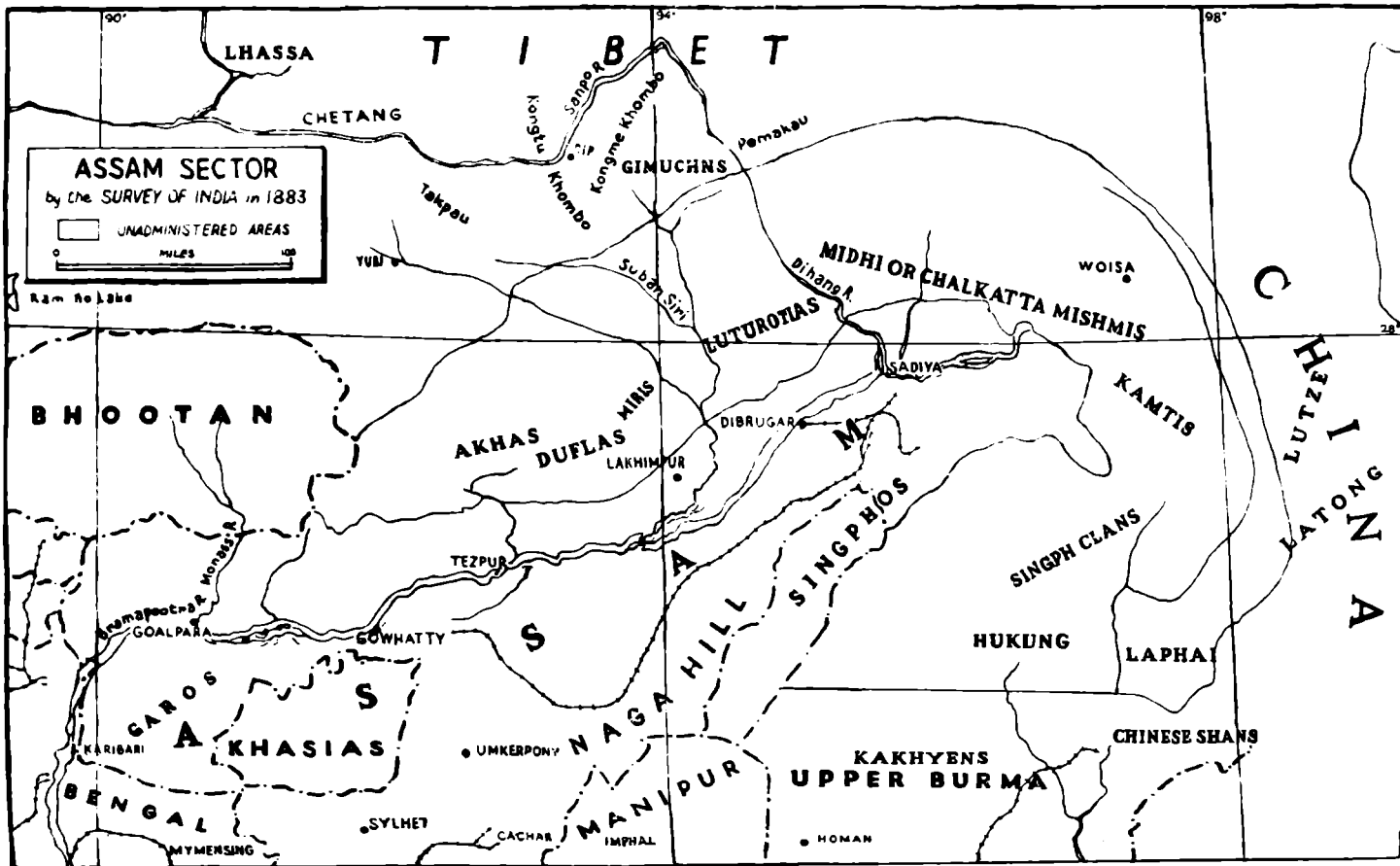
Another important step that the British took to ensure the security of the plains of Assam was to extend their administrative control over what were known as the *Duars* of the Assam Himalaya. These Duars (literally doors) were areas through which access was gained to the various passes leading into the hills. They were the principal channels of trade with the hill tribes, as also of trade with Tibet and Bhutan. Traditionally counted as eighteen, eleven of them were situated along the northern frontier of Bengal and Goalpara and seven in the north of Kamrup and Darrang. The former had been annexed by the Bhutiyas long before the British acquired control over Bengal, whereas the latter had been in the possession of the Ahom kings, until in the reign of King Gaurinath these were surrendered to the Bhutiyas in consideration of an annual tribute of Rs. 4,785. After the British occupation of Assam, the tribute due to the Bhutiyas gradually fell into arrears and frequent outrages and dacoities were committed in British territory. Various punitive measures were taken but without avail. It was, therefore, decided in 1841 to take over

the whole of the series of Duars lying to the north of Kamrup and Darrang on an yearly payment of Rs. 10,000, or one-third of the estimated revenue, to the Bhutanese authorities. In 1843, another *Duar*, known as the Kuriapara *Duar*, lying to the east of the *Duar* of Darrang and held of certain tribal chiefs, called *Sat Rajas* by the Assamese, was annexed in return for an annual payment of Rs. 5,000 or one-third of the supposed revenue. Later in 1865, under the terms of the treaty of Sinchula (which concluded the war with Bhutan), the Government of India annexed all the Duars lying to the north of Goalpara and Cooch Bihar and agreed to pay annually to the Bhutan Government a sum of Rs. 25,000, in which the previous grant of Rs. 10,000 on account of the Assam Duars was merged.¹⁶ Following these agreements, the boundary line between British Indian territory and Bhutan from the Manas river in the west to the Depsham river in the east, was demarcated in 1872-73. Simultaneously with this, another boundary line was laid down between the British-administered territories in Assam and the territories of some of the Monpa tribes (described by A. Mackenzie as 'Towang Bhutiyas' and 'Char Dwar Bhutiyas') extending from the Depsham river in the west to the Ghabroo river on the east.^{16a}

Despite these agreements, however, the tribal problem was by no means solved, and in the last few decades of the nineteenth and in the first few decades of the twentieth centuries, the British had to resort to various punitive measures to curb the tribal delinquency. These measures included suspension of *posa* and blockading the passes so as to cut off the offending tribes from supplies. As the tribesmen had become accustomed to *posa* and the profitable trade of the markets of Assam, more often than not these measures served the purpose. When they did not, military expeditions were sent into the mountains to chastise the tribes and demonstrate the reach of the power of the British Raj upto their lands. Records in the possession of the Governments of

¹⁶ See J. C. White, *Sikkim and Bhutan* (London, 1909), p. 280.

^{16a} Mackenzie, A., *A History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier* (Calcutta, 1884), pp. 18-19. This demarcation of Bhutiya Tribal territory from Assam has been described by Alastair Lamb as an international demarcation between India and Tibet. For an able refutation of Lamb's thesis, see G.N. Rao, *The India-China Border, A Reappraisal*, (Asia Publishing House, 1968), pp. 68-69.



Indian Border—Assam Sector

India and Assam give details of such expeditions against the Daflas in 1874-75, the Akas in 1883-84 and 1897, the Abor clans five times between 1858 and 1894 and against the Mishmis in 1885 and 1899-1900. Nor did such expeditions against refractory tribes terminate with the nineteenth century; they continued well into our own for very much the same reasons. It is significant that China, which now claims the entire sub-montane area down to the foothills, never thought of registering even once a diplomatic protest against these periodic military incursions into the tribal belt.

One result of these expeditions, apart from inspiring in the tribes a sense of respect and awe for British arms, was to transform step by step this *terra incognita* to the north and east of the Brahmaputra valley partially into a *terra cognita*. Every detachment which went into the tribal territory brought back with it some additional information regarding the nature of the terrain through which it passed, the villages which it visited and the dwellings and customs of the tribal people. The importance of the information thus obtained must not, however, be exaggerated. The difficulties of movement in the jungle-clad hill country severely restricted the size of the forces which could be deployed and most of the larger expeditions failed to penetrate very deeply into the hills.

More solid work by way of unveiling the tribal country was done by explorers, travellers and missionaries, sometimes without any Government encouragement. As stated earlier, in 1827, R. Wilcox visited the hills occupied by the Digaru Mishmis. In 1836, Dr. Griffiths covered more or less the same terrain. Nine years later, Lieutenant Z. A. Rowlatt took the route which Needham subsequently followed along the right bank of the Brahmaputra and proceeded as far as the Du within sixty miles of the Tibetan border. In 1851, a French missionary, Father M. Krick, sent to India as Superior of the South Tibetan Mission, set out on foot up the Lohit river with his cross, flute, sextant and medicine chest. He reached a point near Rima in Tibet and visited Membu, a large Padam Abor village, which he certified as 'undoubtedly less corrupt than Paris'. Three years later, however, when Krick paid a second visit to the hills, he and his companion, Boury, were murdered by a Mishmi chief. Almost thirty years elapsed before another long-range exploration along this route was undertaken.

Between December 1885 and January 1886, Francis Jack Needham followed the course of the river from Sadiya and journeyed within a mile of the Tibetan village of Rima, covering a distance of 187 miles. This journey brought out the important fact that there was no trace of Tibetan or Chinese influence among the tribes living along this route.¹⁷ In the meanwhile, the Survey of India had set about collecting information regarding the tribal areas as well as the Tibetan uplands lying beyond, with the help of its native agents, sometimes called 'Pandits'. One of the most remarkable of these 'Pandits' was Nain Singh, who travelled from the western end of Tibet to Lhasa and then via Tsonidzong to Assam (1873-75). His short but reliable report, for the first time made known some of the religious and political realities of the western end of the tribal belt, information which was later elaborated by Bailey, Nevill and Graham. A few years later, another 'Pandit', Kishen Singh, or 'A. K.', surveyed (Greater) Tibet upto the borders of Mongolia, China and Burma, reaching Rima from the east. Rinzin Namgyal explored several side valleys in Sikkim and was the first surveyor to map the circuit of the Kanchenjunga. He also added greatly to our knowledge of Bhutan. As a result of these explorations and surveys, the physical and human geography of considerable areas of the tribal territory came to be much better known than it was half a century earlier, their flora and fauna better understood and the heights and contours of their mountain ranges were henceforth precisely laid down on maps.

It will be a mistake, however, to conclude that the British had promoted these explorations and surveys as a prelude to the expansion of their effective control over the tribal belt. They were, in fact, loathe to undertake such a task. The cost of maintaining normal administrative control over this thinly-populated hill country was considered to be excessive and even punitive expeditions were sought to be avoided, as long as possible, for financial reasons. Nevertheless, long before the end of the century, they had come to regard the tribal belt as broadly but vaguely falling within their sphere of interest. Memories of Ahom overlordship over the tribes had not yet completely faded. New ties with the tribes had been forged.

¹⁷ Assam Secretariat, 1886, File No. 1735-J

In 1876, Sherdukpen chiefs in Rup and Shergaon were invited to attend a Durbar at Tezpur to hear Queen Victoria proclaimed as Empress of India. This is an indication of the fact that the British had almost come to regard at least some areas in Mon-yul as included within their jurisdiction. In 1883, new British maps appeared showing the tribal areas to the north of Assam washed in yellow as was the case with the North Western Frontier.¹⁸ The same colour wash of the tribal areas will be observed in the map published by the Survey of India in 1895, corrected upto 1903, as well as the map attached to the *Memorandum on Native States*, Vol. II, published by the Government of India in 1909.

But while thinking in the terms of a sphere of interest extending over the tribal belt, the British at the same time sought to restrict contacts between the plainsmen and tribesmen as far as practicable. All unauthorised visits to the tribal areas were discouraged and all attempts to encroach on what were considered tribal territories was sought to be stopped. By the seventies of the last century, pressure from the south on the foothills had increased considerably, threatening to erase the line of demarcation between the British administered districts in Assam and the tribal areas. Tea plantations established along the edge of the foothills had begun to spread northward. Traders and businessmen had begun to visit neighbouring tribal hills either to catch wild elephants or to tap wild rubber. These not only meant an interference with the revenue of the Government; they also appeared to be a potential source of friction with the nearby tribes. To bring this unhappy situation under control and reduce misunderstandings to the minimum, in 1873 the Lieut. Governor of Assam, with the approval of the Governor-General, promulgated the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, which brought into being what came to be known as the 'Inner Line'. This Regulation laid down a Line in some of the districts of Assam, beyond which no British subjects of certain classes or foreign residents could proceed without a license from the appropriate authorities. It also laid down rules regarding the possession of land beyond the Line, trade, preservation of elephants and other matters. In the first instance, the Line was laid down only for the districts of Darrang,

¹⁸ Sir Olaf Caroe in *Asian Review*, April, 1963, p. 74. For the map of 1963 see *Atlas of India's Northern Boundary*, published by the Government of India (New Delhi, 1962).

Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Cachar. In 1909, in pursuance of the Indian Government's policy of controlling the Europeans and others crossing into Tibet, a series of notifications were issued prescribing an Inner Line in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup also, prohibiting all persons residing in or passing through them, other than officers on Government duty, from going beyond the Line without a pass from the Deputy Commissioner.¹⁹

Not long after this Inner Line was promulgated, another called the Outer Line, appears to have been drawn for official guidance, though it was not given publicity. This so-called Outer Line was slightly to the north of the Inner Line and ran from the Bhutanese border as far east as the Baroi river (lat. 27° long. 93° 20'). Beyond that point there was no demarcation, but from the Baroi eastwards the boundary is stated to have followed 'a readily recognisable line along the foot of the hills as far as Nizamghat'. There was no Outer Line eastwards of Nizamghat²⁰. What did this Outer Line signify? Sir Lancelot Hare, Lieut. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, writing to the Viceroy in 1910, explained :

We have an inner and outer line. Upto the Inner line we administer in the ordinary way. Between the inner and outer lines we only administer politically. That is our Political Officer exercises a very loose jurisdiction, and to prevent troubles with the frontier tribes passes are required for our subjects who want to cross the inner line.²¹

In other words, whereas the Inner Line marked the boundary of areas where full administrative control had been established, the Outer Line marked the boundary of areas where only loose political control was exercised. In 1880, the Government of India sanctioned the issue of a Frontier Tract Regulation providing for the appointment of Political Officers under the District Officers of Lakhimpur, Darrang and Dibrugarh, to administer justice and

¹⁹ Mackenzie, *op. cit.* pp. 55-56. Assam District *Gazetteer* (Darrang and Lakhimpur, 1950 edition); Aitchison, Vol. II (1909 edition) has a map of the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam showing the Inner Line.

²⁰ I.O. B-180, Memorandum on the North-East Frontier of India, December 3, 1910. The precise points followed by the Outer Line were never defined, but the line had been delineated roughly on a map, prepared by Needham, the first Assistant Political Officer, appointed to deal with the Abor tribes.

²¹ F.D. Notes, S.E., January 1911, Nos. 211-240.

revenue in tribal territories for which the Chief Commissioner of Assam was politically responsible. These Political Officers could tour upto the Outer Line without obtaining special permission and take decisions, whenever necessary, regarding inter-tribal or cognate matters. Not much, however, was done in the succeeding years to achieve full political control over the tribes living between the Inner and the Outer Lines. In September 1907, Sir Lancelot Hare pointed out to the Government of India how this policy of non-interference had failed to redeem the tribes 'from their native savagery', in spite of their proximity to civilisation for more than half a century, and recommended the adoption of more effective measures to bring the tribesmen under active control. The Government of India, however, did not endorse all his recommendations but agreed that

it was desirable to assert British sovereignty over the tract between the 'inner' and 'outer' lines, to prohibit the collection of any kind of blackmail by the tribesmen within the tract, to impose a reasonable poll-tax or house-tax, and to take such measures as could be conveniently enforced for the preservation of forests.

Opposing those who believed in the maintenance of the status quo, Sir Lancelot writing on May 26, 1910, stated that although the Government

has never admitted that it has incurred any responsibility for territory lying beyond the foot of the hills, it has never passed any self-denying ordinances restricting its right to extend in this direction, if it ever thought it desirable to do so.²²

It would, thus, appear that the distinction between the Inner and Outer Lines was not quite as clear-cut and rigid as is generally supposed. The Inner Line was a purely internal boundary dividing the two areas of administration and political control. The lowlanders below this line were administered according to the system which had developed elsewhere in India; the highlanders above the line were, to begin with, to be subjected

²² Foreign Department Notes, S.E., January 1911, Nos. 211-240.

only to a loose political control, but were to be gradually brought under more active control with the passage of time. The Government of India were anxious to avoid the risk of provoking disturbances among tribesmen by too sudden an extension of active control; but extension of active control up to the limits indicated by the Outer Line was a policy which was to be pursued slowly and with caution. Neither of these two Lines, however, constituted the international boundary of north-eastern India, as has been sought to be made out by the Chinese and some of their Western spokesmen. The Inner Line was an internal administrative boundary between two types of communities and terrain, both being under the British control; the outer line, like the Roman *Limes Imperii*, was not the result of any agreement, even an imposed agreement, but a mere voluntary halting place. When the Rules for the Administration of Criminal and Civil Justice in Dibrugarh Frontier Tract were approved by the Government of India, it was expressly stated that only the Line where the frontier tract began need be defined, and that any attempt to fix the outer limit of control might be given up. The time for giving up the voluntary halting place seemed to be fast approaching. Already the British had entered into agreements with the tribes living beyond the Outer Line. Already Indian maps had begun to show the vast tribal belt beyond the Line as belonging to the British sphere of interest. A sudden spurt of Chinese expansionism at the end of the first decade of this century, posing a serious threat to Indian security, impelled the hesitant Government of India, and the even more hesitant British Government in London, to take the next logical step and transform what was in fact a nebulous position into a political reality.

Chinese Incursions 1908-11

The Chinese, who had been moribund for decades and had well-nigh lost what little control they had over Tibet, showed a sudden spurt of energy in the years following the withdrawal of the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa. They now initiated a vigorous forward policy with a view to bringing the frontier districts of Tibet under their control; and when it led to revolts on the part of the tribes in the Marches, particularly in Batang and Litang, Chao Erh-feng, leader of the Chinese forces operating in the

area, suppressed them with such brutal severity that the Tibetans henceforth referred to him as 'Butcher Chao'. Writing about the eastern Tibetans some years later, Charles Bell noted that,

they remember, too, the brutality and sacrilege of Chao Erh-feng's troops in destroying monasteries, killing priests, and perhaps worst of all, in using the sacred books in making boots for the Chinese soldiers.²³

Early in 1908, Chao was appointed Warden of the Eastern Marches, while his brother was appointed Governor of Szechuan in order to support him with funds and munitions of war. In 1909, he invaded Tibet proper. His troops advanced on Chamdo, an autonomous lama-ruled state in close relations with Lhasa, and then marched into Lhasa on February 12, 1910; the Dalai Lama made his escape (as another Dalai Lama did in 1959) across the river down the road to India within sight of the Chinese guards, who had special instructions to effect his capture. Chinese influence in Tibet was, thereafter, strengthened and extended; the principal towns were garrisoned by Chinese troops and Tibetan officials were either deprived of power or superseded by Chinese officials.

About the time that the Chinese consolidated their position in Tibet, they began to intrigue in Bhutan and Nepal so as to be able to resuscitate their former claims to suzerainty over these countries. They also began to concentrate troops in the neighbourhood of the Sikkim frontier. In August, 1910, a report was received from the Kashmir Durbar that a Chinese official from Lhasa had visited Rudok and examined the hills along the boundary, apparently with a view to selecting a suitable site for a fort.²⁴ The British Trade Agent at Gartok reported that the Chinese were about to arrive at that place. At the same time the Chinese had also begun to advance in south-eastern Tibet. They occupied and expelled the Tibetan officials from Sangachu Dzong, an important centre in the country west of Salween, pushed forward still further into Zayul in the basin of the Brahmaputra, and appeared at Rima near the Mishmi hills. In May 1910, the Government of Eastern Bengal

²³ See Bell's letter to Denys Bray, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department. F.O. 228/2962.

²⁴ I.O. Pol. 1380/10.

and Assam reported that information had been brought to Sadiya (Assam) by the Mishmi chief of Tangum to the effect that two Tibetans had come to his village with the news that 10,000 Chinese soldiers had arrived at Rima demanding taxes from the Tibetan Governor; the Governor had refused and was imprisoned. The Tibetans also brought orders from the Chinese to the Pangum Chief to cut a track from Tibet to Assam broad enough for two horsemen to ride abreast. The Chief had refused to obey and had said that he was a British subject. From a statement made by one Halam Miju to the Assistant Political Officer, Sadiya, in July 1910, it appeared that the Chinese had established a firm control over Rima and planted flags at the River Yepuk in the neighbourhood of Walong.²⁵ About the same time, the Chinese were also known to have been carrying on military operations against the Pobas to the north of the Abor country, and Colonel Willoughby, the British Military Attaché in Peking, opined that the success of the Chinese against the Pobas would inevitably lead them on to the Abor hills. Reports of Chinese activities among the Aka tribesmen and in the territory of the Hkampti tribe, lying to the east of the Assam border, were also received. In fact, instances of Chinese 'forward' policy were reported along the whole Tibetan frontier from Gartok in the west to Rima in the extreme east, and also along the entire length of the Yunnan border. There seemed to be little doubt that as far as Assam was concerned, the Chinese were converging upon it from the south-east as well as from the north-east.²⁶

British Reactions 1910-13

Inevitably, the Government of India was alarmed. Two questions needed immediate consideration : first, Chinese intrigues in Nepal and Bhutan, and second, Chinese intrusions in tribal territory. In regard to the first, the Government of India made up its mind speedily, and London informed the Wai Chia-pu through the British Minister in Peking that

²⁵ I.O. Memo (1910), B 177.

²⁶ I.O. Memo (1910), B 180. It appears from Captain A.F. Bailey's Report (Foreign, S.E., January 12, 1912, Nos. 65-92) that the Chinese developed the ambition of conquering, annexing or extending their authority over the tribal area following the success of Chao Erh-feng's invasion of Tibet.

His Majesty's Government will be bound to resist any attempt of the Chinese Government to impose their authority on, or in any way interfere with, these states.²⁷

Almost simultaneously the Indian Government also assured the Nepalese Prime Minister and the Bhutenese King that they would support and protect Nepal and Bhutan in the event of unprovoked aggression from any quarter. The question of the tribal country was a more complicated one. It was clear, however, that the policy of non-interference, which the British had broadly followed in regard to the tribes, could no longer be maintained in the face of the emerging threat from the north and the north-east. A shift in policy was urgently called for. On March 9, 1910, even before the Chinese had begun their intrigues among the Mishmis, Charles Bell had written :

The present position in Tibet had made it more necessary than before to see to these border tribes. If we wait till the Chinese press on them, our difficulties will be greatly increased, and we may be too late to avert the 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.²⁸

It seemed clear that if the British would not go forward, the Chinese would, which would give rise to endless complications in the future. Even if the Chinese did not penetrate deep into the tribal country, it was obvious that if there were a hostile power behind the tribals, whether indigenous or foreign, fomenting troubles among the tribes or impelling them to raid the plains, a very difficult situation would be created, analogous to the one which had vexed administrators for half a century on the North-West Frontier. Explaining the situation to the Secretary of State, the Government of India wrote on 21, September 1911 :

During the past few months there have been further develop-

²⁷ S.F., February 1913, Nos. 1-67.

²⁸ Secret E., January 1911, Nos. 211-240.

ments in the Chinese policy of expansion which it is impossible to ignore. For example, Mr. Hertz's expedition on the Burma-China frontier had no sooner been withdrawn than the Chinese attempted to assert their influence in the country we claim, by the despatch of a party with the usual appointment orders and tokens for issue to village headmen; in April last a party of Chinese appeared in the Aka country close to the administrative frontier of Assam; the Chinese officials at Rima have sent summons to the Mishmi tribal headmen to appear before them with a view to the annexation of the Mishmi country; and Sir John Jordan has recently reported that, in connection with the disturbances in the Payul and Pomed country in south-eastern Tibet the Chinese Government have approved of the despatch of a force down the Dihong river towards the Abor country, a measure which, if carried out, may possibly lead to claims to tribal territory which do not at present exist, if not to more serious complications. Circumstances have thus forced us to revert practically to the original proposal of Lord Minto's Government that endeavour should be made to secure, as soon as possible, a sound strategical boundary between China-cum-Tibet and the tribal territory from Bhutan up to and including the Mishmi country, and this should, we consider, now be the main object of our policy. As long as such tribal territory lay between us and our peacefully dormant neighbour, Tibet, an undefined mutual frontier presented neither inconvenience nor danger. With the recent change in conditions, the question of a boundary well-defined and at a safer distance from our administrative border has become one of imperative importance and admits of no delay, for we have on the administrative border of Assam some of the wealthiest districts of British India, districts where large sums of private European capital have been invested and where the European population outnumber that of almost any other district in India. The internal conditions, moreover, of Eastern Bengal and Assam province are not such as to permit us to contemplate without grave anxiety the close advent of a new aggressive and intriguing neighbour.²⁹

²⁹ Sir Robert Reid, *History of the Border Areas Bordering on Assam 1883-1941*, (Shillong, 1942), p. 227.

There could thus be no shilly-shallying about the challenge posed by the Chinese, and something had to be done without delay. Inevitably, the whole tribal question became a subject of prolonged and anxious consideration among the British policy-makers in India and in England at different levels. Numerous notes, letters and memoranda were exchanged between the Governments Eastern Bengal and Assam, the Government of India and the Secretary of State in London. The General Staff was consulted at every stage, and ultimately a consensus evolved that the question of a definite, delimited, strategic frontier could no longer wait.

But before such a frontier could be worked out, it was essential that the entire tribal country upto the limits of the Tibetan-Chinese jurisdiction must be carefully explored and surveyed. In spite of the explorations and surveys conducted in the preceding decades, large areas of tribal territory had remained completely unexplored. The gaps must now be filled. Accordingly, following Noel Williamson's murder in March 1911, at Komsing in the Abor country, a large expedition was organised under the command of Major-General H. Bower to 'punish the Abors and also to explore and survey the country', so as to 'secure as soon as possible a sound strategical boundary between China-cum-Tibet and the tribal territory from Bhutan upto and including the Mishmi country'. This expedition was really a combination of a number of missions and surveys—the Miri Mission, the Mishmi Mission and a host of surveys which continued their operations till 1913.

Writing to Major-General Bower, Commanding the Abor Expeditionary Force, on September 25, 1911, A. H. McMahon, Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department clarified the political, as opposed to the punitive, aspects of the expedition. The objects of the expedition, he stated, were :

- (1) to exact severe punishment and reparation for the murder of Mr. Williamson and make the Abors clearly understand that, in future, 'they will be under our control, which, subject to good behaviour on their part, will for the present be of a loose political nature;
- (2) to explore and survey as much as of the country as possible and submit proposals for a suitable frontier line between India and Tibet. 'No boundary must, however, be settled

on the ground without the orders of the Government, except in cases where the recognised limits of Tibetan-Chinese territory are found to conform approximately to the line indicated' in the map (attached) 'and to follow such prominent physical features as are essential for a satisfactory strategic and well-defined boundary line.'³⁰

In addition to these instructions from the Secretary, Foreign Department, the expedition and the missions were also provided with a memorandum prepared by the General Staff. The memorandum, while requiring the expedition, missions and surveys to collect such information 'as will enable the General Staff to determine the best military line under the circumstances', emphasised:

It is obviously dangerous to delimit a frontier on incomplete geographical knowledge, and the time for demarcation may come before many years are past. When that time comes we should endeavour to avoid the heavy pecuniary loss which has occurred in past demarcations in other parts of the world owing to inexact geographical expression in the definition of the frontier and consequent delay and constant reference to points of dispute, by being ready with such complete geographical information that vague definition will not occur and that technical accuracy of expression will be assured.³¹

The Abor expedition was mounted towards the end of 1911. It subdued the offending Abor villages and penalised those who were responsible for the murder of Williamson. It is significant that the terms of peace imposed by the expedition assumed the British right to exercise legal authority in the area, for the terms are in the form of British orders to the seven offending or implicated villages. Having finished this primary task, the expedition surveyed the whole Yamne valley, mapped the Shimong river, traced the course of the Siyom and practically established the identity of the Dihang with the Tsangpo.

The Mishmi Mission was sent to the Mishmi hills and there it divided into two columns—the Dibang or Nizamghat column and the Lohit valley column—the former exploring the Sisseri and

³⁰ F.O. 371/1065.

³¹ *Ibid.*,

Dibang valleys and the latter completing the survey of the Lohit valley. The Miri Mission explored large areas between the Dibang and Bhutan. Captain F. M. Bailey and Captain H. T. Morshead mapped the areas drained by the Dibang and its tributaries, crossed the Dibang-Dihang divide in the vicinity of the main Himalayan range, solved the mystery of the Tsangpo gorges, studied the extent of the no-man's land between the Tibetans and the Lhopas, and on their return presented to McMahan a map on which he could draw frontiers which corresponded with ethnic and geographical realities. The General Staff, yet unsatisfied, recommended that more detailed work was necessary in connection with the western section of the frontier. Accordingly, extensive touring to the Aka country up the Subansiri to the Dafla country, and to Tawang, was undertaken by Captain Nevill and his companion, Captain Kennedy, who surveyed over 4,000 square miles of territory including the Tawang valley.

While this survey work was proceeding, certain administrative changes were introduced for dealing more effectively with the frontier affairs. In 1912, the tribal territory to the north of Assam was divided into three sections, the Western, Central and Eastern. The Western Section, concerned with the Tawang region and the western hill tribes like Akas and Daflas, was entrusted to Captain Nevill in 1913. W. C. M. Dundas was put in charge of the Central and Eastern sections, dealing with Abor and Mishmi hills. Near about the same time the work of constructing roads in the Lohit valley and the Mishmi hills was taken in hand, a passable mule road to Walong was constructed between 1912 and 1914, a trading post was established at Kebang and number of military police posts were set up at Walong, Minzang and near the mouth of the Delei river, while the posts which were earlier established at Balek, Pasighat and Kobo were retained and strengthened. Sometime after 1915, the Western section was renamed Balipara Frontier Tract, and the Central and Eastern section as Saidya Frontier Tract.³³

³³ Aitchison, XII, p. 82.

³⁴ These tracts were declared 'excluded areas' by the Government of India Order of 3 March 1936 and were so administered till 1947. These are now known as the North-East Frontier Agency and detailed provisions for their administration were laid down in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India which came into effect on 26 January 1950.

Prelude to the Simla Conference

Meanwhile, the entire political complexion of Tibet and its neighbourhood had undergone a complete change. The Chinese Revolution of October 1911, shook the Manchu empire to its foundations; and its outlying dependencies, long chafing under a sense of oppression, took advantage of the opportunity to assert their independence. In December 1911, Mongolia proclaimed itself an independent state under a new government endowed with authority to manage its affairs independently of others. 'Mongols' it was declared, 'shall obey neither Manchu nor Chinese officials whose administrative authority is being completely abolished'.³⁴ Russia gave her diplomatic and even military support and signed a four-clause agreement in November, 1912, with Mongolia, which amounted to a solemn pledge to assist in maintaining the autonomy of the regime. In Tibet, Chao Erh-feng was murdered by the revolutionaries in December, 1911, and with him the ramshackle structure, which he had built on foundations of force and terror, fell like a house of cards. In Lhasa the Chinese troops, cut off from funds from home, mutinied against the Amban and their officers and resorted to looting and destruction on a large scale. This roused the Tibetans to furious counter-measures, and in many places the Chinese troops were set upon and either put to flight, annihilated or beleaguered. The Dalai Lama, a fugitive in India for well-nigh two years, now returned in triumph to Tibet. In a desperate bid to win his allegiance, Yuan Shih-kai, the President of the new-born Chinese Republic sent him a telegram expressing profuse regrets for the excesses of the Manchu regime and announcing the restoration of the Lama's rank and titles. To this the Tibetan God-King replied that he had resumed the temporal and spiritual authority of his country and as such needed no rank or titles from the Chinese Government. Returning to Lhasa, the first step that the Dalai Lama took was to send strong reinforcements to the eastern front to meet fresh invading armies from China, and although they did not succeed in restoring the frontier as it was in 1910, they did succeed in creating a strong line of defence along the Mekong-Salween divide. 'Within that boundary', writes Hugh Richardson, 'and for nearly forty

³⁴ Peter, S. H. Tang, *Russian and Soviet Policy in Manchuria and Outer Mongolia 1911-1931* (Durham, North Carolina, 1959), pp. 299-300.

years, there was not one Chinese official and no trace of Chinese authority or administration'.³⁵ Tibet like Mongolia became independent.

The British were greatly perturbed by these unforeseen developments, for these raised issues which were infinitely more difficult to solve than the Chinese pressure on Assamese borderland. So long as fighting was going on in Tibet, they kept scrupulously neutral between the Chinese and the Tibetans, exercising their restraining influence on both so as to bring the hostilities to an early end. In December 1911, when the Tashi Lama made a request to the Indian Government for rifles and machine guns and for the appointment of a British representative at Shigatse, he was politely told that the request cannot be acceded to.³⁶ A similar request from Dalai Lama in March 1912, for a British military escort to accompany him to Lhasa was also politely turned down. And yet even before the Dalai Lama had set out for Tibet, the Government of India urged him to exercise his great influence among the Tibetans so as to bring the fighting in Tibet to an early end, save the Chinese from annihilation and allow them to be conducted back to China through Indian territory. The British also gave shelter to the harassed Chinese, officers and men, in their Trade Agencies at Yatung and Gyantse. Finally, it was jointly through the Nepalese and the British intervention that the surviving Chinese troops and officers obtained a safe-conduct to India, from where they were shipped back to China. A number of destitute Chinese who could not leave Tibet, were, permitted to stay back at Gyantse and the Chumbi valley on the clear understanding that they would be expelled if they indulged in any political activity. The majority of them were allowed to settle within the limits of the British Trade Agency at Gyantse on account of the personal interest taken by Mr. Macdonald, the Trade Agent.

Although the evacuation of the Chinese from Tibet, brought about an immediate lessening of tension, it meant no long-term solution of the problems raised by recent events. The Chinese, it was clear, would try to stage a come-back as soon as internal conditions in China or Tibet permitted such a venture. In fact, during the summer of 1912, information was received that the

³⁵ Richardson, *Tibet and its History* (London, 1962), p. 105.

³⁶ Foreign S.E., January 1912, Nos. 208-298.

Chinese were preparing an expedition for the re-conquest of Tibet from the east. As the effect of such a step, if successfully carried out, would have been to produce a situation which experience had shown to be one entailing grave risks to the peace of the Indian border, it was decided that His Majesty's Government must take such steps as might be considered necessary to prevent a reversion to conditions so prejudicial to Indian interests.

The British were also worried by developments in Mongolia, where the Russians had obtained a secure foot-hold by the Russo-Mongolian Agreement of November 1913. This worry was further aggravated by the Mongol-Tibetan Mutual Assistance Agreement signed in January, 1913. The preamble to the Agreement stated that the two countries, having freed themselves from the dynasty of the Manchus and separated from China, had formed their own independent states. The Agreement itself, comprising nine articles, provided for joint consideration by the two states of the well-being of the Buddhist faith, reciprocal recognition and approval of independence, reciprocal facilities for travellers and trade, and mutual assistance against internal and external dangers. In British eyes, these two Agreements (Russo-Mongolian and Mongolian-Tibetan) had indirectly opened up a backdoor through which Russian influence could penetrate into Tibet and nullify all that had been achieved by the Lhasa Convention of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907.

The British view of the situation was ably summarised by Sir Henry McMahon, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, who played a key role in the formulation of Britain's trans-Himalayan policy at this juncture :

At the commencement of the year 1913, Tibet was in arms against her neighbour and suzerain, China ; the Chinese Resident with his escort had been driven from Lhasa, and Tibet had declared her independence. China, on her part, was harrying the Tibetans in the March country and endeavouring by intrigues and force of arms to re-establish her position. Unrest and anxiety on our Indian frontiers followed as a natural result of these disturbances ; our treaties with Tibet and China were rendered of no effect . . .

Moreover, Japanese subjects were resident in Lhasa and had intimate relations with the high authorities there ; Russian

consular students were in training in Kumbum Monastery on the Tibet frontier; a large number of Russian Buriat monks were training the Tibetan troops. . . . The Mongol-Tibet treaty. . . and the Urga Convention. . . gave to the Russians an indirect but real power of intervention across the Mongol-Tibet frontier. . . . The collapse of Chinese power in Tibet and the activities of Russia in Mongolia had caused, indeed, within the last two years a complete change in the status quo in Tibet, which was clearly prejudicial to the interests of Great Britain, in spite of the fact that our geographical position and our extended frontier line forced upon us a closer relation with Tibet than could be claimed by any foreign power.³⁷

There were a number of alternative policies which the British might have followed to meet the situation, but each had its own difficulties and dangers. First, it was possible to build up with Tibet the same kind of relations as with Nepal or Bhutan—to convert it into a thinly-veiled British Protectorate. In 1910, when the Dalai Lama was still a fugitive in India, he had proposed a binding alliance with the British ‘on the same basis as the treaty between India and Nepal’.³⁸ On March 14, 1912, when Lonchen Shatra, the Chief Minister of the Tibetan Government in exile, met Sir Henry McMahon, he asked for British military assistance for Tibet, and in exchange offered to place Tibet under British protection. ‘Tibet’, said Lonchen Shatra, ‘being a religious country, and its owner (the Dalai Lama) being a religious man, it could not exist without having some other power to help and support them.’³⁹ Acceptance of any proposal of this nature would, however, mean assumption of responsibility for another 2,000 miles or so of frontier, enclosing over 500,000 square miles of territory, mostly high, severe, sparsely populated and totally lacking in communications.⁴⁰ It would also mean a severe strain on Anglo-Chinese relations and might do incalculable harm to Britain’s extensive commercial interests in China. What is even more important, it would involve a modification of the

³⁷ Tibet Conference, *Memorandum regarding Progress of Negotiations from 6th October to 20th November 1913*.

³⁸ Tibet Papers, Col. 5240 (London, 1910), Nos. 332, 347 and 349.

³⁹ F.O. 371/1326, No. 14007, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 14 March 1912.

⁴⁰ Richardson, *op.cit.*, p. 104.

Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and thus give Russia 'an opportunity to protest', 'coupled with inconvenient demands' elsewhere.⁴¹

A second alternative open to the British was to help Tibet to achieve a status of a completely independent state. But the British knew that Tibet was not strong enough to preserve her independence without the support of a strong power; and China would resist the stabilisation of Tibetan independence, if she knew that Tibet was alone. There was also the risk of Tibet throwing herself into the arms of Russia in the face of any serious threat from China—an eventuality which it had been one of the primary objectives of British policy in Asia to resist and eliminate. The Government of India noted with some apprehension that the first person to meet the Dalai Lama on his return to Tibet in 1912 was the self-same Russian agent, Dorzief, whose itineraries between Lhasa and St. Petersburg in the days of Lord Curzon, had led to the Younghusband Mission (1904).

A third alternative was to wait for the emergence of another Chao Erh-feng, who would conquer Tibet and convert it into a Chinese province. But the British had already had experience of Chinese military rule in Tibet and would certainly not like to see a repetition of that nightmare. It seemed clear by now that the Chinese in Tibet would not be satisfied with Tibet alone but indulge in intrigues and incursions in territories which were directly or indirectly under British rule.

In view of the difficulties inherent in these various alternatives, the British thought the best course would be to revert to the *status quo ante* when Tibet enjoyed her autonomy within the frame-work of nominal Chinese suzerainty, and to limit the British policy primarily to the achievement of two objectives, namely, to secure the maintenance of peace and order on the Indo-Tibetan border, and to forge closer relations between Delhi and Lhasa so as to ensure that the controlling influence at Lhasa was not overtly hostile to India or to the frontier states. Accordingly, soon after the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa, a message was sent to him by the Government of India, which stated :

The desire of the Government of India is to see the internal

⁴¹ Telegram P. . . dated January 16, 1913, from the Viceroy to the Secretary of State.

autonomy of Tibet under Chinese suzerainty maintained without Chinese interference so long as treaty obligations are duly performed and cordial relations preserved between Tibet and India. They look to the Dalai Lama to do his best to secure these objects.⁴²

Next, about the same time (August 17, 1912) the British Minister in Peking handed over to the Chinese Government a memorandum, which stated :

The British Government, while they are prepared to recognise the 'suzerain' rights of China over Tibet have never recognised, and are not prepared to recognise, the right to China to intervene actively in the internal administration of Tibet which should remain, as contemplated by the Treaties, in the hands of the Tibetan authorities.

The British Government must demur altogether to the conduct of the Chinese officers in Tibet during the last two years in assuming all administrative power in the country and to the doctrine propounded in Yuan Shih-Kai's Presidential Order of the 21st April, 1912, that Tibet is to be 'regarded as on an equal footing with the Provinces of China Proper' and that all administrative matters connected with Tibet 'will come within the sphere of internal administration'.

The British Government 'formally decline to accept such a definition of the Political status of Tibet'.

While the right of China to station a representative, with a suitable escort, at Lhasa, is not disputed, the British Government are not prepared to acquiesce in the maintenance of an unlimited number of Chinese troops either at Lhasa or in Tibet generally.

The British Government request the Chinese Government to furnish a written agreement on the foregoing lines as a condition precedent to extending their recognition to the Chinese Republic. In the meanwhile, all communication with Tibet via India must be regarded as absolutely closed to the Chinese and will only be reopened when an Agreement on the lines indicated above has been concluded.⁴³

⁴² *Documents des Archives des Gouvernement imperial et Provisoire*, Series II, 20, 1.

⁴³ Foreign, Secret E, February 1913, Nos. 170-509.

The Chinese were naturally indignant when they received the above memorandum and for sometime refrained from sending any reply. But the situation could not be left as it was and the British Foreign Office almost decided to send an ultimatum to the Chinese Government that unless an agreement on the lines indicated was concluded within a reasonable time, the British Government 'will regard the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1906 as no longer holding good, and will hold themselves free to enter into direct negotiations with Tibet'. Hints thrown out from the British Legation in Peking, that in the absence of an agreement the British might do in regard to Tibet what the Russians had done in regard to Mongolia, made the Chinese see the danger in the situation, and on January 30, 1913, Mr. Lu Cheng-hsiang informed the British Minister in Peking, Sir John Jordan, that the Chinese Government were willing to participate in negotiations on the basis of the memorandum of August 17, of the previous year.

The Simla Conference, October 1913 to July 1914

A tripartite conference between Tibet, China and Britain was then held in India. It opened on October 13, 1913, at Wheatfield House in Simla, attended by Sir Henry McMahon as the British Plenipotentiary, Ivan Chen as the Chinese Plenipotentiary and Lonchen Shatra, the Prime Minister of Tibet, as the Tibetan Plenipotentiary. The plenipotentiaries were all outstanding men, each in his own way. McMahon belonged to the Political Department of the Government of India and had served on the Commission for the demarcation of the Afghan-Baluchistan boundary and as Political Agent at Gilgit, Chitral and Baluchistan. As Secretary to the Foreign Department of the Government of India for some years preceding the Simla Conference, he had acquired an insight in the problems of India's North-Eastern Frontier which few could rival. 'All who were privileged to work under him', wrote one who knew him well, 'were struck with admiration for his faculty of making up his mind on great matters, of courageously taking decisions and of no less tenaciously maintaining them'. Regarding his two colleagues in the Simla Conference McMahon himself has recorded his opinion in the following words: '...Gentlemen of very courteous and polished manners and delightful to deal with. Monsieur Ivan Chen has the advantage

of long diplomatic training and of experience of European capitals, but as a diplomat he has, I think, met his match in Lonchen Shatra, who is a remarkably shrewd and quick-witted old gentleman more than able to hold his own in discussions and full of recourse.' Charles Bell, who knew Lonchen more intimately than McMahon, wrote: 'Lonchen Shatra had but seldom left his native land. Yet he showed a knowledge of men and a grasp of political affairs that came as a surprise to many at the conference. His simple dignity and charm of manner endeared him to all who met him at Simla or Delhi.'

The proceedings of the conference began with the Chinese and Tibetan representatives inviting Sir Henry McMahon to preside. After an address of welcome to his colleagues and their staff by McMahon, copies of their respective plenipotentiary powers were interchanged and found to be in order. Thereafter, Lonchen Shatra laid on the table the claims of his Government, stressing how the former relations of China and Tibet were like those of a disciple and teacher and how these relations had been snapped by the recent excesses of the Chinese, and claiming for Tibet a frontier which included within Tibetan territory the district of Kokonor and the March country as far east as Tachienlu.

'Tibet and China have never been under each other', he emphasised, 'and will never associate with each other in future. It is decided that Tibet is an independent state and that the Precious Protector, the Dalai Lama, is the ruler of Tibet, in all temporal as well as in spiritual affairs. Tibet repudiates the Anglo-Chinese Convention concluded at Peking on the 27th April, 1906...as she did not send a representative for this Convention, nor did she affix her seal on it'. Further, Lonchen Shatra demanded compensation 'for all the forcible exactions of money or other property taken from the' Tibet Government, for the revenue of Nyarong and other districts which they kept in their possession by force, for destroying the houses and property of monasteries, officials and subjects of Tibet and for the damage done to the persons or property of the Nepalese and the Ladakhis.

When China's turn came, Ivan Chen pegged her claims even higher than those of Tibet. Starting from the premise that Tibet formed 'an integral part of the territory of the Republic of

China', he maintained that the China Government had the right of appointing a Resident at Lhasa with an escort of 2,600 Chinese soldiers and the right to guide Tibet in her foreign and military affairs. So far as the frontier between Chinese proper and Tibet was concerned, he submitted a map which pushed the frontier as far west as Giamda within 60 miles of Lhasa.

There was no meeting point between these claims and counter-claims. On November 18, when the conference met again McMahon explained that it would be futile to discuss other points of difference between the Chinese and the Tibetans until the question of boundary between the two countries was settled. This was agreed to by the two other Plenipotentiaries. In support of the boundary claimed by Tibet, Lonchen Shatra then produced a whole library of evidence—'a large number of original archives from Lhasa, tomes of delicate manuscripts bound in richly embroidered covers ; he confronted his opponent also with the official history of Tibet, compiled by the 5th Dalai Lama and known as the "Golden Tree of the the Index of the Sole Ornament of the World", a work of great scope and colossal dimensions. He also claimed recognition of the Chinese-Tibetan Treaty of 822 and the Manchu settlement of 1727 and announced 'that he would lay on the table original records of each Tibetan estate as far as east as Tachienlu, proving that the lamaseries and tribal chiefs had exercised a continuing administrative control over the country for many centuries, and that they held their lands, collected their taxes and received their subsidies by virtue of their association with the Government of Lhasa'.⁴⁴

Ivan Chen was in utter panic, wrote McMahon, when confronted with this stupendous mass of evidence put forward by Lonchen Shatra, for he had little to produce in support of the Chinese claims. He, therefore, ignored all historical records and treaties and emphasised only the great military successes achieved by the Chinese in the time of Chao Erh-feng. 'He relied on China's position in International Law', he said, 'by which Chao Erh-feng's effective occupation of the country cancelled any earlier Tibetan claim'—a fantastic proposition for the simple reason that if Chao's short-lived occupation could constitute a claim in law, the following Tibetan occupation and assertion of independence

⁴⁴ Tibet conference, Memorandum regarding progress of negotiations from November 21 to December 24, 1913.

should constitute an even better claim in law. Ivan Chen, however proposed that in the interest of expeditious settlement it would be better if both sides, instead of examining every bit of evidence piecemeal, presented consolidated statements of their territorial claims. This was agreed to. The detailed and consolidated statements were then prepared—the Tibetan, of prodigious length, the Chinese, comparatively short and without sufficient documentary backing—and presented to the next session of the conference on January 12, 1914. The differences between the two sides, however, remained as irreconcilable as before and a breakdown seemed inevitable. Under the circumstances both Ivan Chen and Lonchen Shatra requested McMahon 'to suggest some definite solution of the frontier problem which they would refer to their Government without delay'. McMahon, who had anticipated this impasse, had already worked out in consultation with London a solution which was 'likely to afford satisfaction to the contending parties' and at the same time accord with Indian interests. This solution envisaged the division of Tibet into two zones to be called the Inner and the Outer Tibet (as viewed from China) on the lines of Inner and Outer Mongolia created by the Russians. Outer Tibet was to be the wide area, to the east of the historic Yangtse frontier, over which the Tibetan Government had for many centuries exercised complete jurisdiction. Here the Chinese were not to send any troops, nor station any civil or military personnel, nor establish any colonies. But as a symbol of their suzerainty they might install at Lhasa an Amban in charge of Chinese interests. Inner Tibet was to be the broad, peripheral area of Tibet, extending in the north to the Altya Tagh range and in the east to the old provincial borders of Kansu and Szechuan, in which the population was mainly Tibetan by race and religion. China would have full administrative authority over this zone, subject to the proviso that it could not be made a Chinese province and, in the selection and appointment of high priests of the monasteries, control was to vest in the Lhasa authorities. McMahon spelt out this solution in the form of a draft convention and the outlines of Outer and Inner Tibet were shown on the accompanying map.

But the Chinese were far from satisfied. Ivan Chen went on haggling for a modification of the Tibetan-China boundary and of the phraseology of the draft convention. Some of his suggestions

were conceded, but not all—particularly the extravagant territorial demands to which Lonchen Shatra would under no conditions agree. And then on April 27, 1914, in an atmosphere of strain and anxiety, with neither the Chinese nor the Tibetan completely satisfied with the compromise agreement but both equally anxious to avoid a break-down, the revised Convention was initialled by the three Plenipotentiaries and the map signed by the Chinese and Tibetan representatives and initialled by the British. Thereafter, Sir Henry McMahon congratulated the delegates for the excellent work they had done.

On April 29, however, the Chinese Government disavowed the action of their Plenipotentiary and declined to recognise the settlement. Six months of labour seemed for a moment wasted. But the British were obviously prepared for such a contingency. On June 25, the Wai-chiao-pu was informed that 'unless the Convention is signed before the end of this month, His Majesty's Government will hold themselves free to sign it separately with Tibet', and that 'in that case, of course, the Chinese lose all privileges and advantages which the tripartite Convention secures to them....' When the Chinese still prevaricated and came forward with fresh proposals for Sino-Tibetan frontier rectification, and Tibet categorically refused to consider them, Sir Henry McMahon and Lonchen Shatra proceeded to the conclusion of a bilateral treaty between their two countries (July 4, 1914). They also recorded a formal declaration to the effect :

We, the Plenipotentiaries of Great Britain and Thibet, hereby record the following declaration to the effect that we acknowledge the annexed Convention as initialled to be binding on the Governments of Great Britain and Thibet, and we agree that that so long as the Government of China withholds signature to the aforesaid Convention, she will be debarred from the enjoyment of all privileges accruing therefrom.

In other words, the recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet by Tibetan and British Governments and the right conceded to China to appoint an Amban at Lhasa among other things were withdrawn. Tibet was released from the obligation to recognise Chinese suzerainty and British committed herself to the position that she would not recognise Chinese suzerainty over Tibet 'unless

the Chinese Government fulfilled their side of the bargain by signing the Convention'.⁴⁵

In commenting on the repudiation of the Convention by the Chinese Government, Sir Henry McMahon wrote :

The disavowal by the Chinese Government of their Plenipotentiary's action in concluding an agreement is somewhat difficult to explain. I have reasons to believe that the Chinese have obtained all that they really need, and even more than they

⁴⁵ Alastair Lamb in his essay on *The China-India Boundary* writes : 'The July 3 text of the Simla Convention was initialled ; it was not signed and this is no mere debating point'. 'Initialling', he adds, 'can imply no more than that the delegates have accepted the initialled text as the valid text arising from the negotiations. To become binding the agreement would have to be signed and, probably, ratified' (p. 51, f.n. 15). In other words, according to the learned author, the Simla Convention lacks the binding character of a valid treaty because it was only initialled and not signed.

The fact is that while the British Plenipotentiary, Sir Henry McMahon only initialled, the Tibetan Plenipotentiary, Lonchen Shatra Paljor Dorje, put his full signature according to Tibetan custom. The Convention records : 'Owing to it not being possible to write initials in Tibetan, the mark of Lonchen at this place is his signature' (Aitchison, 1929. Vol. XIV, pp. 37-38). And both the Plenipotentiaries affixed their respective seals on the document. As the seal is the most essential part of a valid official document, it is difficult to see how an initialled and sealed document can be different from a signed and sealed in its binding character.

It may be noted further that the declaration by the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries, cited above, is followed by the words :

'In token whereof we have signed and sealed this declaration, two copies in English and two in Thibetan.

'Done at Simla this 3rd day of July, A.D. 1914, corresponding with the Thibetan date the 10th day of the 5th month of the Wood-Tiger Year.

A. Henry McMahon
British Plenipotentiary

(Seal of the British Potentiary)

(Seal of the Dalai Lama)

(Seal of Lonchen Shatra)

Signature of Lonchen Shatra

(Seal of the Drepung Monastery)

(Seal of the Sera Monastery)

(Seal of the Gaden Monastery)

(Seal of the National Assembly)

Are we to understand that the British and Tibetan Plenipotentiaries signed and sealed a declaration in respect of a Convention, which lacked legal validity? (See *Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic*, A Report to the International Commission of Jurists by its Legal Inquiry Committee on Tibet (Geneva, 1960), p. 140).

expected as a result of the Conference. I can only attribute their action to their proverbial inability to recognise finality in any issue. . . . I have endeavoured to meet the views of the Chinese in every possible way, to safeguard their prestige, to restore to them an honourable position in Tibet and an effective buffer state for the provinces of China proper. Any further territorial concessions would be unfair to Tibet, detrimental to ourselves and subversive of the fundamental principles underlying the Convention, which aims at securing a lasting peace in Tibet and on our frontiers.⁴⁶

The Chinese in explaining the reasons for their non-adherence to the Convention referred only to their objection to the provisions regarding the Sino-Tibetan frontier. On July 6, 1914, the Wai-chiao-pu informed the British Minister in Peking: 'It is much to be regretted that *that the boundary, and that alone*, has prevented an agreement, with the consequence that six months' negotiations have proved of barren result', but they 'hoped that future negotiations will result in finding a method of settlement completely satisfactory to all parties'.⁴⁷ In reply, the British Foreign Office informed the Chinese Government on August 8, that 'the Agreement recently reached between the British and Tibetan delegates at Simla represents the settled views of His Majesty's Government on the question, as stated by the British Plenipotentiary at the final meeting of the Conference: His Majesty's Government accordingly see no object in reopening the discussion of questions which have already been exhaustively dealt with and as to which they have come to a final decision. They must consequently decline to re-open negotiations either at Peking or in London except for the purpose of recording the signature of the Chinese Government to the Convention in its present form'.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Simla Conference, Memorandum of proceedings.

⁴⁷ Sir John Jordan, who was in close touch with the Chinese Foreign Office and public opinion, repeatedly stated that if Batang and Litang had been included in Inner Tibet, the Chinese might not have refused to ratify the Convention.

⁴⁸ That the Sino-Tibetan frontier question was the only reason for China's non-compliance to accept the settlement is also borne out by Sir Charles Bell, who assisted Sir Henry McMahon throughout the negotiations and thus had an intimate knowledge of what transpired. Bell wrote :

In the end, Tibet proved willing to accept the British award in order to arrive at a settlement. China remained obdurate, but notified Britain that, except as regards the boundary between Tibet and China, she was willing to accept the Convention in all respects. *Tibet : Past and Present*, p. 157.

The Simla Convention, which was originally designed to be an Anglo-Chinese-Tibetan Convention, thus became an Anglo-Tibetan Convention. It became the basis of relations between Britain and Tibet from 1914 to the date when Britain formally withdrew from India, as also of those between Tibet and India after India became independent on August 15, 1947.

Anglo-Tibetan Boundary Agreement (1914)

Simultaneously with the tripartite negotiations described above two other sets of bipartite negotiations were conducted between Britain and Tibet during these months. The first related to the definition of a boundary alignment between India and Tibet to the north of Assam and the second to a new trade agreement between the two countries. As already stated, a vast mass of material, geographical and ethnic, had been collected by the Government of India in the years immediately preceding the Simla Conference, and on their basis the alignment of the frontier from east of Bhutan to the Isu Razi Pass (at the trijunction of India, Tibet and Burma) was delineated on 1"—8 miles map on two sheets. The broad principle followed in the delineation were the principle of water-shed generally followed in demarcating frontiers in inaccessible mountainous regions. From the Indian side, Charles Bell was entrusted with the task of discussing the boundary with Lonchen Shatra ; and the records available with the Government of India show that from January 15 to January 31, 1914, they considered the proposed alignment with meticulous care in a spirit of give and take. The results of this discussion were summarized by Bell in a letter to Lonchen Shatra dated February 6, 1914, in which both the points of agreement and reservation were clearly indicated. Thereafter, some of these points of reservation were referred to the Tibetan Government. About six weeks later, on March 21, 1914, Bell, writing to Sir Henry McMahon, informed him that the Tibetan Government 'have now definitely agreed' to the boundary alignment 'as desired by us'. This was followed by an exchange of notes between the British and the Tibetan Plenipotentiaries on March 24, and 25. Sir Henry McMahon's note reads :

In February last you accepted the Indo-Tibetan frontier from the Isu Razi Pass to the Bhutan frontier, as given in the map

(two sheets) of which two copies are herewith attached, subject to the confirmation of your Government and the following conditions :

1. The Tibetan ownership in private estates on the British side of the frontier will not be disturbed.
2. If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a day's march of the British side of the frontier, they will be included in Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly.

I understand that your Government have now agreed to this frontier subject to the above two conditions. I shall be glad to learn definitely from you that this is the case.

In reply Lonchen Shatra wrote :

As it was feared that there may be friction in future, unless the boundary between India and Tibet is clearly defined, I submitted the map, which you sent to me in February last, to the Tibetan Government at Lhasa for orders. I have now received orders from Lhasa, and I accordingly agree to the boundary as marked in red in two copies signed by you, subject to the conditions mentioned in your letter, dated the 24th March, sent to me through Mr. Bell. I have signed and sealed the two copies of the maps. I have kept one copy here and return herewith the other.

The note was dated the 29th day of the 1st month of the Wood-Tiger year (March 25, 1914) and bore the seal of Lonchen Shatra. 'The Indo-Tibetan frontier', wrote Bell on March 26, 1914, 'may now be regarded as settled'. The possibility contemplated in Sir Henry McMahon's note regarding Tso Karpo and Tsavi did not arise, as it was later found that both these localities were on the Tibetan side of the boundary.

This mutually agreed Indo-Tibetan boundary has since then been known as the McMahon Line. The Line was later incorporated in the map attached to the proposed tripartite draft convention, showing the external boundaries of Tibet, and submitted to the seventh meeting of the Simla Conference on

April 22, 1914; and although the Chinese Plenipotentiary persisted in his demand for the rectification of the eastern (Sino-Tibetan) boundary, neither he nor his Government whispered a word of objection regarding the line delineating the southern section of the boundary. In other words, the Chinese Government in 1914 acquiesced in the agreed Indo-Tibetan boundary; their objection to it is a comparatively recent development, as a matter of fact as late as 1959.

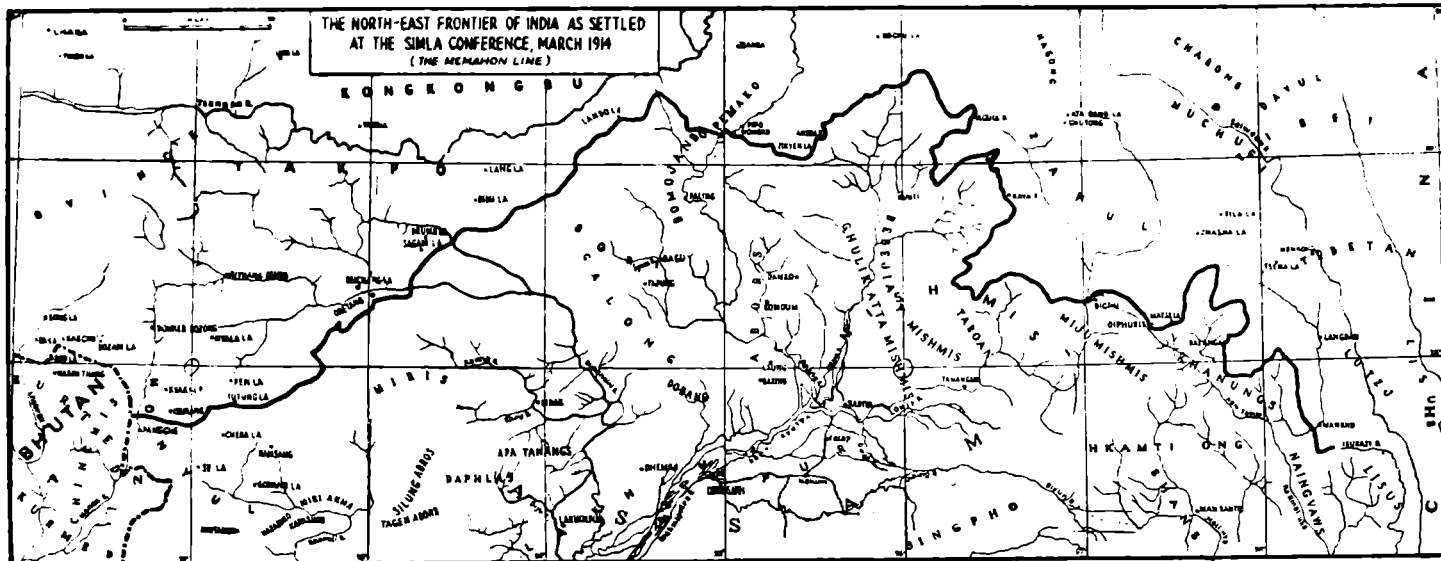
One of the arguments which Communist China put forward in 1959 in justification of her refusal to recognise this boundary is that it was determined by a secret agreement between the British and the Tibetan representatives 'behind the back of the Chinese representatives' and was, therefore, unknown to him and his Government. It is true that the British did not seek the participation of the Chinese in discussing or negotiating the Indo-Tibetan border agreement. But the reasons for this omission are not far to seek. In the first place, past experience had shown that Anglo-Chinese agreements bearing on Tibet were meaningless because the Tibetans did not recognise them and without their recognition they could not be made effective. On the other hand, the treaties which Tibet signed with foreign Powers such as those of 1684, 1842 and 1852 with Ladakh and Kashmir, that of 1856 with Nepal and that of 1904 with Britain were scrupulously observed by the Tibetans. It is, thus, clear that if an effective Indo-Tibetan boundary agreement was to be arranged, it was with Tibet that the British must negotiate, not with China. Secondly, since 1912 Tibet had thrown off the last vestige of Chinese authority and asserted her independence. Although the British continued to work for a restoration of Chinese suzerainty, they knew and recognised this fact of Tibet being an independent polity before and during the Simla Conference. During the prolonged negotiations at the Conference, whenever the status of Tibet came up for discussion with Ivan Chen, the Chinese Plenipotentiary, was reminded that 'the Chinese administrative control in Tibet... has now ceased to exist', and that 'until the seal of the Tibetan Plenipotentiary has actually been affixed to an agreement such as under consideration, the status of Tibet was that of an independent nation recognising no allegiance to China'. Thirdly, Lonchen Shatra's participation in the Conference on a footing of equality with the British and the Chinese representatives, involved

a recognition by the other two participants of Tibet's independent status and treaty-making competence. In fact, it may well be presumed that Lonchen Shatra would have refused to discuss the question of Tibet's frontiers with India in the company of the Chinese Plenipotentiary. Above all, the question of the Indo-Tibetan boundary was not within the terms of reference of the Conference. The British knew that it was a matter to be settled between Tibet and India, and not one for tripartite negotiations. In other words, neither were the facts of the situation congenial to Chinese participation in the Indo-Tibetan boundary discussion, nor did precedents and law warrant such participation.

It was, nevertheless, not the intention of the British to keep back from the Chinese the alignment of the Indo-Tibetan frontier, once it was agreed upon by the two appropriate Governments. On February 17, 1914, McMahon tabled a statement with an explanatory map describing the boundaries of Tibet. While doing this he said: 'Well-authenticated records, both Chinese and Tibetan including the China-Tibet treaty of 822 A.D. and the Chinese maps of the Tang dynasty, indicate historic Tibetan frontiers such as shown by the red line on the skeleton map which I now lay upon the table'.⁴⁹ This same map was incorporated and attached to the draft of the Simla Convention, as stated above, and was signed by the Chinese Plenipotentiary.⁵⁰ In view of the above facts, it is difficult to accept the naive assertion, made by Chou En-lai and repeated by his officials and western supporters, that the agreed Indo-Tibetan frontier was not known to the Chinese Plenipotentiary at Simla or to the Chinese Government then or in the following months and years. The Chinese did not raise any objections about the southern sector of Tibet's frontier because they did not feel concerned about it. It did not touch

⁴⁹ *The Boundary Questions between China and Tibet* (Peking, 1940), p. 88.

⁵⁰ In the Simla Convention map Tibet's outer frontier was shown by the red line and the division of Inner and Outer Tibets was shown by the blue line. The red line (this was the McMahon Line) was continued to show the frontier of Tibet in the direction of north-eastern India. Any one who looks at this map carefully will see that this red line was actually revised, conceding some small territory to China and agreeing that it was not part of Inner Tibet. At both ends of the revised line the signatures of the three Plenipotentiaries are given. Ivan Chen is written at either end so that Ivan Chen not only signed the map but signed also the alterations on the map. Are we to believe that Ivan Chen did not see or understand what he was signing.



The McMahon Line (1914)

any of the territories which China was claiming from Tibet.

The draft Simla Convention and the map accompanying it continued to be under scrutiny and discussion since the last week of April, 1914. In the following months the Chinese came forward with fresh proposals for frontier rectification ; but these proposals referred only to the Sino-Tibetan frontier, not to the Indo-Tibetan frontier. On June 13, 1914, the Chinese submitted a memorandum along with an explanatory map. In this map the red (McMahon) line remains unaltered, the yellow line represents the boundary between Inner and Outer Tibet as originally claimed by the Chinese, and the brown line delineates the compromise boundary as suggested in the memorandum.⁵¹ The fact that even in this map drawn up by the Chinese themselves the red line remained unaltered demonstrates that they saw nothing wrong about it and accepted it without any reservation. In October 1914, the Wai Chiao-pu recorded in explicit language its acceptance of the whole Simla Convention 'except the boundary claims', meaning Tibetan boundary claims against China. Not a word was said about the agreed Indo-Tibetan boundary in the record. In 1919, at the end of the World War I, the Chinese Government, chastened in some measure by their experience at the Paris Peace Conference, as also by the despatches received from the Szechuan frontier saying that their troops were losing ground all along the line, seemed to be in a mood to come to terms with Tibet and settle the Sino-Tibetan problem through British mediation. On May 30, 1919, the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs invited the British Minister in Peking to the Foreign Office and submitted to him new proposals of the Chinese Government for the settlement of the Tibet problem. These proposals were once again primarily concerned with the rectification of the Sino-Tibetan frontier, and their acceptance, would have entailed the transfer of a good deal of 'Inner Tibet' the 'Outer Tibet', including Batang, Litang and Tachienlu territories and the transfer of Derge and the southern portion of Koko Nor from 'Outer' to 'Inner Tibet'. On this occasion also the Chinese did not put forward any claim in regard to territories lying to the south of the Conference map-line indicating the Indo-Tibetan frontier. The conclusion thus seems inescapable that the Chinese either recognised that they could not possibly have any

⁵¹ F. S. E., October 1914, Nos. 134-396.

say in the settlement of the Indo-Tibetan frontier or had no objection to it or were not concerned about it.*

The Government of India's possession of the area to the South of the McMahon Line having been agreed to by Tibet, and not questioned by China in the next two or three decades, a series of Assam Rifles posts were established on selected sites in the mountainous regions, carried out further exploratory work in areas which still needed exploration and extended their administrative control over the tribes, which had for three quarters of a century been a source of worry to the plains of Assam.

The other set of exclusively Indo-Tibetan negotiations, conducted during the Simla Conference, concerned, as stated above, Indo-Tibetan trade. While these negotiations were proceeding, China was never consulted either by Britain or Tibet nor was she made a party when they were finalised in the form of a new trade agreement. The new Trade Regulations superseded the earlier ones of 1893 and 1908, to which China was a party, and led to a considerable increase of Indo-British commercial activity and influence beyond the Himalayas. They also proved beyond doubt that in the British estimation, Tibet in 1914 was an entity capable of altering treaty obligations or entering into new treaty obligations without reference to China. From the fact that the Chinese Government never questioned the validity of these Trade Regulations, it may be legitimately inferred that the Chinese held the same view regarding Tibet's treaty-making power. In fact, the Trade Regulations of 1914 continued to be in operation till they were revised by mutual consent by India and China in 1954.

Legal Basis of the McMahon Line

The legal basis of the McMahon Line has often been questioned in recent years. The Chinese Communists and their spokesmen have contended that the 'Tibetan Local Authorities' had no right to enter into such a treaty because Tibet is, and was at the time, 'an integral part of Chinese territory'. That Tibet was *not* a part of Chinese territory but had acquired the status of an independent polity, in 1914 should be clear from the preceding pages. But was

* In fact, no Chinese Government took any formal exception to the McMahon Line until 1959.

it ever an *integral* part of China, before the Communists forcibly made it into one in 1951 ?

There was doubtless a large element of imprecision in the relationship between Tibet and China before the Chinese Revolution of 1911.⁵² Historically, that relationship had its origins in the time of the Mongol emperor, Kublai Khan, who deeply impressed by the mystical powers of Pak-pa, the chief monk of the Sakya monastery of Tibet, accepted him as his spiritual preceptor, conferred on him the dominion of Tibet and himself became his lay disciple and protector. By the time the Manchus became the emperors of China, the Dalai Lama of Tibet had become the head of the Lamaist Buddhist organisation of Central Asia. The Mongols and the Manchus, no less than the Tibetans, acknowledged his spiritual supremacy and bowed before him as the 'Holy of the Holies'. The Manchu emperors saw the immense advantage of securing the support of the Dalai Lama in tackling their borderland problems and extending Chinese influence in Central Asia ; the Dalai Lama, on his part, did not usually fail to appreciate the personal security conferred on him and his people by the recognition of Chinese protection. In that way a kind of relationship grew up between the Manchus and the Dalai Lamas. That relationship, however, was never formalised in precise, constitutional terms such as, for instance, the British did in defining their relationship with Indian princes or with Sikkim and Bhutan. There was no treaty or exchange of letters between Tibet and China, defining their mutual relations or the precise status of one in relation to the other.

One important consequence of this imprecision was that the quantum of Chinese influence in Tibet was not quite the same throughout the period of Manchu rule ; it varied in proportion to the strength and weakness of the Chinese Central Government and the character and personality of the Dalai Lamas. Throughout the period of Manchu rule, however, Tibet was never considered as or made into a Chinese province (except for a short period of two years under Chao Erh-feng) ; it retained a good deal of its

⁵² Eekelen rightly says that the relationship of the Dalai Lama and the Manchu Emperor was 'mystical, feudal and remote from modern international law' and quotes J. E. S. Fawcett's statement that 'we only darken counsel by trying to cast it into western political or legal terms'. W. F. Van Eekelen, *Indian Foreign Policy and the Border Dispute with China*, The Hague, 1964, p. 138.

autonomy and from time to time fought its own wars, conducted its own external relations, and even entered into treaty obligations with foreign powers without reference to the Manchu protector. The Dogra-Tibetan war of 1841-42 and the concluding treaty of 1842 may be cited as an instance in point. It is true that in the text of the treaty, the 'Khagan of China' is mentioned along with the 'Lama Guru Sahib of Lhasa' as one of the parties to the treaty, the other party being 'Sri Khalsaji' and 'Sri Maharaj Sahib Bahadur Raja Gulab Singhji'. But just as 'Sri Khalsaji', the nominal overlord of Gulab Singh, had nothing to do with the conclusion of the treaty (Gulab Singh having been virtually independent since the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839), in the same way the Chinese emperor had hardly anything to do with the treaty except to accept it as a *fait accompli* after it was concluded. The Tibet-Nepal treaty of 1856 provides another instance of this nature. At the time when this treaty was concluded, both Nepal and Tibet were in strictly constitutional sense Chinese-protected states, Nepal having had acknowledged Chinese suzerainty after her military reverses in 1792. In spite of this common 'vassalage' to the Chinese emperor, Nepal invaded Tibet in 1855 in violation of the stipulation exacted by China in 1792 and, having defeated the Tibetans, imposed on them a humiliating treaty (1856), under the terms of which she obtained extra-territorial rights in Tibet.⁵³ It is interesting to note that in the treaty both Tibet and Nepal affirmed that they would continue to 'pay respect as always before to the Emperor of China'. But this 'respect' apparently did not entail any loss of freedom of action or even the necessity of consulting the Emperor in conducting a war or determining the terms of a treaty.⁵⁴

⁵³ For the English translation of the text of the Tibet-Nepal treaty of 1856 see Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-49. The treaty was signed by the Lamas of the Lhasa Government who agreed to the annual payment of Rs. 10,000 to Nepal and to the admission of a Nepalese representative and a trading-post at Lhasa. It granted extra-territorial rights to Nepal in so far as it provided for Gurkha jurisdiction in disputes between her nationals and joint adjudication of quarrels between Gurkha and Tibetan subjects.

⁵⁴ As Eekelen says, this acknowledgment of 'respect' was an inexpensive safeguard against possible complications but 'could not be a substitute for her (China's) participation in the agreement, so that this text supplied the major argument in favour of Tibet's power to conclude international agreements on her own'. Eekelen, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

The capacity or right of Tibet to conduct what may be called her own external policy, irrespective of the wishes of China, was better illustrated when she refused to accept Chinese treaty-obligations to Britain on a number of occasions in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1876, as an appendix to the Chefoo Convention, Sir Thomas Wade secured Chinese recognition through a treaty of Britain's right to send a mission to Tibet. But when in 1886 an attempt was made to implement this clause of the Chefoo Convention, the Tibetans made it clear that they would not permit a British mission to enter their territory, whatever the Chinese undertaking or however well-provided the mission might be with Chinese passports. And because of Tibetan opposition and China's inability to enforce it on their 'vassal', the Convention on Burma (1886) provided for the countermanding of the proposed Macaulay Mission 'in as much as an enquiry into the circumstances of the Chinese Government had shown the existence of many obstacles' to its fruition.

In 1886 the Tibetans, resentful of British machinations, violated the Sikkimese frontier and sent a small detachment across the Himalaya to occupy Lingtu, well within the Sikkimese territory. The British tried to bring about a settlement of this boundary question through the mediation of Tibet's so-called suzerain, China. The Chinese Government was urged to compel the Tibetans to withdraw its troops within one year. The Government of China sent urgent messages to the Dalai Lama asking for compliance with the British demand. But the Tibetans went their way, disregarding Chinese remonstrances, with the result that in March 1888, a British force, commanded by Brigadier Graham, drove the Tibetans out of Lingtu, pursued them into the Chumbi Valley and then withdrew. These incidents led to the conclusion of the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890 and the ancillary Trade Regulations of 1893. The former defined Sikkim's boundary as the water-parting of the Teesta, recognised Britain's protectorate over Sikkim and provided a joint Anglo-Chinese guarantee of the Tibet-Sikkim boundary alignment. The Trade Regulations provided *inter alia* for the establishment of a trade mart at Yatung on the Tibetan side of the frontier, 'which shall be open to all British subjects for trade', and the residence of British officers at Yatung 'to watch the conditions of British trade at the mart'. But it all appeared to be wasted labour. The Tibetans simply ignored

the Convention and the Trade Regulations, maintaining that they were not bound by them because they lacked their consent.⁵⁵ They refused to open Yatung as a trade mart or recognise the boundary alignment. On the contrary, they stationed their men at Dhankiala and Giagong well within what was regarded as Sikkimese boundary, and there was once again a stalemate.

The stalemate was broken by Lord Curzon. Curzon saw more clearly than most of his contemporaries that the so-called Chinese suzerainty over Tibet was a 'farce', 'a fiction', and a sheer 'political affectation', and that if the Anglo-Tibetan relations were to be put on a sound basis, Britain must deal directly with Tibet and not through her so-called suzerain, China. The Trade Regulations of 1893 had fallen due for revision in 1898, but little had been or could be done to put them into effect. Nor had there been any progress in attempts to demarcate the Sikkim-Tibet frontier. By the end of 1900, evidence also began to accumulate that the Russians were attempting to obtain a foothold in Tibet by establishing close links with the Dalai Lama. Curzon was a keen student of Russian expansion in Asia; and the activities of Dorjiev, the Buriat Mongol, moving to and fro between Lhasa and St. Petersburg, made the Viceroy believe that if things were allowed to drift, Tibet might go the same way as the Khanates of Central Asia had gone. A Russian protectorate over Tibet, Curzon maintained, would constitute 'a distinct menace' and 'a positive source of danger to the Indian empire'. To counteract the menace, was he to seek the assistance of China? 'I would not dream of referring to China in the matter', Curzon wrote to the Secretary of State in London. 'Her suzerainty is a farce, and is only employed as an obstacle. Our dealings must be with Tibet,

⁵⁵ Charles Bell, writing from Gangtok on February 27, 1912, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department stated: 'Between 1890 and 1904 the Tibetans refused to observe the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890. They maintained that the Convention was concluded by Great Britain with China and not with Tibet, and that, therefore, Tibet was not bound to observe it. This attitude during this long course of years the Chinese were unable to shake'. Foreign, E. C., October 1912, Nos. 12-45.

In a telegram, dated March 23, 1912, the Viceroy told the Secretary of State in London: '... in Tibet, Chinese treaties with foreign powers are not valid'. *Ibid.* Even passports given by the Chinese Government were treated with scant respect in Tibet.

and with Tibet alone'.⁵⁶ Referring to the Tibetans, he said : 'Of course, we do not want their country . . . But it is important that no one else should seize it, and that it should be turned into a sort of buffer between the Russian and Indian empires'.⁵⁷ The Younghusband Mission of 1903-4 emerged out of this motivation. As the Mission progressed through Tibet, the Chinese Amban exercised whatever influence he had with the Tibetans to induce them to negotiate with the British and to come to terms. But once again the Tibetans went their own way, disregarding the advice of their so-called suzerain's representative. It was only when the Mission forced its way to Lhasa that they agreed to sign a Convention with Britain (1904), under the terms of which they consented to recognise the Sikkim-Tibet frontier, open trade marts at Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok with resident British agents and exclude other foreign powers from political influence in Tibet. It is significant that the Convention was signed and sealed by Tibetans and British representatives in the presence of the Chinese Amban, but without any Chinese participation. Alan R. Warwick, who had accompanied Younghusband to Tibet, gives the following description of the manner in which the signing ceremony was performed in the famous Potala palace :

. . . the Convention was read out in Tibetan. Colonel Younghusband then asked the Tibetan officials if they were prepared to sign it, to which they all answered in affirmative, and the process of fixing the seals began. The seal of the Council was placed on the parchment, then those of Drepung, Sera and Ga-den monasteries. Then was fixed the seal of the National Assembly.

As soon as it was done, Colonel Younghusband and the Ti Rimpoche left their seats and advanced to the table together. At the same time the Amban and the whole Durbar rose to their feet. The Ti Rimpoche merely touched the Dalai Lama's seal with the tips of his finger ; the seal itself was then applied to the parchment by a monk in attendance. Lastly, Colonel Younghusband affixed the seal of the Tibet Frontier Commission, and thus signed his name, F. E. Younghusband,

⁵⁶ India Office Library, *Hamilton Papers*, Curzon to Hamilton, Letter July 10, 1901.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Curzon to Hamilton, Letter June 11, 1901.

Colonel, British Commissioner. The Convention between Great Britain and Tibet was completed.

Younghusband then gave (M) the document to the Ti Rimpoche and said that a peace had now been made which he hoped would never again be broken.

The ceremony of sealing was repeated for the four remaining original copies. The second one was handed to the Amban as representing the Chinese Government, while the remaining three for the British and Indian Governments and the British Ambassador in Peking were retained by the Commissioner. The whole ceremony lasted an hour and was conducted in the greatest good humour and some laughter during the sealing of the parchments.⁵⁸

It seems clear that none of the participants or witnesses in that signing ceremony in Potala palace on September 7, 1904, considered the conclusion of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention in any way illegal or even extra-legal. The helpful mediation of the Chinese Amban preceding the ceremony, and the readiness with which he received the document after it was duly sealed by the two parties, further prove that even the Chinese did not consider it beyond the power or legal jurisdiction of Tibet to sign a bilateral agreement with a foreign power. In fact, the treaty as signed, and the later Chinese expression of adherence to it by the Adhesion Agreement of 1906, was a clear acknowledgment of Tibet's competence to make treaties, independently of China.

A good deal of misunderstanding of Tibet's historical and juridical status has been caused by the introduction of Western terminology in explaining or labelling what are peculiarly Eastern usages. The Western powers, either because of their inability to comprehend the real nature of Sino-Tibetan relationship or because of 'extraneous policy' considerations, categorised that relationship in terms with which they were acquainted. China, to them was the suzerain, and Tibet, the vassal; and as the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 indicates, nothing would have pleased them more than if both China and Tibet played the rules of the game.

These terms, vassal and suzerain, as is well-known, had grown out of western political experience in the feudal times and had later found a place in text-books on international law. Normally

⁵⁸ Allan Watwick, *With Younghusband in Tibet* (London, 1962), pp. 135-36.

suzerainty is assumed to imply that the vassal state has no relations with other states since it is entirely absorbed by the suzerain. This general definition, however, has always been subject to qualification. In fact, the exact nature of relationship between vassal and suzerain has invariably depended upon the details of each individual case, and examples can be cited from Western diplomatic experience of vassal states which have exercised some of the prerogatives of sovereign states like waging wars, concluding treaties, establishing condominiums over and administering other territories or declaring neutrality when the suzerain was at war. Thus Naples, when nominally under the suzerainty of the Pope, waged wars and made peace without reference to the suzerain. Egypt, a vassal of Turkey, concluded commercial and postal treaties and sent and received diplomatic agents and consuls. In 1888, she conquered the Sudan jointly with Great Britain and later exercised condominium over it without any reference to her suzerain. Bulgaria, a vassal of the Porte, fought in 1885 a war against Serbia independently of her suzerain and entered into direct political relations with foreign powers. At the Peace Conference held at the Hague in 1899 and 1907, she not only sent a separate representation of her own but signed the Acte Finale, although her suzerain was not a party to it. In fact, it would appear that the princely states of British India were the only vassals to have adhered to the textbook definitions of vassalage, while a good many of their kind in other parts of the world enjoyed varying degrees of freedom with no fixed pattern of subordination.

The so-called vassalage in the Chinese imperial system appears to have been more or less notional in character; and more often than not the Manchu emperors left the outlying dependencies very much to themselves in determining the nature of their relations with their neighbours. Describing the foreign relations of the Chinese empire, J. B. Morse writes: 'So far does provincial autonomy go that we shall find in the course of this history that before and for many years after 1834, the Imperial Government struggled hard to keep clear of all contact with foreign affairs and required that their discussion and decision on them should be left absolutely to the officials in the provinces'.⁶⁹ If the provinces

⁶⁹ J. B. Morse, *The International Relations of the Chinese Empire 1834-1860* (1910), p. 9.

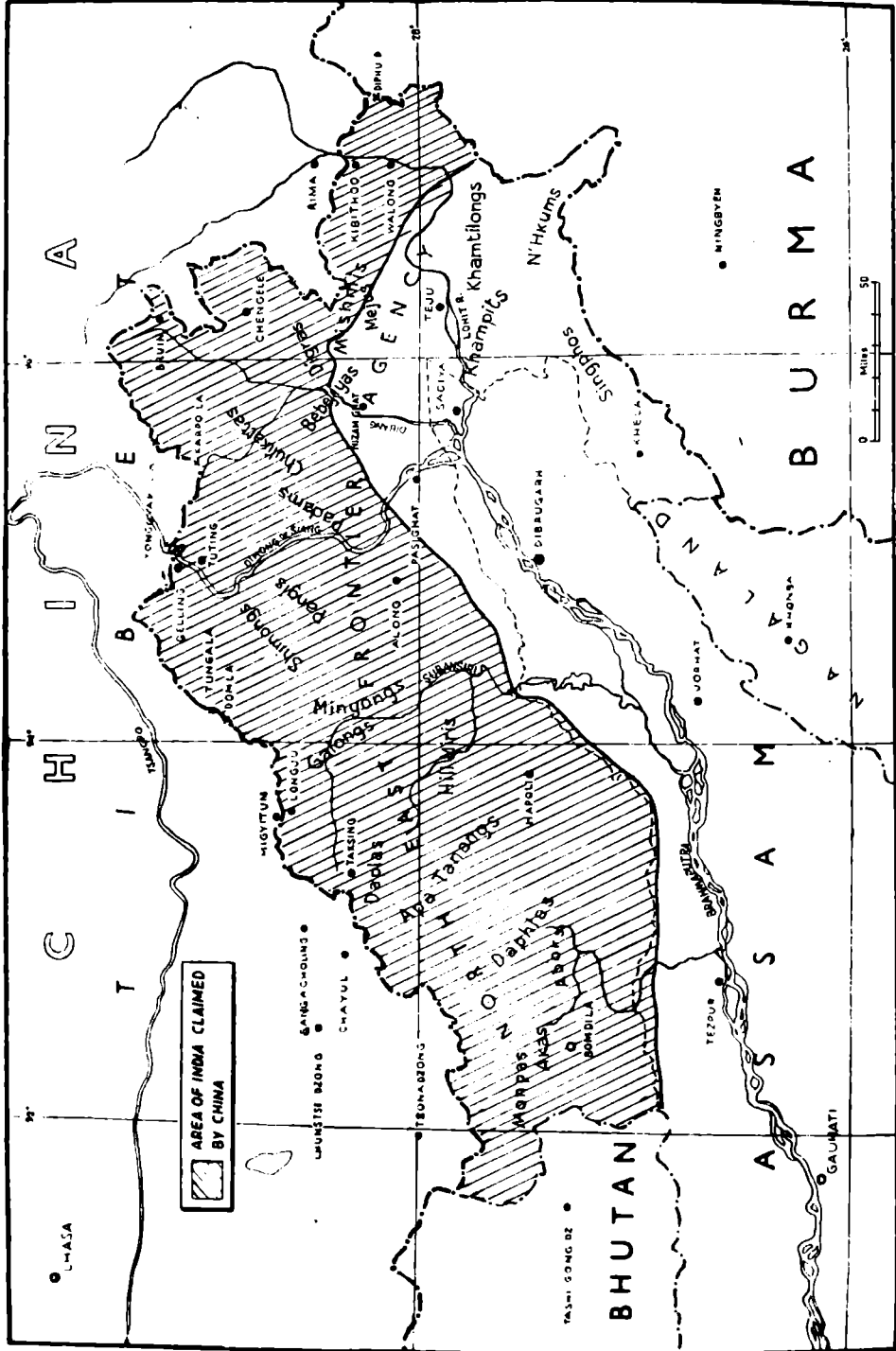
could take decisions regarding relations with foreign powers, it is easy to see why, as Shuhsi Hsu says, it has been the practice of China as suzerain not to interfere with her vassals in their relationship with other nations'.⁶⁰ This will also explain why the Chinese emperors did not register even a diplomatic protest when a dependency like Korea entered into a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Great Britain in 1883 without any reference to Chinese suzerainty, and when Hunza, Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan—all 'officially or indirectly acknowledging allegiance to China—entered into treaties and agreements with Britain without Chinese participation. In fact, the Western concept of a vassal-state being a part of the suzerain for the purpose of foreign relations, involving the vassal's constitutional incompetence to enter into treaties or agreements with foreign powers, was alien to the Chinese mind and incompatible with the usages of their imperial system.

Tibet, as stated above, concluded the Lhasa Convention with Britain in 1904, and China not only recognised it but paid from its own coffers the indemnity of twenty-five lakhs of rupees, which formed one of the terms of the treaty. In 1914, Tibet again signed three different agreements with Britain—the Boundary Agreement, the Trade Agreement and the Simla Convention. In 1926, once again we find the Tibetans sitting round a conference table with a representative of the Government of India and discussing the question of the Boundary between Tehri Garhwal and Tibet. Was it illegal for the Tibetans, representatives to do so?⁶¹ Neither

⁶⁰ Shuhsi Hsu, *China and Her Political Entity* (1926), p. 92.

⁶¹ On the composition of the Boundary Commission and the procedure of negotiations, expert opinion at the time was as follows. In a note dated November 9, 1925, Danis Bray wrote: 'In a case of this sort we had better adhere strictly to the constitutional position. As Tehri has no foreign relations outside India itself, there can be only two parties in the present dispute, viz., the Government of India and Tibet. The Tehri representative will be little more than the local adviser to the British representative. I agree that the agreement between British and Tibetan representatives should be subject to ratification by the two Governments'. Accordingly, on December 11, 1925 the Political Officer in Sikkim informed the Government of Tibet 'that as Tehri is an Indian state under the Government of India, she cannot have direct dealings with Tibet but must act through the Government of India; that the representative of the Tehri Durbar will only come to the meeting as a local adviser to Mr. Acton, the representative of the Government of India; that the representative of Tibetan Government shall have to deal direct with the representative of the Government of India, that all the

INDIAN BORDER—EASTERN SECTOR



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the Tibetans nor the British thought so, nor did any Chinese Government doubt the propriety of this demarcation. In course of the current boundary dispute, even Communist China has referred to these negotiations with approval. It may be good politics, but it is certainly not good logic to rely on Tibet's competence to negotiate the boundary in the middle sector and deny her competence to negotiate the eastern sector.

When India became free in 1947, the Chinese Government took the initiative in asking India whether, on attaining independence, she assumed the treaty rights and obligations existing till then between India and Tibet. It is well to remember that most of those rights and obligations, referred to by the Chinese Government, arose out of treaties and agreements concluded between India and Tibet independently of China. May not one infer from this that the then Chinese Government did not deny Tibet's competence to enter into treaty relations with foreign powers? In 1956 Communist China concluded a new treaty with Nepal, revoking the 1856 treaty between Nepal and Tibet. There was no need for this formal revocation, if Tibet had been considered to have had no treaty-making powers, and the treaty of 1856 was *ipso facto* invalid.

Some Comments on the McMahon Line

The McMahon Line, emerging from the 1914 Indo-Tibet Boundary Agreement, referred to above, covers a distance of about 850 miles. Commencing from the point near the north-eastern tip of Bhutan at $91^{\circ} 40' E$, $27^{\circ} 48' N$, it crosses the Namjang river and follows the Great Himalayan Range, which is also the watershed between the Chayul Chu in Tibet and the Kameng, Kamla and Khru rivers in India, proceeds again east and north-east, crosses the Subansiri river and then the Tsari river just south of Migyitun. From this point it takes a north-eastern direction, crosses the Tunga pass (approximately Long. $94^{\circ} 10' E$ and Lat. $28^{\circ} 59' N$), continues eastward again, crosses the Dihang and ascends the watershed between Chimdru Chi and Rongta Chu in Tibet and the Dibang and its tributaries in India. Thereafter, it

arrangements arrived at by the delegates will be subject to confirmation of the Government of India and the Tibetan Government'. File 368-X, 1927, Nos. 1-54.

runs south to a point just below Lat. 28° 30' and just west of Long. 96° 30', continues in an easterly direction, crosses the Lohit river a few miles to the north of Kahas and a few miles to the south of Rima and joins the trijunction of the India, Burma and China boundaries near the Dihu or Talok pass.

In determining this alignment a multiplicity of factors—historical, ethnic, geographic and strategic—were carefully examined, followed by detailed discussion and negotiations between C.A. Bell and Lonchen Shatra. In the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, which defined the Sikkim-Tibet frontier, the principle followed was the 'crest of the mountain range separating the waters flowing into the Sikkim Teesta and its affluents from the waters flowing into the Tibetan Mochu and northwards into other rivers of Tibet'. In the Simla Conference boundary discussion the same watershed principle seems to have been very much in the mind of the participants. McMahan had agreed that watershed should be used as the frontiers' limit wherever possible, as it is permanent and intelligible to the mind of local tribesmen, and it makes necessary the appointment of any frontier commissions. Ivan Chen accepted the British arguments in favour of a watershed frontier between Inner and Outer Tibet, but suggested that the principle would be better followed if the boundary was along a more westerly mountain range.

In determining the alignment of the McMahan Line, although the watershed was generally kept in view, it could not be applied in toto, as such a course would have carried the Indian boundary far into Tibet. McMahan and his team, while anxious to secure a frontier which would be consistent with India's strategic requirements, did everything possible to keep out of the Indian boundary areas which were undoubtedly under Tibetan rule. The result was that the boundary line, which was ultimately agreed upon by the two governments, was not based primarily on watershed but, as Eekelen has put it, 'on a combination of ridge, watershed and highest crest'.⁶² Despite this regard shown for the Tibetan claims, it has been contended by some writers that the McMahan Line intruded into certain indisputably Tibetan territories, and that justice and fairness demand that they should now be surrendered to Communist China. The areas specifically mentioned in this connection are: (1) Walong (2) Tsari (3) Tawang.

⁶² Eekelen, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

Walong is about thirty miles to the south of Rima. Originally a Mishmi settlement, it was never included in the province of Zayul, of which Rima, as T. T. Cooper said, was the 'Tibetan frontier town'.⁶³ The Chinese seem to have intruded into the area in 1910, and again in 1912, and erected some boundary marks in the neighbourhood. But they left before long and were expelled from Rima and its neighbourhood by the Tibetans in the wake of the Tibetan revolt following the revolution. Were the British bound to respect the boundary marks put up by the Chinese in the course of their short-lived intrusion? 'We are of course under no obligation', said a British Foreign Office note of the time, 'to accept the local Chinese definition of the frontier'.

In the years preceding the boundary settlement, a few Tibetan herdsmen had immigrated into the area, settled in three small hamlets and were suffered to exist by the neighbouring Mishmis 'for the reason that they were useful to them in looking after and pasturing their cattle'.⁶⁴ These three Tibetan hamlets were: (1) Walong (1 house) on the right bank of the Lohit, (2) Tinnai (1 house) on the left bank of the Lohit, and (3) Dong (2 houses) on the same bank. The inhabitants of all these three did not exceed fifty persons.⁶⁵ In consequence of the definition of the frontier agreed upon between India and Tibet, these three small hamlets were included within the British boundary. Did this involve British annexation of territory which was indisputedly Tibetan or Chinese? Writing to the Government of India on September 17, 1913, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam stated:

There was no question about this strip of land until the Chinese came and arbitrarily fixed this boundary at Menilkrai.

Sati is the last Miju village on the right bank of the Lohit, and Sama the first old established Thibetan village. Almost midway between the two is one Thibetan house at Walong, which in the past was allowed to remain through the forbearance of the Mijus to whom this family of the Thibetans was useful as a halting place on the journey to Rima, and also because they kept and pastured the Mijus' cattle. Beyond Walong north of

⁶³ T. T. Cooper, *Mishmee Hills* (London, 1873), p. 208.

⁶⁴ S. E., November 1912, Nos. 599-690; I. O. Pol. 3669/12.

⁶⁵ Note by Mr. Dundas on N. E. Frontier, I. O. L/PS/10/181.

the Namti and between that stream and the Kraoti, there are remains of terraced fields which show that there was once a Thibetan village on the site. These people, it is said, were driven north by disease, and also on account of continual attacks by Mijus who once raided as far as Rima itself, besieging that place. The absence of Miju habitations is accounted for by the fact that there is no soil suitable for 'jhum' cultivation. That the Mijus 'jhumed' the land years ago and occupied it, I have no doubt. The appearance of the land gives colour to this belief. All the cultivable patches are denuded of trees and covered with short 'son' grass, while the steep slopes are thick with pine forests, proving to my thinking that the barer flats are the sites of Miju cultivations, which have been abandoned as owing to the lack of timber the soil cannot recover enough even to be 'jhumed' again.

The names of places, hills, flats and streams are Miju, and these are the names used by the Thibetans who have none of their own for the Yepuk, Namti, Kraoti, Dunai, etc. The first Thibetan name met on the right bank of the Lohit, proceeding north, is Tor Chu. Sama has neither cultivation nor any claims to land south of that stream.

As a matter of fact, the whole area is uninhabited (except for one house of Walong) from Sati stream to the Tor Chu and is a kind of Tom Tidder's ground; belonging actually to the Mijus who, however, for many years have no use for it.

I went into this question carefully when I was in charge of the Mishmi Mission. Just the one visit of the Chinese to Menilkrai and the planting there of their flags, which indicate no boundary line, has given rise to the belief that the land above as far as the Tor Chu cannot be claimed by us.

The Chief Commissioner is of the opinion that Mr. Dundas has furnished strong grounds for the conclusion that the Tor Chu falls within the sphere of the Mijus rather than that of the Tibetans.⁶⁶

A few months later another officer, T.P.M. O'Callaghan, went into the same area and reported :

It appears that after Dundas had returned in 1912, two Chinese

⁶⁶ F. O. 536/16. Enclosure in No. 422.

officials with many followers came down and halted at Walong, and had the post put up. I am enquiring into the matter and have been joined by Walong, Tinai and Dong villagers. One thing is certain and that is that both the local Tibetans and the Mishmis admit that all rivers mapped as "Ti" (M'ju River, Water) have always been M'ju and accordingly British territory.^{66a}

Callaghan accordingly decided to 'remove the posts to beyond the Tho Chu, as up to the right bank is admittedly our territory. This is admitted by the villagers on both sides upto at least the Tho Chu on the right bank of the Lohit and to Kriti on the left bank'.

It may be added that at the Simla Conference, Ivan Chen had denied the jurisdiction of Tibet even over Zayul. 'Zayul', he said, 'is divided into two parts, the upper and the lower, both of which are outside the pale of Tibetan control and are inhabited by independent and barbarous tribes called Miris, Abors and Mishmis'.⁶⁷

We now turn to the question of the Tsari district. That it was a region of special sanctity to the Tibetans, no one acquainted with the past records of the area will deny. Hundreds of Tibetans used to proceed to the region in connection with their two pilgrimages, the Kingkor (Short Pilgrimage) performed annually, and the Ringkor (Long Pilgrimage) performed once in every twelve years. The route of the latter (which was also the longer) pilgrimage followed the Tsari Chu, crossed the ridge above the junction of the Tsari Chu with the Char and Chayul Chu and returned by the Chayul valley.⁶⁸ In other words, this involved a journey of more than two weeks south of the main range through the Abor and Daffla country.

But the mere act of pilgrimage does not impart to the pilgrims or the country from which they come any rights of jurisdiction over the places of pilgrimage. The Hindus in India were in the habit of making pilgrimages to Manasarowar and Mount Kailas, but this has not altered the fact of their being politically parts of Tibet. Captain Bailey noted that 'Migyitun which is down the

^{66a} S. E. September 1915, Enclosure to No. 96.

⁶⁷ Simla Conference Proceedings.

⁶⁸ S. E., April 1915, Nos. 64-65.

Tsari Chu', was the lowest Tibetan village in the valley. This Tibetan settlement (Migyitun) was established, as Lonchen Shatra stated in course of the discussions preceding the boundary agreement, to keep the Lhopas out of Tibet, as these tribes were non-Buddhist and inclined to damage the monasteries and other sacred places. The Tsari district, referred to above, lay to the south of the Migyitun and was entirely under the control of the Lhopa tribes. This is shown by the fact that on the eve of every Ringkor the 'Tibetan Government bribed the Lopas who lived near the pilgrim route with tsampa, swords, salt, etc., in order that the pilgrims may not be molested, in spite of which they still rob the pilgrims and occasionally capture them and enslave them'.⁶⁹ Nevertheless the question of the sacred places in this area was jointly discussed by Charles Bell and Lonchen Shatra during the Simla Conference, and it was agreed: 'If the sacred places of Tso Karpo and Tsari Sarpa fall within a day's march of the British side of the frontiers, they will be included in the Tibetan territory and the frontier modified accordingly'. On further examination, however, it was found that both these places lay on the Tibetan side of the agreed boundary.

The position of the Tawang district was more complicated. It was called Monyul (low country) by the Tibetans; but neither geographically nor racially did it really form a part of Tibet. Geographically, it was separated from Tibet proper by a wild range of rugged mountains, averaging 16,000 feet in height. Racially, the differences between Tibet and the Tawang district were almost equally marked. The bulk of the people living in Tawang, called Monpas, were in dress and manners, race and language, so close to the Bhutanese that in early British records they were often referred to as Bhutiyas. On the other hand, there is hardly any doubt that ever since the establishment of the Tawang monastery in the middle of the eighteenth century, as a daughter house of the famous Drepung at Lhasa, the Monpas had adopted Lamaist Buddhist religion and come under considerable Tibetan influence.

The British possessed very little reliable information either about the geography or political complexion of the Tawang district until Pandit Nain Singh visited the area in 1874-75 on behalf of

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India. Earlier in the century they had seen Monpa tribals visiting the annual trade fair at Udalguri, along with Tibetans and others and, as stated before, also entered into political agreements with some Monpa (Sherdukpen) tribal chiefs called *Sat Rajas* (seven chiefs) by the Assamese. But no British explorer had ever entered the interior of the district and Monyul in consequence had virtually remained a sealed book to the Indian Government. In 1873-75, Nain Singh, disguised as a Buddhist monk, travelled from Ladakh to Assam by way of Lhasa and Tawang. On his way from Lhasa to Tawang he halted at Tsonadzong, which was the administrative headquarters of the district, to the north of the range that divided Monyul from Tibet, as well as an important trade mart through which all trade between Assam and Tibet passed. He noted :

There is free trade between Hor, Lhasa and Tsonadzong, but on all goods to and from the south a duty of 10 per cent is levied at Chukhong or Custom House one day's long march to the south of Tsonadzong. Arrangements are made by the Collector of Taxes that merchants shall not have to pay both ways. The taxes go to the Dzungpon and are remitted by him to Lhasa.

Arriving at Tawang, Nain Singh found that

The Tawang monastery is entirely independent of the Dzungpon (of Tsona) and of the Lhasa Government. . . the affairs of the Tawang district are managed by a sort of parliament, termed Kato, which assembles in public to manage business and administer justice. The Kato is composed entirely of Lamas, chief officials of the principal monastery.⁷⁰

Almost fifty years later (1913), when Nevill visited the area with a Tawang passport, he found Monyul still 'governed by the Lamas of Tawang'. In a report dated 11 November, 1913, he stated :

The people are not ruled by the Jongpen of Chonajong, but

⁷⁰ For Nain Singh's narrative see Capt. H. Trotter, *Account of Pandit's Journey in Great Tibet from Leh in Ladakh to Lhasa, and of his return to India via Assam*, Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, Vol. 47, (1877). See also *Records of the Survey of India*, Vol. III, pt. 1, pp. 178-179.

are under the Towang Kato, a sort of parliament composed of Lamas. . . . The Towang people are very jealous of their trade with Assam and have succeeded in keeping it entirely in their hands. Lhasa traders are not permitted beyond the Chonajong jurisdiction, and all strangers are systematically prevented from passing through their country.^{70a}

It would seem clear from the above that whatever might have been the nature of the influence the Tibetans exercised over Monyul, the Lhasa Government had no direct political authority over the region. Monyul was not a province of Tibet, as is shown among other things by the existence of a customs barrier between it and the Tibetan province of Tsonadzong. Links of a remote and tenuous kind there were between Tawang and Lhasa and these were clearly pointed out by Lonchen Shatra when he discussed the question of the frontier in this sector with Charles Bell. Lonchen said :

“that the Potala Trung-yik Chenpo and the Loseling College of Drepung monastery each get 10 Dotse (1 Dotse is equal to about Rs. 84) from Tawang for the right to send Agents to manage the land of the Tawang monastery, which right they farm out to them considered as the right of private individuals. The Lebrang and Nyetsang get a share of about Rs. 500 together out of the subsidy paid by the British Government annually for the Kuriapara Duar. This the Lonchen requests may be continued to be paid to them. The families of She-wo and Sam-drup Potrang have also got private estates in Tawang which he requests that they may be allowed to retain. The Tawang monastery, established by the 5th Dalai Lama has about 300 monks, although its official strength is about 500. This monastery has got private estates at Dhirang and Takla Jongs which he requests that they may be allowed to retain with the monastery's other income.”

In his reply Bell, told the Lonchen that ‘all proprietary rights (Dak-top) of individual Tibetans on the British side of the frontier will be retained by those who at present enjoy them’.⁷¹

^{70a} S. E. September, 1915, Enclosure to No. 87.

⁷¹ Simla Conference Proceedings. C. A. Bell's note to McMahon dated 21 March, 1914

It is significant that the Lonchen mentioned certain rights enjoyed by individual Tibetans on this side of the proposed frontier but made no reference to any temporal authority exercised by the Government of the Dalai Lama in the area. The inclusion of Monyul within the British frontier thus did not involve any infringement of the territorial integrity of Tibet. It meant an indirect blow to Tibetan influence in Towang ; but influence is not government.

There is no gainsaying the fact that the British were keen to include this area within the proposed frontier for strategic reasons. In his Note dated 1st June, 1912, the Chief of the General Staff had already explained that Towang was

“a dangerous wedge of territory . . . thrust in between the Miri country and Bhutan. A comparatively easy and much used trade route traverses this wedge from north to south by which the Chinese could be able to exert influence or pressure on Bhutan, while, we have no approach to this salient from a flank, as we have in the case of the Chumbi salient.”⁷²

Bell agreed to all the stipulations of the Lonchen regarding the private rights of individual Tibetans in the Towang area because while the inclusion of Towang within the British frontier was regarded as of paramount importance for strategic reasons, it was considered no less important to secure this inclusion in a spirit of give-and-take and by methods of compromise and agreement rather than by coercion.

Some Post-Simla Developments

The text of the Anglo-Tibetan Boundary Agreement and the Simla Convention were published in Aitchison's Treaties in 1929 and the McMahon Line was shown in the maps attached to Volume XIV and in the subsequent official maps issued by the Government of India. In the current Sino-Indian boundary dispute, Communist China has seized upon this lapse of about a decade and half between the conclusion of the above agreements and their publication as an evidence pointing to the malafides of

⁷² PEF 1910/14, General Staff Note on the North-East Frontier, June 1, 1912.

the treaty-makers and the shadiness of their transaction. It need hardly be pointed out that a treaty, concluded in accordance with the recognised procedure, does not become any the less valid in account of its non-publication or delayed publication.

On the question of maps showing the new Indo-Tibetan boundary, Sir Olaf Caroe, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 1939-45, has clarified the position thus :

In the early days of British rule, the external frontiers of India were conceived as lying to the limits of the territory where British writ ran. But on the North-East, in the belt known as the North-West Frontier, there lay beyond the limits of administered territory an agglomeration of tribes owning no master. In such cases it became the practice of early British administrators to exercise in the region beyond the administered border what was known as a 'loose political control'.

'Trans-border agencies' were set up, but it was not until later that the need was felt to show the tribes so politically controlled as excluded from the neighbouring states and included in India.

Thus there was a time-lag in amending the maps. On the North-West Frontier they were amended after the Durand Line was delimited in 1893. On the North-East Frontier, the McMahon Line having been accepted—without a Chinese demurrer—there was a greater time-lag in amending the maps as the First World War supervened and McMahon himself was sent to Egypt in 1914. But the new position will be found clearly set out in Vol. XIV of Aitchison's *Treaties*, 1929 edition. The maps were amended thereafter.⁷³

As in the matter of maps, so in the matter of administration, the British moved slowly. There was in fact no cause for urgency. The Chinese threat had disappeared and the Tibetans were friendly and dependent on British support. Moreover, the difficulties of the tribal terrain and the wildness of the tribes had yet to be reckoned with. Above all, World War I broke out within

⁷³ See P. C. Chakravarti, *India's China Policy* (Bloomington, U. S. A., 1962), p. 136. That it was no part of British policy to keep the Line secret from the interested powers is shown by the fact that Sir Charles Bell included it in his *Tibet Past and Present*, published in 1924.

a few weeks of the Simla Conference, involving the entire British empire and draining the tribal affairs of their erstwhile significance.

Though slow, the British never lost sight of the need for extending administrative control over the entire tribal belt up to the McMahon Line. As early as September 21, 1911, the Government of India in their letter to the Secretary of State had outlined the pattern of policy to be followed in the North-East Frontier :

The question of future arrangements for controlling and safeguarding the area between the administrative boundary and the new external frontier remains to be considered.

We consider that our future policy should be one of loose political control, having as its object the minimum of 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 in the North-West Frontier of India. We admit that as a natural and inevitable consequence of the settlement of the external boundary . . . it will be necessary to take effective steps to prevent the violation of the new external boundary by the Chinese after the expedition and missions had been withdrawn. The nature of the measures to be adopted, however, cannot be determined until we know more of the country. In one part, they may take the form of outposts, while in another, only tribal agreements and arrangements may be necessary⁷⁴

It was clear to the British from the beginning that the pattern of administration in the tribal areas could not be the same as in the plains of Assam. The nature of the terrain and the traditions and character of the people made such difference inevitable. With this

⁷⁴ F. O. 371/1065.

proviso and the need of restraint always in mind, Political Officers in charge of frontier areas began extending their administrative control over the tribes step by step. W.C.M. Dundas, Political Officer of the Central and Eastern Section of the North-East Frontier, states in his report for the year 1917-18 that two years earlier he

brought the large Padam Abor villages, Bomjur, Dambak, Silluk, Mimasipo, Mebo and Aiyeng under administration.... The example influenced the smaller Mishmi villages between the Dibang and Dihong who offered no opposition and began to pay poll-Tax the same year. Next year the process was extended to the Pasi-Minyong and Minyong villages.... During the year under report the remaining Abors as far as the Simen river... have been assessed to poll-tax. Once the difficulties with the Padam Abors was surmounted, the rest was simple.... The people have since the Abor Expedition and the establishment of a post at Pasigat been very friendly, bringing all their disputes to us for decision. The transition in their case was not abrupt, and they had the example of villages infinitely more powerful submitting to taxation.⁷⁵

Captain Nevill, Political Officer of the Balipara Frontier Tract, wrote in his Annual Administrative Report for 1927-28 :

As years have passed by, the Akas, the Dufflas and other tribes have gained confidence and learnt to appreciate the benefits of the new order. The people are increasingly bringing their disputes for settlement and they fully appreciate the fact that their grievances are sympathetically listened to and dealt with when possible.... Nowadays, a constant request from all sections of the hills is to establish a garrison in their country.⁷⁶

Other Annual Reports of the years from 1919 to 1939 show that the Political Officers in charge of the Sadiya and Balipara Frontier Tracts undertook occasional tours, which took them far into tribal territory, where they suppressed crimes, imposed taxes, adjudicated justice and performed other acts of sovereignty. During the same

⁷⁵ Reid, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

period, survey and mapping operations were conducted in some of the less-known areas on the Indian side of the boundary, new posts were established in a number of places along the frontier, new battalions were added to the Assam Rifles and new roads were planned and built in accordance with the availability of funds. Even in Tawang, where the old monastic administration was allowed to continue for about two decades, the British took over in 1944 and established a post of the Assam Rifles at Dirang Dzong.⁷⁷ In the same year, another administrative and defence post, manned by the Assam Rifles, was established at Walong.

In July 1947, both the British and Indian Governments informed the Government of Tibet that after the transfer of power, British obligations and rights under existing treaties with Tibet would devolve upon the successor Government of India and that it was hoped that the Tibetan Government would continue with that Government the same relations as had hitherto existed with the British Government. After some delay, the Tibetan Government announced their acceptance of the offer and in a message to Prime Minister Nehru told him 'that it is the intention of the Tibetan Government to continue relations on the existing basis until new agreements are reached'.

On November 5, 1947, the Charge d'Affairs of the Chinese Republic in India enquired 'whether after the transfer of power the Government of India have replaced the former Government of British India in assuming the treaty rights and obligations hitherto existing between British India and Tibet'. On February 9, 1948, replying to this enquiry, Nehru as Minister for External Affairs and Commonwealth Relations informed the Chinese Ambassador in India that the treaty rights and obligations previously existing between British India and Tibet had devolved upon the Government of India 'from the date of the establishment of the Dominion of India'.

One effect of this devolution of rights and obligations was that the new Government of India inherited the British frontier with Tibet. Conscious of the implications of the rapid political changes which were taking place around India, the new Indian Government set itself to further strengthen and consolidate the administration in the entire tribal belt up to the McMahon Line and

⁷⁷ J. P. Mills, 'Problem of the Assam-Tibet Frontier', *Journal of the Royal Central Society*, 1950.

set up a series of new check-posts so as to be able to keep watch on intrusions from beyond the boundary. There was no protest at any stage from the Chinese side, and when the People's Liberation Army advanced into Tibet in 1950-51, it did not cross the McMahon Line.

The only activity that the Chinese indulged in during the 'thirties and thereafter was to issue a series of maps showing not merely the whole of NEFA but a good part of Assam within the frontiers of the Chinese Republic. The origin of these maps is a little mysterious. Francis Watson in his excellent work on *The Frontiers of China* writes :

Before the liquidation of the last Manchu adventure in Tibet, General Chao Er-feng had proposed to the Imperial Government the establishment of a new Chinese province, Sikang, to extend from inside Szechwan on the west over a large area of Tibet to within a short distance of Lhasa. After the collapse of the Empire the Chinese Government was powerless to give these ideas of partition any substance. But they found their way into a number of maps, not all of them Chinese. In 1928, there were signs of a revival of the project by the Kuomintang Government, which in practice used the mythical extent of the Chinese province as cover for any penetrations which could be made. These may have owed as much to the independent ambitions of Szechwan Governors as to the administration in Nanking. . . . ⁷⁸

But as stated elsewhere mere maps, unrelated to political realities and unsupported by historical evidence, cannot be regarded as a mode of acquiring territory or conferring title to territory which another state has acquired by agreement and occupation. The Government of India was entitled under international law to extend its political jurisdiction over the tribal belt of the Assam Himalaya on the ground that it was in reality *res nullus* and the security of Assam would be threatened if another state such as China had occupied it. As Hall has stated: 'a settlement is entitled, not only to the lands actually inhabited and brought under its immediate control, but to all those which may be needed

⁷⁸ Francis Watson, *The Frontiers of China* (London, 1966), pp. 59-60.

for its security, and to the territory which may fairly be considered to be attendant upon them.’⁷⁹ The right thus conceded by law was in this case further confirmed by treaty, and the absence of Tibetan or Chinese protests for several decades created an effective estoppel to any later Chinese denial of the validity of the Line. It may be added that this legal position has not been altered in the least by the fact that the status of Tibet has been reduced to that of an extinct State owing to Chinese action since 1950 and acceptance of this altered status by India under the terms of the Sino-Indian agreement of 1954. For, international law makes it obligatory on the absorbing State to respect the treaty-obligations of the absorbed State. Oppenheim points out that, according to the principle of *res transit cum suo onere*, treaties of the extinct state concerning the boundary lines, repairing of main roads, navigation on rivers, and the like, remain valid and all rights and obligations accruing from such treaties of the extinct State devolve on the absorbing State.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Hall, *International Law* (8th edition), p. 129.

⁸⁰ See A. Appadorai, ‘Bases of India’s Title on the North-East Frontier’, *International Studies*, Vol. I, No. 4, p. 370; also L. C. Green in *China Quarterly*, 1960, p. 45.

Three

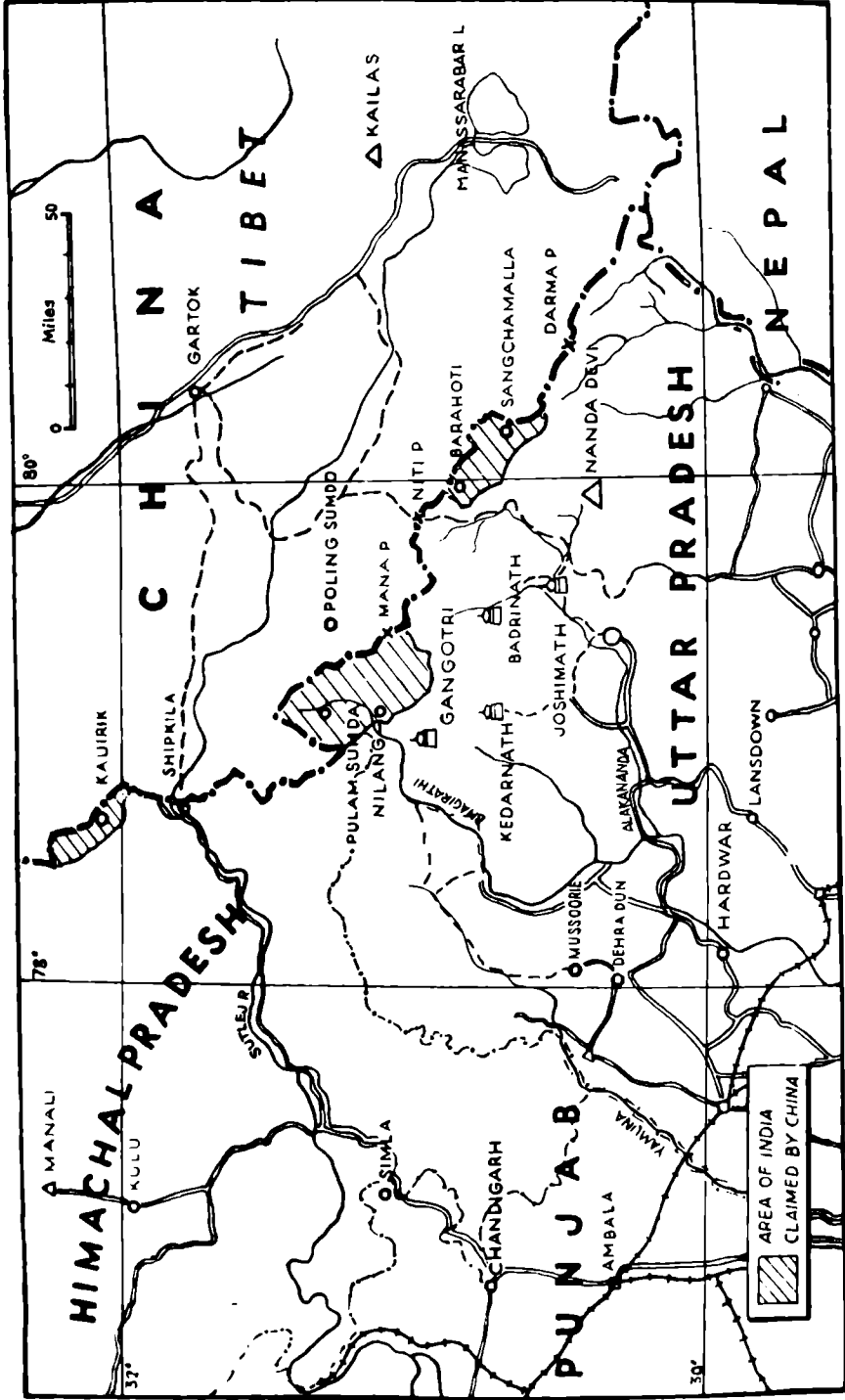
Central Sector

THE CENTRAL sector of the Indo-Tibetan boundary extends from the south-eastern corner of the State of Jammu and Kashmir along the north-east of the Punjab and Himachal Pradesh and the north of the Uttar Pradesh to the trijunction of the boundaries of India, Nepal and Tibet. It is sometimes referred to as the 'Ari Sector', Ari being a corruption of *Ngari Khorsam*, a Sanskrit name for south-west Tibet.

The topography of this sector has two distinctive features. The main axis of Himalayas is here left by the Sutlej and in many parts of it there is a double range of snow peaks, roughly parallel, with the higher peaks mainly in the nearer India-ward range, but the lower range towards Tibet being the watershed. Some of the disputed areas in this region lie in the valleys between these parallel ranges. Secondly, some of the passes across the ranges separating India and Tibet in this sector are comparatively easier than most of those in other sectors and have for centuries served as the traditional routes of trade and pilgrimage between the two countries. The Sino-Indian Agreement of 1954 did no more than set its seal of approval on this age-old custom when it recognised some of these passes as marking entry points into the territory of Tibet.

As stated in the first chapter, the mountainous area on this side of the Himalayan watershed in this sector has from very remote times been occupied by a congeries of Hindu states or chieftaincies, large and small, held by Ranas and Thakurs. As time passed, the smaller chieftaincies, though most of them were in theory independent, acknowledged a degree of subordination to one or the other of the more powerful states in their neighbourhood. During the later half of the eighteenth century, the Gurkhas of Nepal became immensely powerful and extended their dominion from Bhutan in the east to the borders of Kangra in the west. Between 1803 and 1814, they extended their conquests further,

INDIAN BORDER—CENTRAL SECTOR



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overran Kangra and moving south-wards occupied the Punjab Hills as far as the Jamuna.

This phase of Gurkha domination was brought to an end by the Anglo-Nepalese War of 1814-15. Under the terms of the treaty of Segauli, which concluded that war, the territory of Kumaon on the immediate western border of Nepal was annexed to the East India Company's dominion in India while the further areas of Garhwal (Tehri) and the Punjab Hill states were brought under the Company's political protection. In 1815, 1816 and 1819 a series of *sanads* were granted to the numerous Rajas and Thakurs of this area, conferring upon them their states or chieftainships on condition of payment of tribute or *nazarana*, 'for defraying the expenses of protection by British troops', 'allegiance' or 'strict obedience' to the British Government and fulfilment of other stipulated terms.¹ There is little doubt that according to the terms of the *sanads*, the British regarded their boundaries as traditionally fixed and in the aggregate extending to the borders of Tibet.

A few more territorial changes took place along this sector of the boundary about three decades later. On the termination of the First Sikh War, while the British transferred to Maharaja Gulab Singh 'all the hilly mountainous country', the territory between the Indus and Ravi—including Ladakh—Spiti was retained by them in their own hands and was added to Kulu with the object of securing a road to the wool-producing districts of Western Tibet. The British frontier all along this sector thus became conterminous with the frontier of Tibet.

One relieving feature about this sector of the boundary is that the differences between the Indian and Chinese alignments here are not very wide. Only in four specific areas do they diverge from each other. These areas are: (1) Spiti (2) Shipki Pass (3) Nilang-Jadhang (Sang and Tsungha) and Barahoti, and (4) Sangchamalla and Laphthal. The total area claimed by the Chinese in this sector amounts to about 12,000 square miles.

Spiti

Available historical and numismatic evidence suggests that Spiti

¹ For details see Aitchison, Vol. I, pp. 14-45, 71-72, 87-89, 91, 95-97, 99-108, 110; Vol. II, pp. 6-7.

was ruled in very early times by a Hindu dynasty, whose kings bore the surname or suffix of Sena. Later, possibly in the tenth century, it was annexed by Ladakh. It may be inferred from contemporary Ladakhi records that at that time Ladakh not only included Spiti but also the Phare valley to its east. In the seventeenth century when the Tibetans defeated the Ladakhi King, Delegs Namgyal, they seized Spiti but soon returned it as part of the dowry when King Delegs married the Tibetan commander's daughter. From that time until its annexation to Kulu in 1846, Spiti continued to be a part of Ladakh. There are reasons to believe that in the early nineteenth century Spiti comprised all the areas belonging to the villages of Gue, Churub, Kaurik, Shaktok, Karak, Bargaiok and Sumkhel.²

Soon after Spiti came under direct British administration, the East India Company deputed Sir (then Captain) A. Cunningham and Mr. Vans Agnew to demarcate the boundary between it and Ladakh, and their surveys led to 'the mountainous and uninhabited country to the east of Baralacha and north of Parang Passes being attached to Spiti'. In 1849-50, W.C. Hay visited the Spiti valley and in an article published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Vol. XIX, 1850, No. 6) listed the five *Kotis* (circles) of the district, one of them being Chuje. He also named Kurik (Kaurik) as one of the 17 villages under the Chuje *koti*. In the map attached to the article, Spiti valley is shown as extending to a point four miles east of the junction of the Pare and Spiti rivers, corresponding entirely to the present Indian alignment in this sector.

In 1850-51, J. Peyton completed the survey of Spiti on a scale of two miles to one inch. Maps of the Survey of India that followed thereafter, showed the Indo-Tibetan boundary running along the eastern boundary of the village of Kaurik and thence along the watershed between Spiti and Pare rivers. Various revenue settlements of the area followed this detailed survey, and Chuje has always been shown as a revenue-paying *koti* in the Kangra district. There is thus hardly any room for doubt regarding the validity of the Indian alignment along the east of Spiti. Past history and nineteenth century surveys and revenue settlements all support this conclusion.

² This is evident from an administrative order issued by Raja Morub Tanjim of Ladakh for the information of village Gumpas and Kharpoon (Chief) of Spiti, cited in *Report*, p. 72.

Shipki Pass

Here the dispute concerns not merely the Shipki Pass but also areas to the west of it. Whereas India maintains that the Shipki Pass is a border pass, and all areas on its Indian side are Indian territory, the Chinese regard not merely the pass but also the pastures on its west upto Hupsang Khud, as belonging to China.

A number of western travellers went into this area in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and we might well recount their testimony with a view to assess the validity of the two contesting claims. One of the earliest of these travellers was Alexander Gerard, who visited the area in 1818, and again in 1821. Describing his experiences, Gerard referred to the bed of the Oopsung (Hupsang Khud) as containing 'rocks more rugged than any we have seen' and then stated :

From the Oopsung the road was a tiresome and rocky ascent to *the pass which separates Koonawur from the Chinese dominions*, 13,518 feet above the level of the sea.³

At the end of his second visit, Gerard again referred to the Shipki Pass as 'the line of separation between Busahir and Chinese territory', adding that 'there could scarcely be a better defined natural boundary'. He further remarked that 'the villages between Nisung and Shipki once belonged to the Chinese but were given to Busahir many years ago, for the support of the Tusheegung Takroodwara on the right bank of the Sutlej, opposite to Numgea.'

More than twenty years later, Dr. Ch. Gutzlaff visited the same area. Reporting his journey to the Royal Geographical Society in London, he stated :

... we arrive at Shipki, in Lat. 31° 49', Long 78° 44' E on the banks of Satadra (Sutlej) and the first place after crossing Kanawar over high passes exceeding over 15,000 ft. *on the frontier of Hindostan*.⁴

C.D.H. Ryder, who travelled in the Shipki area in December, 1904, wrote :

³ *Account of Koonawar in the Himalaya* (London, 1841), pp. 281-82.

⁴ *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XX, 1851, p. 205.

On Christmas Eve we surmounted our last obstacle, the Shipki La on the frontier—a climb of 5,000 feet, mostly in snow, and a drop of 6,000 feet on the other side camping at Khab in British Territory.⁵

Other travellers in the area, such as E.W. Wakefield, who journeyed from Tibet to India along this route in 1929, also spoke of the Shipki pass as a border pass between British Indian and Tibetan frontiers. It would thus seem evident that the customary alignment in this sector lay along the Shipki Pass, as India maintains, and not along the Hupsang Khud, as China contends. That the area upto the Shipki Pass belonged to British India is also shown by the fact that the Hindustan-Tibet Road was constructed and maintained by the Public Works Department of the Government of India and the road ran up to the Shipki Pass. The entire area up to the Pass was surveyed during 1882, 1897, 1904-5, 1917 and 1920-21 ; and there are records of land revenue settlements dating from 1853, which go to show that the areas upto the pass were assessed for revenue.⁶ The pass itself was known among the Tibetans as 'Pimala' (Common Pass) which proves beyond doubt that it was regarded as a border pass until the Chinese Communists attempted to make it their exclusive possession.

Niland-Jadhang, Barahoti, Sangchamalla and Laphthal

All these places are located in the mountain ranges in the furthest northern districts of Uttar Pradesh. From times immemorial the region as a whole has been regarded as one of special sanctity by the Hindus. It was described as *Kedāra Kshetra* in ancient Sanskrit literature ; and to this day thousands of pilgrims from all over India climb up the mountains to worship at the holy shrines at Badrinath, Joshimath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Pandukeshwar and numerous smaller ones strewn about the region.

Politically, the region as a whole appears to have become a scene of Indian activities from the early centuries of the Christian era. In the seventh century A.D., the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsiang, noticed the existence of a Hindu kingdom flourishing in the

⁵ *Geographical Journal*, 1905, p. 390.

⁶ *Bashahr State Gazetteer, Part A*, 1910 (Lahore, 1911), p. 76.

region, which he described as Po-lo-ki-mo-pon-lo or Brahmanpura. This kingdom, according to the pilgrim, extended over an area of 4,000 *li* and was bound on the north by snow mountains, beyond which lay another kingdom called Son-fa-la-na-kiu-ta-lo or Suvarna-gotra, ruled by a woman. There are reasons to believe that Brahmanpura is the same as Barahot in the Bhagirathi valley in Tehri-Garhwal. There still stands an ancient inscribed rock trident at 'Barahot' as a symbol of its being the capital.

In the eighth century, Hindu Rajas belonging to the Katyuri dynasty appear to have established their authority in the region. According to the tradition, the dynasty had its origin at Joshimath and thence spread out both towards north-east and south-east as far as Almora.

The dynasty was eventually supplanted by the Chand Rajas of Kumaon and the Palas of Garhwal. Ferishta, writing in the sixteenth century about the dominion of the Raja of Garhwal, described it as extending to the north as far as Tibet and containing within it the sources of the Jamuna and Ganges. 'He retains in pay', Ferishta added, 'an army of 80,000 men, both in cavalry and infantry, and commands great respect from the emperors of Delhi'.⁷

Some land-grants of a Raja of this region (Baz Bahadur Chand who ruled from 1640 to 1678) seem to suggest that he invaded Tibet, captured the fort of Taklakhar (Taklakot) and controlled the passes leading from India to Tibet. He had also set apart the revenues of five villages near the passes for the purpose of providing the pilgrims to Lake Manasarowar and Mount Kailas with food, clothing and lodging. Another copper-plate inscription, dated 1667 A.D., records the cession to Raja Prithi Patti Shah of Garhwal by Raja Uday Singh of Bashahr 'the territory upto the Gurtang nala and the retention by Uday Singh for himself the territories above the Gurtang nala on both sides of the Jadhganga and above Gangotri from Nilang Peak to Jallokhaga'.⁸ Jallokhaga has been identified with Tsangchok La on the Sutlej-Ganges watershed; and if this is correct, it is obvious that Uday Singh's dominion included Nilang-Jadhang, which lies to the south of the watershed.

⁷ Briggs, *Ferishta*, IV, pp. 547-49.

⁸ *Report*, p. 79.

A number of revenue records from pre-British days are available, which go to show that Nilang-Jadhang was under Indian administration long before the British sovereignty was extended over the area. Thus, a letter dated 1784 from Raja Jai Kirti Shah to Kardar Gajey Singh Negi of Taknore stated that land had been given to the Jads of Nilang-Jadhang 'at a rent of rupees 20'.⁹ In the boundary discussions between India and Tibet in 1926, this document was produced by the representative of the Government of India and its authenticity was accepted by the Government of Tibet without a demur.

After the British acquisition of Garhwal, Nilang-Jadhang came to be included in the protected state of Tehri-Garhwal. Topographic surveys were, thereafter, made by Strachey, Johnson, E.C. Ryall and others from 1850 onwards, and revenue settlements of Garhwal were made under the supervision of G. W. Traill. Records of the Tehri Durbar unmistakably show that the rulers of this protected state continued to collect revenue from these two villages as before.

Barahoti, Sangchamalla and Lapthal are located in the districts of Garhwal and Kumaon to the south and west of the Ganges-Sutlej watershed. Beyond them lie the three passes of Niti, Tunjunla and Balcha Dhura, which appear to have been traditional border passes connecting India with Tibet in this sector. That the watershed was the traditional boundary in this region is shown by the testimony of some early British travellers and Settlement Commissioners in Kumaon and Garhwal. Thus, R. Strachey, who visited Rakas-Tal and Manasarowar lakes in 1848 stated that he set out from Sangcha on September 7 and ascended the summit of the Balcha Ridge. 'From Balcha pass, 17,490 feet', he added 'we looked down over the part of Tibet we were about to enter'.¹⁰ It is apparent that Tibet lay beyond the Balcha Dhura Pass. This view of the boundary is upheld by Settlement Commissioners. J.O'Beckett, Settlement Commissioner of Kumaon from 1863 to 1873, stated in his report: 'Kumaon District is separated in the north from Hoondes or Thibet by the watershed of the snowy range'.¹¹ Similarly, E.K. Pauw who was Settlement Com-

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

¹⁰ *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, XV, 1900, p. 168.

¹¹ *Report on the Revision of Settlement in the Kumaon District* (Allahabad, 1874), Part I, p. 11.

missioner of Garhwal in 1896, stated that Garhwal 'is bounded on the north-east by that portion of Tibet known as Hundes, from which it is separated by the watershed'.¹² These statements leave no room for any doubt that the watershed was the traditional boundary in this sector, and that Barahoti, Sangchamalla and Lapthal, located as they are on the Indian side of the watershed, belonged to India and not to Tibet.

The British, so long as they ruled over India, stuck to this view of the frontier. In 1889-90, and again in 1914, the boundary of the Barahoti area became a subject of discussion between the British and the Tibetan officials. On the former occasion, Paramanchand Joshi, Deputy Collector of Garhwal, showed on behalf of the British Government, to the Tibetan official (Sarji) at Barahoti an official Indian map and 'explained to him that the British boundary extended along the water-parting from Tun-Jungla, Marhe La, Shalshal pass, and went to Balcha Dhura etc., as shown in the map and that Barahoti was, therefore within British territories'.¹³ In 1914, during the discussions on the boundary, Sir Charles Bell told Lonchen Shatra: 'the boundary between India and Tibet near Barahoti runs through the Tung Jung and Shal Shal Passes'. He also supplied the latter with a sketch-map of the area which showed the watershed boundary in this region.¹⁴ It is important to note that on both these occasions the Tibetan Government accepted the British view without a protest.

In the current controversy between India and China, the Chinese do not appear to have been quite clear in their own mind as to where exactly the frontier lies. They preferred a claim to Barahoti as early as 1954, but said nothing about Lapthal and Sangchamalla at that time. Four years later (October 1958) when they surreptitiously established outposts at Sangchamalla and Lapthal, they still said nothing about the areas intervening between these three isolated localities. In the boundary discussion of 1960, however, the Chinese officials came forward with the contention that not merely these three separate localities but all their neighbouring and intervening areas belong to China, thus magnifying what was originally a claim for a few square miles into a claim

¹² *Report on the Tenth Settlement of the Garhwal District* (Allahabad, 1896), p. 1.

¹³ Quoted in the *Report*, p. 84.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

for about three hundred square miles of territory on the Indian side of the Sutlej-Ganges watershed.

Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan

A few words may be usefully added here regarding the Indian boundary with Nepal and the boundaries of Sikkim and Bhutan, for the Chinese are clearly on the lookout for an opportunity to claim these as their 'lost territories' in the Himalayas. Mao Tse-tung's view of Nepal as a territory of which China had been robbed by 'unequal treaties' was expressed as early as 1939.¹⁵ It is also widely known that the term 'Five Fingers of Tibet', much used by Chinese Communists in their subversive propaganda among the peoples of the Himalayan region, refer to Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and NEFA as territories inextricably linked with Tibet and ordained to share its destiny. No less sinister in its implications is a map of China in Liu Pei-huan's *Brief History of Modern China*, first published in 1952, and re-issued in 1954, and meant for students in the People's Republic of China. This map shows Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam, the Andaman Islands, Burma, Thailand, Malaya and Singapore and the States of the former French Indo-China as 'Chinese territories taken by the imperialists in the old Democratic Revolutionary Era (1840-1919)' and thus indicates them as areas belonging to the Chinese *irredenta*.¹⁶ Chinese interest in Sikkim and Bhutan may further be inferred from Chou En-lai's letter to Nehru, dated September 8, 1959, in which China is declared to be 'willing to live together in friendship with Sikkim and Bhutan, without committing aggression against each other, and has always respected the proper relations between them and India'. The use of the rather peculiar tense structure in describing the relations between Sikkim and Bhutan on the one hand and India on the other is worth noting. Its sinister significance is brought out during the boundary discussions of 1960, when the Chinese blandly refused to discuss the Sikkimese and Bhutanese boundaries with Indian officials. In September 1959, they went so far as to make it plain that they considered Sikkim as an independent unit, regardless of Indian statements

¹⁵ *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party.*

¹⁶ Francis Watson, *The Frontiers of China* (London, 1966), p. 26.

that it was an Indian protectorate.¹⁷ In November, 1966, they 'explicitly pointed out that the question between China and Bhutan is a matter that concerns China and Bhutan alone and has nothing to do with the Indian Government which has no right whatsoever to intervene in it'.¹⁸ There can be no doubt that according to the Chinese an interim period of independence for Sikkim and Bhutan is necessary before the Chinese, 'when the time is ripe', re-establish their authority over these states.

Nepal, it is well-known, is an independent state; and although India is vitally interested in her independence and territorial integrity, at no stage since 1947 has she allowed herself to get involved in Nepal's boundary question with her northern neighbour. So far as boundaries between Nepal and India are concerned, they were fixed with a high degree of precision in a series of bilateral agreements between the Gurkha Government of Nepal and the British Government of India in 1816, 1860 and 1875¹⁹ and the surveys undertaken in accordance with their terms.

Sikkim became a British-Indian protectorate by the treaty of 1817, but the boundary between Tibet and Sikkim was not properly defined until almost towards the end of the nineteenth century. This was done by the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, the terms of which recognised the watershed of the Teesta and its tributaries as the boundary between the two countries. Certain rights of pasturage were still reserved to the Tibetans in Sikkim by the treaty, but it is clear from a later agreement (Regulations of 1893 agreed to by Chinese and British representatives appended to the treaty of 1890) that these rights were not intended to derogate from the competence of the British Government to legislate for the territory of Sikkim.²⁰ Article 9 of the Regulations of 1893 distinctly lays down that '... 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.'²¹ The

¹⁷ See Chen Yi's statement of September 29, 1965.

¹⁸ *Survey of China Mainland Press*, November 1, 1966, p. 24. In June, 1966, the *Baltimore Sun* reported the publication of new maps by China 'which clearly show that Peking claims ownership of Sikkim and Bhutan'. *The Hindustan Times*, June 15, 1966.

¹⁹ Aitchison, Vol. XIV, pp. 65-67, 71-72 and 73-74.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp. 55, 66.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

boundary, thus defined, was surveyed and demarcated along its entire length from Nepal to Bhutan in 1895-96 and in 1902-3 (Survey of India maps NH-45 and NG-45). The Government of Tibet recognised this boundary under the Lhasa Convention of 1904.

Sikkim's boundary with Nepal is a continuation southward of its boundary with Tibet. On the east the river De-Chu or Dik-Chu, rising in Mount Gipmochi, practically separates it from Bhutan. The boundary between India and Sikkim appears to have been fixed in 1835 as a part of the cession by Sikkim of Darjeeling to the British.²² Since then this boundary has been well-understood and accepted by both parties and there is no reason to doubt that the definition of 1835 is still valid today.

Bhutan's boundary with Tibet has never been defined by treaty. The traditional boundary follows the crest of the Himalayan range which forms the main watershed between Amo Chu and the waters flowing into Ram Tso, Yu Tso, Nyang Chu and Kuru Chu in Tibet and the Paro Chu, Punakha, Jhimbu, Tongsa and Bumtang rivers in Bhutan.

As to the boundary between Bhutan and India, a line was agreed to between the Bhutanese and the British officials in 1865 and the demarcation was completed in 1895.²³ Although theoretically acknowledging subordination to the Tibetan Government, Bhutan obviously has had the right to wage wars and conclude treaties without any reference to the suzerain power. This is shown by the fact that the treaty of 1865, by which Bhutan accepted British Indian protection and the boundaries between Bhutan and India were laid, has been observed since then without any Tibetan or Chinese demur. A subsequent treaty between Bhutan and India in 1910, recognised Bhutan's complete internal authority, increased the British subsidy, and confirmed British control over the State's external relations. These provisions were reiterated in the treaty concluded between independent India and Bhutan on August 8, 1949. A small adjustment of the Indo-Bhutanese boundary was also made at the same time.

In their note of December 26, 1959, the Chinese Government told the Government of India: 'Concerning the boundary between China and Bhutan there is only a certain discrepancy

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

²³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 85, 96-98.

between the delineation on the maps of the two sides in this sector of the so-called McMahon Line'. The area, referred to, appears to be about 200 square miles and a part of the Tashigong Dzong of Bhutan, where the villagers have always regarded themselves as Bhutanese, rather than as Tibetans. Tashigong Dzong, moreover, touches the Indo-Bhutanese and not the Sino-Bhutanese boundary. Actually the whole of Bhutan's eastern boundary (including the part referred to by the Chinese) became a subject of joint examination by the representatives of the Government of Bhutan and the Government of India between 1936 and 1938 and their recommendations were accepted by the two Governments.

Four

Western Sector

THE INDIA-CHINA boundary in the western sector is constituted by the boundaries of the State of Jammu and Kashmir (including Ladakh) with Sinkiang in the north and Tibet in the north-east and east. Jammu and Kashmir have always been part of India geographically, culturally and politically ; Ladakh's history is somewhat different. Its political association with India began during the reign of the Mughals in the seventeenth century and has continued since then without a break. An examination of the India-China boundary in this sector, therefore, involves an analysis of the documents relating to the boundaries of the state of Kashmir and Ladakh.

Founding of the State of Jammu and Kashmir

The modern state of Jammu and Kashmir was the creation of one man—Maharaja Gulab Singh. Gulab (born 1792), a Dogra chief of Jammu, had begun his career as a petty official—a *sawar* or trooper—in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but soon attained eminence in the Khalsa court as a brave and intrepid general and was installed by Ranjit Singh as the Raja of Jammu in 1820.¹ In 1821, Gulab Singh conquered first Khistwar and then Rajouri on behalf of his overlord. In 1834, still as a feudatory of the Lahore Court, he sent his ablest general, Zorawar Singh, with a well-equipped force of 4,000 men to invade and conquer Ladakh, the ostensible excuse being that the King of Ladakh had refused to owe allegiance to the Khalsa Court, even after Kashmir had become part of the Sikh empire.² For well over a century and a half, the Ladakhi rulers had acknowledged the suzerainty of the Mughals and the Afghans and had paid tribute

¹ K. M. Panikkar, *The Founding of the Kashmir State* (London, 1953), p. 29.

² Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Kashmir in 1819. The King of Ladakh instead of paying allegiance to the Sikhs sought alliance with the British to forestall the extension of Sikh authority over Ladakh.

to the Mughal and Afghan governors of Kashmir ; and the Sikhs demanded that the same relations should obtain between them and the Ladakhi rulers. In the war that followed, the Ladakhi King (Tshe-pal Namgyal) was easily defeated and then obliged to agree to an arrangement under the terms of which he promised to pay an indemnity of 50,000 rupees and an annual tribute of 20,000 rupees to Raja Gulab Singh.³ A few years later in 1839, Zorawar Singh annexed Baltistan to the Sikh empire, deposing its chief, Ahmad Shah, in favour of his son and levying an annual tribute of 7,000 rupees. Thus by 1839, the Dogras, acting as the feudatories of the Khalsa Durbar, had established their political control over Jammu, Ladakh and Baltistan.

But Gulab Singh's ambitions were far from satisfied. He now began to cast wistful glances beyond Ladakh into West Tibet, partly because Ladakhi rulers had at one time ruled over that area but more because West Tibet produced the shawl wool on the plentiful supply of which the prosperity of Ladakh and Kashmir was so largely dependent. Anxious to secure the monopoly of the Tibetan shawl wool, in 1841 Gulab Singh sent his redoubtable general, Zorawar, into West Tibet with the express purpose of conquering all areas to the west of the Mayum Pass. Rudok and Gartok, the district headquarters of West Tibet, fell in no time. Zorawar now proceeded further along the old caravan route between Ladakh and central Tibet and captured Taklakot at the western extremity of Nepal-Tibet border. In the mean time winter had set in and Zorawar found himself entrapped by the snows which blocked the normal routes of advance and retreat. Nevertheless a strong Tibetan force, arrived by an unusual route, recaptured Taklakot, ambushed and killed Zorawar himself, and then pursuing the fleeing Dogras entered Ladakh and laid siege to its capital, Leh. Leh, however, was saved by the timely arrival of another Dogra force. A peace treaty was now concluded. This treaty, dated September 17, 1842, took the form of an exchange of documents between the two sides. The Tibetan note, incorporating the concessions made by the Dogras, was handed over to Gulab Singh's representatives, while the Persian note, detailing the obligations assumed by the Tibetans, was presented to the Tibetan officials.⁴

³ K. M. Panikkar, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

⁴ M. W. Fisher, L. E. Rose and Robert A. Huttenback, *Himalayan Battleground* (New York, 1963), p. 55.

In both the notes the *status quo ante* was restored. The Dogras gave up all their claims to West Tibet but were recognised by the Tibetans as the lawful masters of Ladakh. The 'old, established frontiers' were re-affirmed and both parties pledged themselves to respect them. The Tibetan text declared :

Now that in the presence of God the ill-feeling created by the war which had intervened, has been fully removed from the hearts . . . there will never be on any account in future, while the world lasts, any deviation even by the hair's breadth or any breach in the alliance, friendship, and unity between the King of the world, Sri Khalsaji Sahib and Sri Mahraja Sahib Rajai-Rajagan Raja Sahib Bahadur and the Khagan of China and the Lama Guru Sahib of Lhasa. We shall remain in possession of the limits of the boundaries of Ladakh and the neighbourhood subordinate to it, in *accordance with the old customs, and there shall be no transgressing and no interference in the country behind the old established frontiers*. . . . Traders from Lhasa when they come to Ladakh shall, as of old, receive considerate treatment and a supply of *begār* (transport and labour). In case the Rajas of Ladakh should (desire to) send their usual presents to the Lama Guru Sahib of Lhasa, this will not concern us and we shall not interfere. From the other side (arrangements) shall continue in accordance with the old customs and the traders who proceed to Janthan (Chang Tang) country shall receive considerate treatment and a supply of *begār* in accordance with the old custom and shall not be interfered with.⁵

In the Persian document, the Tibetans guaranteed that Ladakh 'will absolutely and essentially not be the subject of our designs and intention'. They also promised to maintain 'the friendship between Raja Gulab Singh and the Emperor of China and the Lama Guru Sahib Lhassawala . . . till eternity'. Finally, they pledged that they 'will have nothing to do with the countries bordering on the frontier of Ladakh ; and if any one of the Raja's enemies comes to our territories and says anything against the Raja we will not listen to him, and will not allow him to remain in our country, and whatever traders come from Ladakh shall

⁵ Panikkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

experience no difficulty from our side. We will not act otherwise but in the same manner as it has been prescribed in this meeting regarding the fixing of the Ladakh frontier and keeping open the road for traffic in shawl, pasham and tea⁶

The Ladakhi chronicles tell virtually the same story regarding the content of the agreements of 1842. Ladakh, they affirm, was annexed to the Khalsa empire. 'Everything on the Tibetan side of the border remained under Tibet, that is, the ancient Ladakhi claim to West Tibet was relinquished'. But the trade relations between the two states were to go on as before. 'Ladakhi merchants were to be allowed to travel to Gartok, Rudok, and wherever they pleased, and Tibetan merchants from Chang Tang were to be allowed to go to Ladakh. Everything was arranged exactly as it had been during the time of the former Ladakhi kings'.⁷

Here we must pause and clarify a point arising out of this treaty which has been used by the Chinese to bolster up their expansionist claims. The Tibetan document, cited above, states that in case 'the Rajas of Ladakh should (desire to) send their usual presents to the Lama Guru Sahib of Lhassa', the Dogra masters of Ladakh would not interfere with it. China interpreted these 'present missions' as 'tribute missions' and then jumped to the conclusion that they symbolised Ladakh's political subordination to Tibet. The original word used in the text is *lapchak*, and we know from contemporary sources that the Ladakhi kings used to send these *Lapchak* Missions with gifts to the Dalai Lama and other Lamaist authorities in Tibet. But they were not 'tribute' missions, as the Chinese assert. The 'Lapchak' missions have been referred to in the treaty of Tingmosgang concluded between Ladakh and Tibet in 1684 (to which reference will be made later). But in 1684, the civil authority in Tibet was not the Dalai Lama but the representative of the Qosot Mongol Khan. If *lapchak* had any political

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

⁷ Fisher etc., *op. cit.*, p. 53. The Chinese have since 1959 cast doubt on the validity of these agreements claiming that Peking never ratified them. (White Paper II, p. 28) 'But in view of the apparent continued observance of the 1842 arrangements by the Government of Tibet, which China certainly administered at this period, and its citation in the discussions of 1851-52, China would appear to be estopped from denying the binding force of her officers' signature'. See *International and Comparative Law*, Vol. IX, January, 1960, p. 121, fn. 86.

significance, as the Chinese say it had, it should have gone to him and not to the Dalai Lama in 1684. The fact is that *lapchak* had no political significance. It was essentially a commercial-religious mission, which signified, if anything, the acceptance or recognition by Ladakh of the spiritual authority of the Dalai Lama. It is important to bear in mind that just as Ladakh sent *lapchak* missions to Lhasa with gifts for the Dalai Lama, the Tibetans sent *chaba* missions to Leh with gifts for the Ladakhi king.⁸ It is equally important to note that the Treaty of Tingmosgang, which refers to or created these missions, was an agreement under the terms of which Ladakh accepted the political suzerainty of the Mughal emperor.

By the time the treaty of 1842 was concluded, Ranjit Singh had been dead for over three years, and the Sikh empire, had begun to manifest symptoms of decay and disintegration. Intrigues became the order of the day—intrigues which led to the First Anglo-Sikh War in 1845-46. This short-lived war was followed by two important treaties—the Treaty of Lahore (March 9, 1846) and the Treaty of Amritsar (March 16, 1846). Under the terms of the first, Maharaja Dalip Singh (1743-49), successor to Ranjit Singh, ceded to the British, as the equivalent of an amnesty of 10 million rupees, 'all his forts, rights and interests in the hill countries, which are situated between the river Bias and the Indus including the provinces of Kashmir and Hazara' (Art. 4). The treaty also provided that 'in consideration of the services rendered by Raja Gulab Singh. . . towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between Lahore and British Government, the Maharaja hereby agrees to recognise the independent sovereignty of Raja Gulab Singh in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Raja Gulab Singh by separate agreement between himself and British Government, with the dependencies thereof. . . .' (Art. 12)⁹

The second treaty was the 'separate agreement' between Raja Gulab Singh and the British Government, referred to above. Under Article I of this treaty, the British Government transferred

⁸ *Report* (1961), p. 59; Fisher etc., *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41; *International Studies*, III, January 1962, pp. 282, 285.

⁹ Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, relating to India and the Neighbouring Countries*, 5th edition (revised and continued upto 1929) Government of India, Calcutta, 1931, Vol. I. p. 51.

and made over, 'for ever, in independent possession, to Maharaja Gulab Singh and the heirs male of his body, all the hilly and mountainous country, its dependencies, situated to the eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravi, including Chamba and excluding Lahul, being part of the territory ceded to the British Government by the Lahore State, according to the provisions of Article 4 of the treaty of Lahore'. The areas specified subsequently for retention by the British included Spiti (Piti), Lahul and Kangra Fort, described as the 'key to the Himalayas'. Under Article 9 of the same treaty the British also promised to assist the Maharaja 'in protecting the territories from external enemies'. In return, the Maharaja acknowledged the supremacy of the British Government and in token of such acknowledgement promised to present annually to the latter 'one horse, twelve perfect shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Kashmir shawls'. Thus was the vassal state of Jammu and Kashmir established in 1846 under British protection. Three years later, as a result of the second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849, the remnant of the Sikh state was swept away and Punjab was annexed to the British empire in India. Sind had already been conquered in 1843. The annexation of Sind and the Punjab advanced the British administrative boundary across the Indus and made it conterminous with the territories of the Baluch and Pathan tribes. British territory also became fully conterminous with that of Gulab Singh on the north, and through him with Chinese Turkestan.

Ladakh and Kashmir—Their Relations

In the discussion with Indian officials the Chinese repeatedly claimed that Ladakh was part of Tibet till the middle of the nineteenth century. This claim is contradicted by all the known facts of history. Ladakh's early history is shrouded in mystery, but the discovery of numerous Indian inscriptions in Ladakh, some dating back to second or third century B.C., testifies to the wide-spread contacts that existed between it and the Indo-Aryan culture of Kashmir and the plains of northern India. Probably in or around the seventh century A.D., Ladakh was occupied by the Tibetans. From about the seventh to the tenth century, Tibet was ruled by a series of powerful kings and under

their leadership the Tibetans conquered territories far and wide extending from Baltistan, Gilgit and Turkestan on the west to Kansu and Szechuan on the east. During this phase even the Emperor of China had to bow before the might of Tibet and agreed to pay an annual tribute to the Tibetan king.

By the tenth century, however, the period of Tibet's military greatness was over and she became involved in protracted internal troubles. Around 900 A.D., Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon, a descendant of one branch of the old Tibetan dynasty, fleeing from Central Tibet, established an independent kingdom for himself which comprised West Tibet and Ladakh in the west and Zanskar, Spiti and Lahul in the south. Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon died about 930 A.D., but before his death he had divided his kingdom among his three sons. According to the Ladakhi chronicles, in this division the third son (De-tsuk-gon) got Zanskar, Spiti and Lahul, the second (Tra-shi-gon) obtained Guge and Prang, and the eldest (Pal-gyi-gon) received :

- (1) Mar-yul (Ladakh)
- (2) Mnah-ris
- (3) Ru-thogs of the east and the gold mine of Hgog
- (4) De-mchog-kar-po
- (5) Ra-ba-dmar-po at the frontier
- (6) Wam-le to the top of the Yi-mig rock
- (7) to the west to the foot of the Kashmir pass
- (8) to the north to the gold mine of Hgog and
- (9) all the places belonging to Rgya.

Most of the place-names, mentioned above, can be identified without much difficulty. Mar-yul is the common Tibetan name for the Leh district in Ladakh; Mnah-ris, although now restricted to West Tibet, referred in old days to the entire territory between the Zoji and Mayum passes;¹⁰ Ru-thogs is Rudok, the Tibetan district north of Gartok; De-mchog-kar-po is Demchok, and Wam-le is identified with Hanle, slightly north-west of Demchok; Yi-mig is the same as the Imis Pass south of Hanle, shown on Indian maps as the boundary between Ladakh and Tibet; the

¹⁰ Francke, A. H., "Antiquities of Indian Tibet", *Archaeological Survey of India*, II, pp. 91, 93-94.

Kashmir Pass is no other than the Zoji La, which joins Kashmir with Ladakh; Rgya is the frontier town between Ladakh and Rupshu district, situated between Ladakh, Lahul and Spiti. Only two place-names—Ra-ba-dmor-po and Hgog—have not been properly identified. But Zahiruddin Ahmad has advanced strong reasons to show that the former may be identified with Rabma, a place halfway between Rudak and Spanggur and somewhat east of the frontier presently claimed by India.¹¹ Regarding Hgog the same author has advanced sufficient evidence to show its identification with the upper valley of Yarkand in the region of Cighnam and Gilgit.¹²

This tenth century division of King Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon's kingdom into three parts is not without relevance to the current dispute between India and China. *It is the first known document which lays down a boundary between Ladakh and Guge* (West Tibet), the dividing line being set at Ra-dmar-po, Demchok and Imis Pass. In later agreements and treaties, as those of 1684 and 1842 reference, has been made to 'old, established' and 'traditional' frontier between Ladakh and Tibet without any detailed specification. It seems reasonable to believe that this 'old, established' and 'traditional' frontier was the same as set forth in King Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon's partition in the tenth century. The signatories of 1684 and 1842 treaties did not consider it necessary to specify details of the boundary because by the time these later treaties were concluded the tenth century boundary was well-established and had become 'traditional'. It should be noted that broadly speaking 'the Indian idea of the Ladakh-Tibet boundary from the Lanak Pass in the north to the Imis Pass in the south conforms essentially with the boundary defined in the ancient Ladakhi Chronicles, as far as the main identification points are concerned. The one possible exception is Ra-ba-dmar-po, and in this instance, the deviation appears to be in favour of Tibet rather than Ladakh.'¹³

Ladakhi Chronicles dealing with the history of the period following the death of Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon are none too clear. By and large they present a picture of alternating fortunes and

¹¹ See Z. Ahmad, "The Ancient Frontier of Ladakh" in the *World Today*, XVI, July, 1960, pp. 314-315; also *St. Anthony's Papers*, XIV, p. 38.

¹² *St. Anthony's Papers*, XIV, pp. 37-38. See also Fisher etc., *op.cit.*, pp. 18-20.

¹³ Fisher etc., *op.cit.*, p. 20.

misfortunes. On the one hand, Ladakh emerged as an independent state and from time to time in the succeeding centuries brought large areas of surrounding territory under its control. On the other hand, during these centuries Ladakh also fell intermittently a prey to invasions and pressures from the north or the west and owed temporary allegiance either to the Mongols or to the Muslim rulers of Kashmir, Kashgar and even Skardu. One of the most significant of these invasions was the one led by the Mongols and the Tibetans about 1680. The invaders defeated the Ladakhis halfway between Tashigong and Gar-gunsa and entering Ladakh proper laid siege to the fortress of Basgo. In utter desperation the Ladakhis appealed to the Mughal governor of Kashmir, Ibrahim Khan, for aid.¹⁴ A Mughal army was rushed to Ladakh and the invaders were defeated and expelled. The war was ultimately brought to an end by the treaty of Tingmosgang between Ladakh and Tibet (1684), to which reference has been made above. Under the terms of this treaty, Ladakh ceded Upper Kunawar to Bashahr and surrendered its claims to West Tibet in favour of Lhasa but retained its control over small enclaves near Mount Kailas. The treaty laid down :

As in the beginning, King Kyi-de Nyi-ma-gon gave a separate kingdom to each of his sons, the same delimitation to hold good.

It (West Tibet) shall be set apart (from Ladakh) to meet the expenses of sacred lamps and prayers, offered at Lhasa ; but at Men-ser (Menze, near Mount Kailas), the King (of Ladakh) shall be his own master, so that the kings of La-dags (Ladakh) may have some wherewithal to pay for lamps and other sacrifices at the Garis-tsho (lake) ; it shall be his private domain. With this exception, the boundary shall be fixed at the Lha-ri stream at De-mchog (Demchok).¹⁵

But more significant result of the war was that Ladakh henceforth became a tributary of the Mughal empire. The commander

¹⁴ Akbar had conquered Kashmir in 1586.

¹⁵ Full details of the treaty are given in the Ladakhi chronicle, *La dvags rgyal rabs*, translated by Francke in *Antiquities of Indian Tibet*, Archaeological Survey of India, II, pp. 115-16. See also Z. Ahmad in *St. Anthony's Papers*, XIV, pp. 48-49 and Fisher etc., *op.cit.*, pp. 37-39. The Chinese, who normally do not recognise any historical evidence unless it supports their claim, cast doubts on the historicity of this treaty. See *Report*, CR, p. 12.

of the Mughal army, Fidal Khan, who came to the rescue of Ladakh, compelled the Ladakhi King not only to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Mughal emperor but also to pay biennial tribute to the Mughal Governor of Kashmir. The Ladakhi King, moreover, was required to embrace Islam and assume the title of Aqsbud Mahmud—a title used by his successors until their deposition by the Dogras in 1842. It was further stipulated that henceforth all Ladakhi coins were to be struck in the name of the Mughal emperor, thereby ensuring a public demonstration of Ladakh's political allegiance to the Mughal empire.

Ladakh's fate thus became firmly linked with the fate of the Mughal empire and Kashmir. When the Mughal empire disintegrated and Kashmir was conquered by the Afghans under Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1751, there was no change in the fortunes of Ladakh, except that instead of paying tribute to the Mughal Governor, she now paid allegiance to the Afghan ruler of Kashmir. Ladakh, however, appears to have regained its independent political status during a short interlude following the conquest of Kashmir by Ranjit Singh in 1819. But in 1834, as stated earlier, Zorawar Singh made the Ladakhi King pay heavily for this contumacy. Since then, Ladakh has remained an integral part of Kashmir.

Ladakh's Boundaries

For convenience of study, Ladakh's eastern boundary may be divided into two sections—one running southward from the Changchenmo valley to the point where it meets the northern boundary of Himachal Pradesh, and the other running north and north-eastward from the same point across Lanak La and Aksai Chin to the Kuenlun mountains. There are three different types of evidence regarding the former—the Ladakhi chronicles, the accounts of European travellers and the findings of mid-nineteenth century surveyors.

We have already seen that the evidence derived from the Ladakhi chronicles substantially corroborates the 'Indian idea of the boundary from the Lanak Pass in the north to the Imis Pass in the south'. Some European travellers in Ladakh in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seem to have held the same view regarding this section of the boundary. Early in the eighteenth century (1715-16), Father Desideri of the Society of Jesus, passed

through Ladakh on his way to Lhasa from Delhi and Kashmir. Desideri wrote :

On the seventh of September we arrived at Treseij-Khang or 'Abode of Mirth', a town on the frontier between Second and Third Tibet, defended by strong walls and a deep ditch with drawbridges.¹⁶

Tresaij-Khang was obviously the same as Tashigong, and it was, according to Desideri, a town on the frontier between Second Tibet, which was Ladakh, and Third Tibet, which was Tibet proper. This shows that the boundary now claimed by India in this area is not different from what it was in the early eighteenth century.

William Moorcraft, who lived in Ladakh for full two years in the early nineteenth century (September, 1820, to September, 1822), described Ladakh's frontiers as follows :

Ladakh is bounded on the north-east by mountains which divide it from the Chinese province of Khotan and on the east and south-east by Rudokh and Chan-than dependencies of Lassa ; on the south by the British province of Bisahar and by the hill states of Kulu and Chamba.¹⁷

Moorcraft, whose travels in Ladakh were confined within a comparatively limited area, has little to say about the major landmarks along Ladakh's eastern boundary, except that in his view the border was 'located between Chushul and a place he calls Punjoor' and that Demchok belonged to Gartok in Tibet. This location of Demchok within Tibetan territory is, however, in conflict with Desideri's statements cited above, that the frontier lay more than 20 miles further south-east at Tashigong. But as Moorcraft never visited the area, whereas Desideri made his notings from personal observation, there should be no difficulty in weighing the relative credibility of the two statements.¹⁸

Pandit Nain Singh, whose itinerary from Leh to Lhasa and from

¹⁶ Filippo de Filippi, *An Account of Tibet, the Travels of Ippolite Desideri of Pistoria*, S. J., 1712-27 (London, 1937), p. 81.

¹⁷ Moorcraft and Tebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces and the Punjab*, Vol. I, pp. 288-89.

¹⁸ Lamb, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-62; G. N. Rao, *The India-China Border, A Reappraisal* (1968), pp. 24-26.

Lhasa to Assam via Tawang between 1873-75 has already been referred to, stated in his account :

At Nigam the boundary between Tibet and Ladakh : the right bank of the stream belongs to the latter and the left bank to the former.¹⁹.

In other words, according to him, the stream of the Niagzu valley which flows southward near the meridian of 79° from Mandal to the Khurnak Fort was the boundary. On the other hand, according to the Indian survey maps the boundary line is a good deal to the west of the line given by Nain Singh. This shows that the surveyors of the Indian Government did not press Ladakh's claims to all the areas which traditionally belonged to it.

To understand the history of some of these surveys in Ladakh, it is necessary to refer to the Treaty of Amritsar (1846), to which reference has already been made. That treaty contained two significant clauses, the first of which (Article 2) laid down that the eastern frontier of the Kashmir state—the frontier between Ladakh and Tibet—would be defined by Commissioners appointed by the British Government and Maharaja Gulab Singh ; whereas the second (Article 4) provided that 'limits of the territories of Maharaja Gulab Singh shall not be at any time changed without the concurrence of the British Government'. It is easy to understand the motives which prompted the insertion of these articles in the treaty. In spite of their friendship with Gulab Singh, who had become their subordinate ally, the British were not free from suspicion about his expansionist ambitions, particularly because these might have come in the way of their own commercial and political interests. Apart from shadowy historical claims, the primary motive which seems to have impelled Gulab Singh to attempt the conquest of Western Tibet was, the desire to secure a complete monopoly of the Tibetan wool trade. As stated above, Western Tibet was the source of shawl wool (pesham) on which the economic stability of both Ladakh and Kashmir depended. By custom and usage, if not by treaty, the Ladakhis had acquired a virtual monopoly of this product, which they obtained in the neighbourhood of Gartok and sold to the weavers of Kashmir as

¹⁹ Col. Sir S. G. Burrard, *Records of the Survey of India* (Dehra Dun, 1915), Vol. VIII, Part I, p. 162.

the raw material for the Kashmiri shawl so highly prized in large parts of the world. This commodity, with its obvious commercial value, attracted the attention of the East Indian Company almost from the beginning of the nineteenth century. When Bashahr became a British protected state in 1815, a part of the shawl wool trade of Western Tibet began to trickle into Rampur, the capital of Bashahr, and in the nineteen thirties this trickle seems to have swollen into a torrent. It was primarily to prevent this diversion of Tibetan wool trade from its traditional course that Zorawar Singh's expedition against Western Tibet was undertaken. But British commercial interests were thereby endangered. In 1822, Moorcroft was so impressed by the potentialities of this trade and the advantages of having some control over the Leh-Yarkand trade route that he urged upon his Government to take Ladakh under British protection. He emphasised that Ladakh and West Tibet were not only the means of tapping the profitable trade in shawl-wool, they also controlled the trade routes to the markets of Central Asia. The Company did not, pay any heed to his advice because any step to bring Ladakh under British protection would have complicated the Company's relations with the friendly Sikhs. Nevertheless, the British were visibly upset when Zorawar Singh launched his campaign against West Tibet and conquered large areas extending upto Taklakot on the Nepalese frontier. The Company was afraid that the Dogra conquest of West Tibet might lead to unforeseen political consequences as it would advance the Sikh frontier right upto the Nepalese border and thus nullify at one stroke the territorial isolation of Nepal from other Indian states, which was so carefully devised by the Company at the end of the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-16). It might also involve the British in needless disputes with China. Above all, it would upset the long-established commercial frame-work of the area and divert the course of the growing shawl wool trade between West Tibet and the British-protected state of Bashahr in the Sutlej valley. In fact, while Zorawar Singh was engaged in his campaign, the Governor-General had a request conveyed to the Sikh court that Gulab Singh should be ordered to recall Zorawar Singh from Tibet.²⁰

²⁰ India Office Library (London), *Enclosures to Secret Letters from India*, Vol. 79, 1841; Thomason to Lushington. September, 1841. See also M. L. Ahluwalia, "Relations of the Lahore Durbar with China", *Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission*, XXX, Pt. 2, p. 1.

These facts explain in some measure why the British incorporated the Articles referred to above, in the Treaty of Amritsar. It is clear that the Company was determined not to allow Gulab Singh to extend his dominions at the cost of Tibet. To eliminate the possibility of any trouble in future, the British also decided to set up a boundary commission to demarcate the Kashmir-Tibet border. Accordingly, in July 1846, Captain Alexander Cunningham and Mr. Vans Agnew were deputed to proceed to the new territories ceded by the treaty of Lahore to 'ascertain the ancient territories' between Ladakh and Tibet as also to lay down the boundaries between the newly-acquired British territory that had previously constituted the southern district of Ladakh and the districts belonging to Gulab Singh. They were instructed to make sure that Gulab should never again be in a position to intercept the shawl trade between Tibet and British territories, as he had done for a time in 1841.²¹ But, as Aitchison has noted, owing to Imamuddin's rebellion, it was not possible for Agnew and Cunningham to reach the Tibet border.²² They, therefore, spent the summer of 1846 laying down the boundaries of the new British possessions of Lahul and Spiti.

A second commission was appointed in 1847 and an attempt was made to secure the co-operation of the Chinese and Tibetans with the British. The British Plenipotentiary in Hongkong, Sir John Davis, approached the Chinese Viceroy at Canton, K'e-ying, with the request that the Emperor should depute commissioners to proceed to the western frontiers of Tibet to carry out demarcation jointly with the British and Kashmir commissioners. A similar request was conveyed to the Dalai Lama's Government at Lhasa through the Raja of Bashahr and the Tibetan Governor at Gartok. But there was no real response either from the Chinese or the Tibetan Government. When Sir John Davis later remonstrated with the Chinese Viceroy, K'e-ying, for the Chinese omission to appoint commissioners, the latter wrote back that 'the borders of these territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed so that it will be best to adhere to this ancient arrangement and it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any additional measures

²¹ *Enclosures to Secret Letters*, Vol. 106, No. 33; Henry Lawrence to Vans Agnew and A. Cunningham, 23 July 1846; see also Sir Alexander Cunningham, *Ladakh* (London, 1854), p. 13.

²² Aitchison, Vol. XII, p. 5.

for fixing them.'²³ Hence the British commissioners were instructed to proceed with their own enquiries regarding the existing boundaries. The results of these enquiries were depicted by Lt. Henry Strachey, one of the commissioners, on the maps prepared by him in 1847 and 1848. These maps, reproduced by the Government of India in the *Atlas of the Northern Frontier of India*, confirm the documentary evidence cited above and prove beyond doubt that the border now claimed by India as the boundary between Ladakh and Tibet (from the Chang-Chenmo valley to the southern-most point of the frontier) follows very closely what it was believed to be in the middle of the nineteenth century. The areas of Demchok, Western Pangong, Chang-Chenmo Valley and Khurnak fort are clearly shown in them as located within the Indian boundary.²⁴ The Government of India never bothered again during the rest of the nineteenth century to arrange any joint demarcation of this sector of the border. On July 31, 1851, the Governor-General, in a despatch to the Court of Directors stated that 'the researches of our officers (of the Boundary Commission) have shown that there is nothing which requires adjustment' and that matters might be left as they were 'without fear of aggression on either side'.²⁵

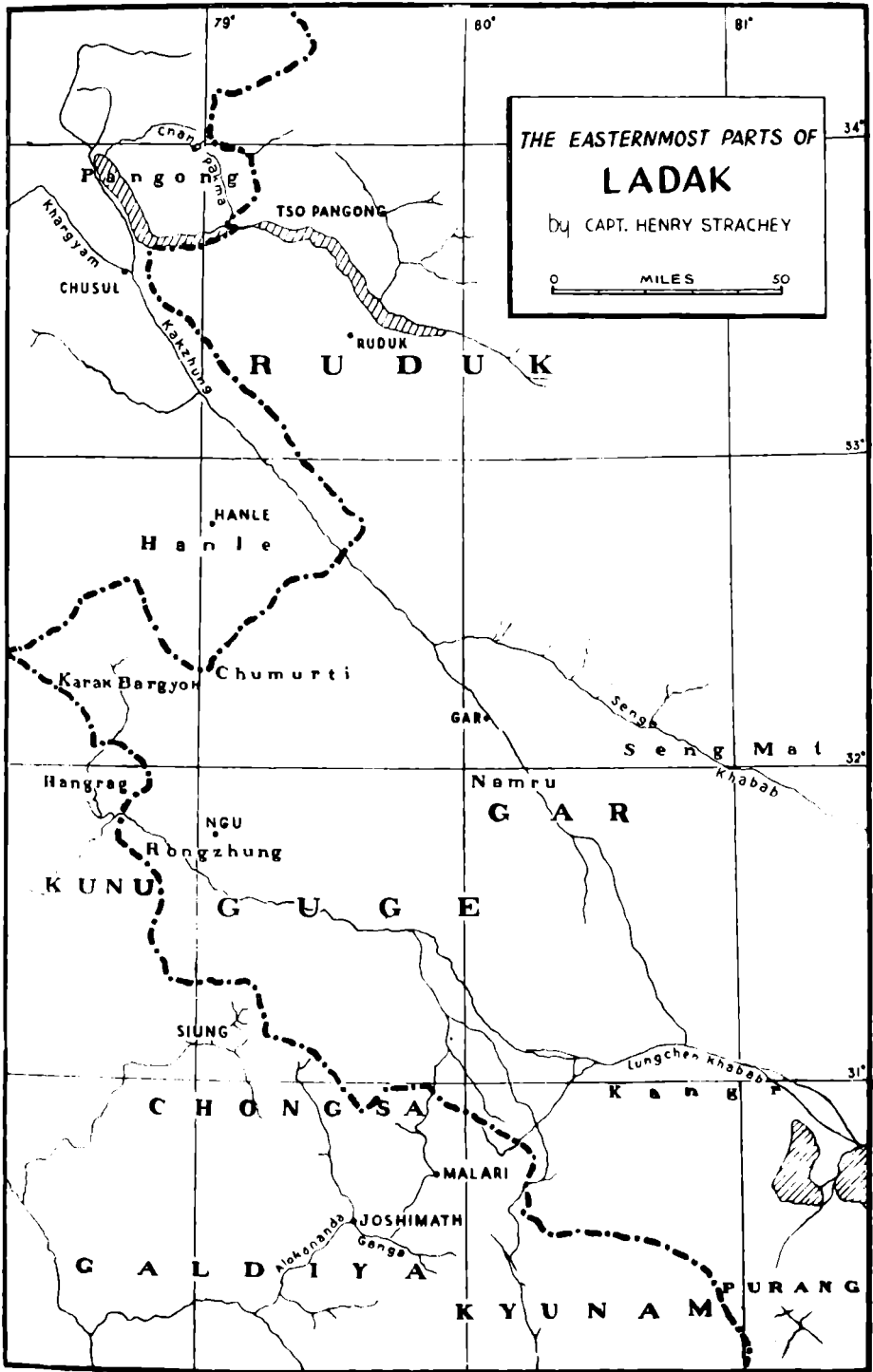
The border-lands of Ladakh to the north and north-east of the Chang-Chenmo valley are among the world's bleakest stretches, much of it a vast desert of rock and sand with few traces of man or human habitations, or as Nehru put it, 'where no people live and no blade of grass grows'. The British had little accurate knowledge of these border-lands until the sixties. The earliest European travellers who seem to have gone into some of these areas, were the three Schlagintweit brothers, Adolf, Hermann and Robert, between 1854 and 1858—Adolf crossing the desolate plains of Lingzitang and Aksai Chin to the Karakash river and thence to Yarkand.²⁶ Their reports provided the Government

²³ India Office Library, Foreign-Secret, No. 35, K'e-ying to Davis, January 13, 1847.

²⁴ See *Atlas of the Northern Frontier of India* (New Delhi, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs), 1960, Maps 11 and 12.

²⁵ S. F., January 1898, Nos. 160-169.

²⁶ Adolf did not return to describe his experiences, for he was murdered at Kashgar on 26th August, 1857. But his Muhammedan companion and guide, Muhammad Amin gave a verbal account which was reproduced in the 'Panjab Trade Report, 1862'.



Captain Strachey's Map of Ladakh Border (1848)

of India with reliable information about the north-eastern corner of Ladakh. Knowledge in regard to these areas increased further as a result of the efforts made in the late sixties and early seventies to explore the possibilities of establishing new trade routes to Yarkand and Kashgar, in addition to the traditional Leh-Yarkand route via the Karakoram Pass. The Karakoram route was probably the most arduous trade route of importance in the world. It involved the crossing of eleven major passes, between 16,000 to 18,000 feet high, and the sacrifice of vast number of transport animals to the strain of the high altitude, and the storms and cold of the desolate plateau.²⁷ Moreover, caravans passing along this route were often subjected to devastating forays by the Hunza and the Kirghiz raiders who lurked in the adjacent mountain hideouts. Attempts were, therefore, made as stated above, to explore a less dangerous route of trade with Eastern Turkestan, which in the contemporary British estimation had almost boundless commercial possibilities. In 1865, Mr. W.H. Johnson on the staff of the G.T. Survey, to which we shall presently refer, took advantage of an invitation from the Ruler of Khotan to visit that city. While proceeding to Khotan he used routes which, keeping to the east of the Karakoram route, crossed the high open land near the sources of the Shyok river and its feeders. In 1868, Lieutenant G.W. Hayward marched via Chang-Chenmo to Yarkand, crossing the Lingzitung plains and following the Karakash valley to Shahidulla. Dr. Cayley, Resident at Ladakh, reported about the same time that 'from Lukung the road went to Gogra and from that place there were two roads to Shahidulla—one via the Lingzitung and the Soda Plains and the other via the Karakash River to Malikash, three stages south of Shahidulla on the Karakoram side'.²⁸ As a result of these explorations at least three alternative routes were discovered, all across the Lingzitung plain beyond Chang-Chenmo valley.²⁹ A proposal was also mooted to make a road from Leh to Daulat Baguldi 'and the Engineering Officer sent to survey the country reported that such a road could be made, and that for four-fifths of the way the gradients

²⁷ G. J. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier 1865-95* (Longmans, 1963), pp. 22-23.

²⁸ S. F., June 1887, Nos. 167-178.

²⁹ For a description of these routes, see Frederic Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories* (London, 1875), pp. 541-43.

would be so easy that a railway might be made along it.³⁰

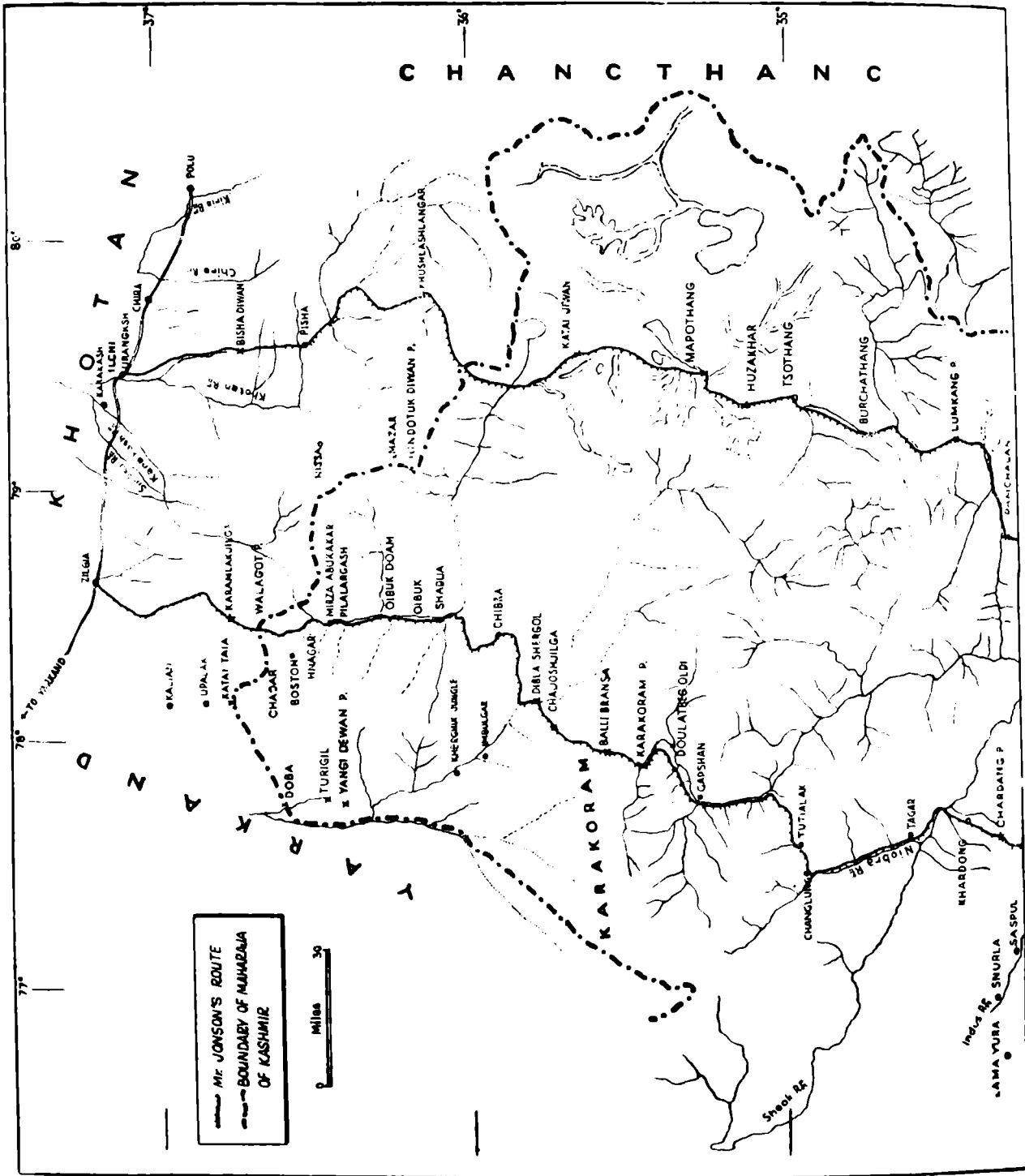
So great indeed was the enthusiasm generated by these discoveries that in April 1870, a Commercial Agreement was concluded between the British Government and the Maharaja of Kashmir for developing trade with Eastern Turkistan along the new routes. Articles I and II of this Agreement, made provision for the survey of all routes, after which a route would be nominated which 'shall be declared by the Maharaja to be a free highway in perpetuity, and at all times, for all travellers and traders'. Articles III and IV provided for the supervision and maintenance of this road, and for the exercise of the Joint Commissioners' (one British and the other Kashmiri) jurisdiction along its entire length, and for a distance to 'be defined by a line on each side of the road, with a maximum width of two statute *kos*, except where it may be deemed by the Commissioners necessary to include a wider extent for grazing grounds'. Still another Article provided for arrangements for the provision of carriage, supply-depots and rest houses along the 'free highway'.³¹ Commercially, these routes did not prove a success and before long the entire project of a free highway was abandoned. But all these exploratory activities and the terms of the agreement with the Maharaja of Kashmir point to the conclusion that the areas through which the routes were projected were considered at the time as belonging to the Kashmir State.

In the meantime, in 1855, Lieut. Montgomerie had been given charge of a party of the Great Trigonometrical Survey for mapping the territories of Maharaja Gulab Singh. Montgomerie had a band of gallant, devoted men with him—Godwin-Austen, Johnson, James Low, Clarke—each of whom distinguished himself as a path-breaker in this great undertaking. Gulab Singh gave his cordial assent to the survey and mapping operations. For about a decade the surveyors toiled in the different areas of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, and in November 1864, Montgomerie was able to report the completion of the survey of all 'of the dominions of His Highness the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir'.

This survey of Jammu and Kashmir included the survey of the border regions to the north and north-east of the Chang-Chenmo

³⁰ S. F., June 1887, Nos. 167-178.

³¹ *Ibid.*



———— Mr. JOHNSON'S ROUTE
 - - - - - BOUNDARY OF KASHMIR



Col. Johnson's Travels (1865)

valley. In 1862 and 1863, under the direction of Montgomerie, Johnson, Godwin-Austen and others carried the triangulation of the area from Leh to the Chinese borders and the Surveyor's reports of 1862-70 indicate that at this time the Maharaja's territories were found to extend to the Kuenlun mountains in the north and included the Chang-Chenmo valley and the upper reaches of the Karakash valley to a point as far downstream as Shahidulla.³² The reports make it clear that the surveyors had pushed their mapping operations till they reached territories belonging to and administered by states outside the control of the Maharaja of Kashmir.³³

When the completion of the survey was announced, Montgomerie requested that Johnson might be given one more opportunity to visit the north-east borders to fix points and sketch detail. In 1865, the permission was given and Johnson reached Leh, where he received an invitation from the Khan of Khotan to cross the frontier and visit Ilich, This meant the crossing of the British frontier—a breach of standing orders—but he decided to accept the invitation without waiting for permission, which could not possibly have reached him in time. On the way to Khotan he followed the route which Schlagintweit had taken earlier and repeated the journey to the Lingzitang plains, crossed western Aksai Chin, reached the Karakash, climbed three peaks of the Kuenlun and sketched the areas around. He returned westward from Khotan through a hitherto unknown country, crossed the Karakoram Pass from the north and reached Leh in December. This remarkable journey brought him an official rebuke but it was enthusiastically acclaimed by the Royal Geographical Society in London. Johnson resigned from the Survey the following year and took service with the Maharaja of Kashmir.

Detailed maps were prepared on the basis of these surveys. The quarter-inch map of *Jammu, Kashmir and Adjacent Countries* was completed at Dehra Dun in 1861. The Ladakh Survey was published on the eight-mile scale at Dehra Dun in 1868, and later

³² Capt. Henry Trotter, *Report of a Mission to Yarkand in 1873* (Calcutta, 1875), p. 285.

³³ It may be noted that geological surveys were also made in the upper Shyok, Chang-Chenmo and Spanggur areas by Richard Lydekker between 1875 and 1882. A full account of such surveys is given in the *Memoirs of the Geological Survey of India*, 22 (1883).

included in the quarter-inch Atlas sheets. These sheets delineate the eastern and north-eastern boundaries of Ladakh from end to end ; and they are shown as including Aksai Chin, Lingzitung and Chang-Chenmo valley and reaching the Kuenlun east of 80° East longitude.

Alastair Lamb has dubbed this section of the boundary in the Kashmir survey maps as the 'Johnson boundary', because it resulted from the work of W.H. Johnson in 1864 and 1865. This survey, Lamb holds, 'is incredibly inaccurate' and therefore 'the boundary marked is patently absurd'.³⁴ It is important to remind ourselves, however, that part of the survey work in this sector was done by Godwin-Austen in 1862 and 1863. Johnson, 'the most indefatigable of observers' and 'a brilliant triangulator, impervious to hardship and danger', as Mason describes him, carried the work further in 1864 and 1865.³⁵ It is true that the map constructed by him and published by the G.T. Survey has not 'necessarily the same degree of detail as the map published by them' of other tracts, for it was made in a hurry 'over ground where to halt was to starve'. Nevertheless, it included a large amount of valuable information ; and as Drew has stated, 'it has been the foundation of every map of the region constructed since'.³⁶ Despite the lack of some details, no later surveyor questioned the genuineness of the boundary marked by Johnson.

A few years later, in 1874, Frederic Drew constructed another map of Kashmir, based partly on the 1868 *Kashmir Atlas* and Hayward's *Turkistan* and partly on his own surveys. Drew had entered the service of the Maharaja of Kashmir in 1862 and was made the Governor of Ladakh in 1871, from which post he retired a year later. During this decade of service in Kashmir, he travelled extensively in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, and published the results of his investigations in the form of an excellent book entitled *Jummoo and Kashmir Territories* in 1875. Attached to the book are a series of fine maps, but one of these is on a good scale, 16 miles to the inch, showing the boundaries of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. Lamb considers Drew's map as 'based on the best surveys'. But there is nothing in Drew's book or map which supports the Chinese claim that large areas in north-eastern

³⁴ Lamb, *The China-India Border* (Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 43.

³⁵ Kenneth Mason, *Abode of Snow* (London, 1955), pp. 79-80.

³⁶ Frederic Drew, *The Jummoo and Kashmir Territories* (London, 1875), p. 332

Ladakh, including the whole of Aksai Chin, had always belonged to them. In fact, the map carries Ladakh's north-eastern boundary along the Kuenlun range east of longitude 80° east, although by adopting a finely dotted line it has indicated that the boundary in this sector is not authoritatively or precisely defined. Explaining his view of Kashmir's northern and north-eastern boundary, Drew wrote :

We now come to the Yarkand territory under the rule of the Amir of Kashgar. As to the boundary with this, from the Mustag to the Karakoram Pass, there is no doubt whatever. A great watershed range divides the two territories. But it will be observed that from the Karakoram Pass eastward to past the meridian of 80°, the line is more finely dotted. This had been done to denote that here the boundary is not defined. There has been no authoritative demarcation of it at all ; and as the country is quite uninhabited for more than a hundred miles east and west and north and south, I cannot apply the principle of representing the actual state of occupation. I have by the dotted boundary only represented my own opinion of what would be defined, were the powers interested to attempt to agree on a boundary. At the same time, this dotted line does not go against the actual facts of occupation.

These last remarks apply also to the next section, from the Kuenlun Mountains southward to the head of the Chang-Chenmo Valley, for that distance between the Maharaja's country and Chinese Tibet is equally doubtful.³⁷

What Drew has sought to emphasise is that this section of the boundary lacked the same degree or definiteness as the boundary from the Mustagh to the Karakoram Pass, partly because there was no authoritative demarcation and partly because the principle of representing the actual state of occupation could not be applied owing to the absolutely uninhabited character of the region. Nevertheless he was clearly of the opinion that the boundary as shown in his map would be considered fair and just 'were the powers interested to attempt to agree on a boundary'. Drew has

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 496. Drew, however, showed the Karakash valley as lying outside the boundary of Ladakh.

not, as Lamb seems to imply, thrown completely overboard the boundary as delineated in the Kashmir survey map, but broadly affirmed it without being dogmatic about it. In any case, neither the Kashmir Survey team nor Frederic Drew saw any trace of Chinese influence in the currently disputed regions of north-eastern Ladakh.

Most subsequent official Indian maps such as those attached to the *Gazetteer of Kashmir and Ladakh*, published in 1890, and the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (1887 and 1907 editions) showed Lingzitan plains and Aksai Chin as forming part of the Kashmir territory. Similarly in the first edition of the map of Turkistan, Kashmir's boundary was shown as extending to the Kuenlun and including Lingzitan plains and Aksai Chin. Hung Ta-chin, formerly Chinese Minister at St. Petersburg, had in the early nineties prepared a map of his country, which also showed large parts of Aksai Chin as within Kashmir. In the second edition of the Turkistan map, however, 'owing to some misapprehension', the boundary line was shown along the Chang-Chenmo valley and the Karakoram excluding the Lingzitan plains. This, it would appear, immediately brought a protest from the Government of Kashmir. Accordingly, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir was informed that 'no authoritative delineation of Kashmir frontiers will be attempted without previous reference to the Durbar'. In the third edition of the map of Turkistan the boundary was, therefore, shown once again as extending to the Kuenlun and taking within it the Aksai Chin area. So did Johnson's *Royal Atlas* published in 1892.

In 1895 or early in 1896, however, the Chinese for the first time raised objection to the British maps showing Aksai Chin within the Kashmir boundary. George Macartney, Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs to the Resident of Kashmir, had sent a copy of the Johnson Atlas as a present to the Kashgar Taotai. The Taotai, it would appear, showed it to some members of the Russian Consulate in Kashgar. The Russians, always on the alert for an opportunity to create misunderstanding and trouble between the British and the Chinese, told him that in their opinion in one of the maps a large slice of Aksai Chin, which the Chinese might claim as their own, had been included within the British boundary. Thereafter the Taotai raised this matter with Mr. Macartney, claiming Aksai Chin as a part of "Chinese Tibet".

Macartney, thereafter, brought it to the notice of the Government of India.³⁸ This led to a prolonged discussion in the Foreign Department of the Government of India, where the consensus was that Aksai Chin is 'a general name for an ill-defined and very elevated table-land at the north-east of Ladakh', and that while the western part of it belonged to Kashmir, the eastern part belonged to China. A note of February 8, 1897, by C. Strahan stated: 'Our maps show two Aksai Chins, one in China and one in Kashmir. There is evidence to prove the existence of the more western one in Kashmir, but none of any value with regard to that to the east, which is within Chinese territory.' Another Foreign Department note of the time added that 'There are two distinct localities named Aksai Chin'. One was situated north of the Lingzitang plains (Soda Plains) and the other to the east of the plains (White Desert). 'It is quite possible that the Chinese are confusing Aksai Chin north of the Lingzitang plains with Aksai Chin which lies to the east of these plains and which has never been included in our territory.'³⁹ It is to be remembered that as a geographical feature the Aksai Chin plains extend eastward far beyond the point where India claims her frontier lies. It is also interesting to note that whereas in 1896 the Chinese claimed the whole of Aksai Chin as a part of Tibet, in the present boundary dispute with India they have categorically asserted that this high and barren plateau had always been a part of Sinkiang.

According to the Indian view, Lanak La at the head of the Chang-Chenmo valley and the Kuenlun range have always been the two traditional land-marks along Ladakh's north-eastern frontier. China, however, does not recognise these two distinctive geographical features as marking the boundary between India and China and has claimed and forcibly occupied extensive areas to the west and south of them as traditional Chinese territory. A number of casual references to Lanak La in the accounts left behind by some western travellers seem, however, to confirm the Indian rather than the Chinese view. A.D. Carey, when travelling in this area in 1885, noted in his diary: 'August 21, 1885. Gentle ascent to the head of Lanak La pass. From top of this pass slight descent into valley with wood, water and a little grass. At 5th mile a grassy swamp crossed. . . . *Route now lies in independent*

³⁸ S. F., January 1898, Nos. 160-169.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Tibet.'⁴⁰ Another British traveller, Captain Hamilton Bower, crossed the Lanak La in 1891. His diary for July 3, 1891, reads: 'Crossed the frontier at Lanak La, and after marching 24 miles, which took us nine hours, camped. The pass is easy and there is no snow on it.'⁴¹ Wellby, who travelled in this region towards the close of the nineteenth century and published a record of his journey in his well-known book entitled *Through Unknown Tibet*, also described Lanak La as 'the frontier pass'.⁴² Captain H.H. Deasy, who visited Lanak La in 1896, wrote: 'It was decided to halt for a day at Lanak Pass before entering the, to us unknown, land of Tibet.'⁴³ Among the European travellers of the present century, who travelled in this region, were Captain G.G. Rawling and Sven Hedin. Describing his travels, Rawling wrote that on 11 June (1902): 'A few miles march brought us to the Lanak La, 18,000 feet high. The ascent was easy, so the tents were pitched that night but a few feet below the summit of the pass and about seven miles beyond the boundary pillar between Ladakh and Tibet.' Sven Hedin was less fortunate than Rawling. He had taken the familiar route from Leh via Tikee, Tankse and Probang to Pamsa in the Chang-Chenmo valley. But he saw the Lanak La at a distance because, as he explained, it 'was closed to him by the Anglo-Indian Government'.

Similar incontrovertible evidence exists pointing to the Kuenlun range as the traditional northern boundary of Ladakh, separating it from the territories of Khotan and Yarkand. We have already referred to W.H. Johnson's journey to Khotan in 1865. Reporting about it to the Under Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department, on May 23, 1866, Lieut. Col. J. T. Walker, Superintendent, Great Trigonometrical Survey, stated:

Mr. Johnson had been deputed to survey the northern portions of the territories of the Maharaja of Kashmir. It was hoped that he might succeed in obtaining a view of some of the towns of Khotan from the Trigonometrical stations on the summits of the *Kuen Lun (sometimes called Kuen Luen) Range, the boundary between the territories of the Maharaja and the province of Khotan.*

⁴⁰ *Supplementary Papers of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1890, p. 18.

⁴¹ *Geographical Journal*, 1893.

⁴² *Through Unknown Tibet*, p. 73

⁴³ *Journal of the Geographical Society*, July-December 1900, p. 142.

The expectation was disappointed, but a very favourable opportunity presented itself for him to cross the frontier, and traverse the province beyond, under the protection of the Khan Badshah of Khotan.⁴⁴

In his journey from Leh, Johnson followed the familiar route as far as Kyan and then broke new ground by marching in a northern direction. He travelled through Nischu, Huzakhar and Yangpa, describing these isolated places in Aksai Chin in great detail. He was the first European to cross the Yangi Diwan pass between Tash and Khushlas langar and on his way up the Karakash valley 'noticed numerous extensive plateaus near the river, covered with good and long grass'. These, he said, 'being within the territory of the Maharaja of Kashmir could easily be brought under cultivation by Ladakees and others, if they could be induced and encouraged to do so by the Kashmir Government'. When he reached the source of the Karakash :

The bearer of my letter returned on the 20th day after his departure, accompanied by a Beg or Governor of a small province and an interpreter, with a letter from the Khan pressing me earnestly to visit him, with promises to take every care of me while I continued in his territory, and informing me that he had despatched his Wazeer, Saifulla Khoja, to meet me at *Brinjga, the first encampment beyond the Ladakh boundary* for the purpose of escorting me thence to Ilichi.⁴⁵

As Brinjga lay a few miles south-east of Karangatah, it seems clear that in 1865 the Khotanese authorities themselves thought that their jurisdiction did not extend beyond the Kuenlun range. To the west of Brinjga, Eastern Turkistan's boundary extended only upto Shahidulla, about 79 miles to the north-east of the Karakoram Pass. Here the Maharaja of Kashmir had established a fort a few years earlier with a detachment of 15 sepoy, but this guard was not sufficient for the protection of the traders travelling along various routes beyond the Karakoram. Johnson noticed among the traders 'a wish that the several routes beyond the Karakoram

⁴⁴ Foreign-political A, June 1866, Nos. 135-139.

⁴⁵ Johnson's report to J. T. Walker, dated April 22, 1866. Foreign-political A, June 1866, Nos. 135-139.

should be made safe by the Maharaja, detaching guards of adequate strength to occupy the ground within his boundary, in the vicinity of the plains called "Khergiz jungle" on the Kugiar route, and at Shahidulla and Ibnagar on the Sanju route'.

In 1873, Lord Mayo decided to send a large mission to Yarkand ostensibly to secure a commercial treaty on terms similar to those obtained by the Russians, but really to obtain as much scientific, geographical and strategic information regarding Eastern Turkestan as possible. The mission was headed by Douglas Forsyth (later Sir), who was accompanied by Captain Trotter of the G.T. Survey of India in charge of a survey party. In their journey to Shahidulla, Forsyth proceeded along the old Karakoram route while Trotter went via Chang-Chenmo 'by the route by which the former mission returned from Yarkand in 1870'. Arrangements for the supply of provisions to the mission upto Shahidulla were made by the Maharaja of Kashmir. It was only when they reached Shahidulla that both Forsyth and Trotter met the representatives of the Amir of Yarkand (Yakub Beg) waiting there to receive them. Reporting his journey, Trotter wrote :

Shahidulla was the first point where we struck the Atalik's dominions and met his people.⁴⁶

Forsyth stated that a captain of the Amir's army, along with a company of soldiers, 'awaited our arrival' at Shahidulla and 'gave us a hearty welcome'. Describing the southern boundary of Yarkand, Forsyth said :

The limits of the State (Yarkand) are, along the southern frontier, Sanju to Shahidulla, Kilyan to Yangi Diwan, Kokyar to Culanuldi, and Cosharab to the Mustagh and Kunjut.⁴⁷

It may be added here that when in 1889 'a Russian came to visit Kashmir, the Resident's letter turning him back was handed to the Russian at the Shahidulla Khoja'.⁴⁸

It would thus seem clear that even in the eighties of the last century Shahidulla and not the Karakoram Pass marked the

⁴⁶ Trotter, *Report of the Mission of Yarkand in 1873* (Calcutta, 1875), p. 285.

⁴⁷ Forsyth, *Report of a Mission to Yarkand* (Calcutta, 1875), pp. 3 and 27.

⁴⁸ S. F., September 1892, Nos. 1-5.

southern frontier of Eastern Turkistan and that the Maharaja of Kashmir was not without some rights of jurisdiction over the intervening area. It may be noted that Chinese maps of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also delineated the southern boundary of Sinkiang along the Kuenlun range. The advance of Chinese jurisdiction from Shahidulla to the Karakoram Pass was a later development, effected with British consent and encouragement.

Kashmir's Northern Boundaries

Kashmir's northern boundaries underwent some marked changes in the second half of the nineteenth century. Gilgit had already become a part of the Sikh empire, and Maharaja Gulab Singh had succeeded to this inheritance when he received Kashmir in accordance with the two treaties made by the British with the Sikh Durbar in one case, and himself in the other. In 1852, Gilgit became a scene of endemic troubles and the Maharaja's forces were compelled to withdraw. But in 1860, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the son and successor of Maharaja Gulab Singh, firmly re-established his authority in Gilgit, which was never challenged again until 1947.⁴⁰ The annexation of Gilgit led almost inevitably to further extension of Kashmir's authority over neighbouring areas. In 1850-51, Chilas on the route to Gilgit was compelled to become tributary to the Maharaja. After the re-capture of Gilgit in 1860, a Kashmiri nominee was installed in Ponial as a vassal ruler. In 1863, Yasin was occupied. Three years later, in 1866, Kashmir forces attacked Hunza, and although they suffered a temporary set-back, by the end of the sixties Hunza and Nagar were compelled to pay allegiance and tribute to Kashmir. Then in April, 1879, towards the close of the Second Afghan War, the Chief of Chitral, Aman-ul Mulk, who had close ties with Afghanistan and whose conduct during the war was a source of grave worry to the British, signed a treaty with the Maharaja of Kashmir declaring that he 'will always sincerely endeavour to be in submission and obedience to His Highness the

⁴⁰ Maharaja Ranbir Singh's 1860 campaign is described by T. G. Montgomerie in his Memo. on the Progress of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of Kashmir, *Selections from the Public Correspondence of the Administration of the Affairs of the Panjab*, V (1861), No. 7.

Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir', and that 'in recognition of the superiority and greatness' of the Maharaja, would present annually a *nuzzerana* (tribute) to the latter.⁵⁰ Kashmir's political boundary thus reached what may be described as the natural geographical frontier in this sector—the stupendous mountain barrier constituted by the Eastern Hindu Kush, the Mustag and the Karakoram. The nearest of these mountain ranges was still seven days' journey from the fastness of Hunza and Nagar but the intervening terrain is not only utterly barren and desolate, cliffs, boulders and sand, but contains some of the greatest glaciers and snow-beds in the whole of Asia.⁵¹

Beyond this colossal mountain barrier lay Chinese Turkestan and further beyond the Muscovite empire. In the fifteenth century Czarist Russia and Ming China were well over 2,000 miles apart at the nearest points, separated by deserts, mountains and steppe-land, and by a variety of peoples both settled and nomadic. But the distance between the two steadily dwindled in the following centuries. In the early eighteenth century the Manchus conquered the whole of Mongolia, parts of Eastern Turkestan and Tibet. Near about the same time the Russians also enormously expended their Asian empire. Chinese expansionism, however, halted before long, and by the early decades of the nineteenth century signs of internal decline had become manifest within the Manchu empire. Turkestan, in particular, became a scene of endemic revolts. The first came in 1825-27; in 1845 a second rising flared up; and ten years later came still another, which proved to be by far the most formidable. This revolt, sometimes described as the Dungan, spread to all the remaining provinces of Western China and produced terrible desolation in Dzungania, in the province of Ili and in Chinese Turkestan. Taking advantage of this general disorder, a Kokandi official, Yakub Beg, with the support of the Khan of Khokand, made himself master of vast areas in Eastern Turkestan as far as Manas and Urumuchi in the north-west and Khotan in the south. Yakub recognised the Turkish Sultan as the Khalif, and Turkish officers came to Yarkand to reorganise his army. He also maintained commercial relations with the British India in the south and the Czarist empire in the west. He was

⁵⁰ For English translation of the text of the Treaty see Alder, *op. cit.*, Appendix V.

⁵¹ F. O. 371/1005.

in fact, as Alder says, 'virtually the last, truly independent sovereign of Central Asia and perhaps the most outstanding ruler that Asia produced after Nadir Shah'.⁵² Yet Yakub's dominion was shortlived. On his death in 1877, the Chinese general Tso Tsung-t'ang (1812-1885), who had fought against the T'ai P'ing and also against the Muhammadans in Kansu, marched into Turkistan, reconquered the country and set it up as a new province of the Chinese empire under the name of Sinkiang. What were the boundaries of this New Dominion? An influential British trader, Andrew Dalglish, who travelled widely in Chinese Turkestan in the early eighties, describes them as follows :

The western frontier extends to the Bolan mountains and follows this range in a southerly direction until it meets the northern spur of the mountains that springs from the Hindu Kush. This northern spur runs in an east-south-east direction and joins the Kuen-luen range, taking in the Yengi Dawan Pass via Kogiar, the Kilian Pass via Kilian, and the Sanju Pass via Sanju, and becomes the southern frontier.⁵³

While the Chinese empire was being rocked by internal convulsions, the Czarist empire in Asia was on the march. In 1844, Czar Nicholas I paid a visit to England and came to an agreement with the latter, according to which Russia and Great Britain were to work together to preserve the internal peace of Persia and the Khanates of Central Asia were to be left 'as a neutral zone between the two empires in order to preserve them from a dangerous contact'. For ten years, this understanding was preserved. But baulked in her ambitions in the Balkans by the Crimean War (1854-56), Russia once again turned her attention to Central Asia, and in less than two decades the four Khanates—Bokhara, Khiva, Samarkand and Khokand—were brought one after another under Russian control. In 1864, the Russian authority touched the borders of Khokand, Bokhara and Khiva. In the next year Tashkent was occupied. In 1867 the province of Russian Turkestan was constituted with Kaupmann as its first Governor-General. In the same year, Bokhara was reduced. In

⁵² Alder, *op.cit.*

⁵³ See *Notes on Chinese Turkestan* (dated Simla, 29th July, 1883) by A. Dalglish.

1874, Khiva became a Russian province under a most thinly disguised protectorate. In May of that year, General Lomakin issued a circular to all the Turkoman tribes claiming supreme authority over them. At about the same time, Russian activities began to infringe on the Pamir line. In 1876, the Russian Governor-General issued instructions for the systematic exploration of the Pamirs and before long Russian exploring parties began to 'parade over the whole of the Pamirs'. In 1878, the Russian frontier was moved forward about 80 miles beyond the Kizil-Lu.

This rapid, relentless advance of Russia through Central Asia created problems for the British which neither the Government of India nor the Imperial Government of London could ignore. It looked as though this advancing flood-tide would before long overwhelm the intervening land-space and threaten the security of the British empire in India. To stem this tide at any cost became the central theme of British policy in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. British attention was now concentrated on India's north-western and northern frontier and on the areas adjacent to the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs. In 1877, with the consent of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, the Government of India appointed an 'Officer on Special Duty' at Gilgit, whose duty was to keep watch on the southern outlets of the passes leading into Hunza, Yasin and Chitral, 'to furnish reliable intelligence of the progress of events beyond the Kashmir frontier... and ... in consultation with the Kashmir authorities, to cultivate friendly relations with the tribes beyond the border with a view to bringing them gradually under the control and influence of Kashmir'. At the same time, a policy for India's northern frontier was formulated with great precision. Spelling out the lines of this policy, Lord Lytton wrote in 1879 :

... the natural boundary of India is formed by the convergence of the great mountain ranges of the Himalayas and of the Hindu Kush, which here extend northwards upto their junction ... Within the angle thus formed lie the territories of Chitral, Darel, Yasin, Hunza and other petty dependencies. From Hunza on the slopes of the Mustagh, westward to Chitral under the Hindu Kush, these states occupy the valleys which run up to the skirts of the ranges, and are drained by the

uppermost tributaries of the Indus river system. And the only passes through these ranges from the Pamir are . . . in the hands of these semi-independent Chiefs. If a strong, independent and hostile power were established on the north of these mountains, the passes might become lines of demonstration. . . which might at least be useful as a diversion to facilitate and support the flank of the more serious operations in Afghanistan. If, on the other hand, we extend, and by degrees consolidate our influence over this country, and if we resolve that no foreign interference can be permitted on this side of the mountains or within the drainage system of the Indus, we shall have laid down a natural line of frontier which is distinct, intelligible and likely to be respected.⁵⁴

But a sound frontier policy depended on a close acquaintance with the physical and human geography of border areas. Some spade-work had been done in this direction earlier by the G.T. Survey, as referred to above, but a great deal still remained to be done. In 1870, Lord Mayo took advantage of Forsyth's first mission to Kashgar to organise a combined assault by indigenous explorers on the unknown lands to the west of it, including Dardistan. Hyder Shah ('Havildar') successfully penetrated into Swat, Dir and Chitral and made a rapid survey across the Nuksan and Dora passes.⁵⁵ At the same time Ibrahim Khan ('I.K.') traversed the Pamirs via Sarikol to Yarkand after crossing over from Gilgit and Yasin.⁵⁶ The explorers attached to Forsyth's second mission (1873-74) made more important discoveries, examined the Great and Little Pamirs and revealed the dangers of a Russian advance through the passes into Hunza, Yasin and Chitral farther west. In 1876, 'Mullah' ascended the Indus river to the point where it joined the Gilgit river and surveyed the southern route to Mastuj through the Ghizar and Sar Laspur valleys, 'supplying an important rectification of the topography'. In 1877 Mirza Shuja (M.S.) went to the Dera Imam and, crossing the Panjab, ascended the table-land of Shiva. On this return he visited the Ghazkol lake, which lies at the point of

⁵⁴ Quoted in Alder, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ *General Report on the Operations of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India during 1870-71*, Sec. XVI.

⁵⁶ *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*, XVI (1870-71), p. 387.

the convergence of the Mustagh and Hindu Kush ranges.⁵⁷

There is little doubt that much of the exploration and survey undertaken in the seventies and eighties of the last century in these frontier areas was due to the fear that the Russians might come across the Pamir passes into Hunza or Chitral or even Kashmir itself. As Russian explorers travelled increasingly over the Pamirs, Captain Biddulph studied passes across the Hindu Kush from the north and then returned to study their southern exits. A much more important exploratory assault on the frontier areas was made in 1885. A party under Ney Elias from Kashgar in the east, and the British members of the Afghan Boundary Commission coming from the west, examined the lands along the upper Oxus. At the same time, Colonel Lockhart went into the tribal lands south of the Hindu Kush 'to determine to what extent India is vulnerable through the Hindu Kush range between the Kilik Pass and Kafiristan'.⁵⁸ He visited the Dora pass and eastern Kafiristan, explored the northern approach to the Boroghil and claimed to have examined 'all passes of any importance whatever' across the Hindu Kush. But the most outstanding explorer in these mountainous regions was Francis Younghusband. In 1887, after an adventurous journey across the Gobi desert to Yarkand, Younghusband, then a young lieutenant in the King's Dragoon Guards, discovered the Aghil Mountains between the Shaksgam and the main upper course of the Yarkand river. He then made a daring crossing of the Mustagh range by the Mustagh Pass to the Boltora glacier and then to Baltistan and Kashmir. In 1889, Younghusband went on the second mission over the Aghil pass into the Shaksgam, followed the Shaksgam down to the Sarpo Laggo stream and then on to its junction with the Yarkand river, visiting on the way the Shimshal pass. He also visited the Taghdumbash Pamir and Tashkurgan and then crossed the Mintaka Pass into northern Hunza, whence he moved along the Hunza valley to near Gilgit.⁵⁹ In 1890-91, he went out again to explore the Pamirs and brought back valuable information regarding their configuration and topographical details. Younghusband's explorations were followed by those of Lieut. George Cockerill, who explored the Shimshal gorge and valley as far as the Shimshal Pass and then the Khunje-

⁵⁷ E. D. Black, *A Memoir of Indian Surveys, 1875-1890*.

⁵⁸ Lockhart and Woodthorpe, *Confidential Report of the Gilgit Mission*, p. 275.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Mason, *Abode of Snow* (London, 1955), pp. 99-102.

rab and Chapursan valleys in northern Hunza and other valleys and routes in the Hindu Kush.

The over-all conclusion derived from these explorations and surveys was that no large-scale invasion from the other side of the mountain barriers was feasible and that 'no hostile advance' along the passes 'is ever likely to be attempted'. But there were beyond the main ranges extensive barren, rugged, no-man's lands, which hardly contained any settled population but were intermittently visited by nomadic tribes, no-man's lands on which Kashmir, Hunza, Afghanistan and China had some sort of flimsy, nebulous, conflicting claims but on which none of them exercised any real authority. The future of these no-man's lands between the Indian boundary and the lines of Russian advance in Central Asia became a matter of grave anxiety to the British. The dominant British view was that while the Indian empire should not extend beyond the principal line of water-parting between the basin of the Indus on the south and the basins of the Oxus and the Yarkand rivers on the north, India's security considerations demanded that Russia should not instal herself in the no-man's lands on the other side of the watershed. Should she do so the passes would, as Lytton apprehended, become the 'lines of demonstration', and the tribal areas on the Indian side of the frontier, the 'areas of intrigue'. Hence, it became a major objective of British policy to impede, by every possible means, Russian advance into these no-man's land and thus fend off Russia from direct contact with the Indian frontier.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Russian advance was apprehended primarily, through Afghanistan, Eastern Hindu Kush and the Pamirs, and secondarily, through Eastern Turkestan. Regarding the first, British policy broadly speaking, aimed at establishing an agreed neutral zone between the two empires. In the late 'fifties', Britain urged that Oxus should be taken as the ultimate dividing line of the Anglo-Russian spheres of interest in Central Asia. The Czar declared the idea of a neutral zone highly pleasing but pointed to Afghanistan as the most appropriate for the purpose. The British replied 'that Afghanistan would not fulfil those conditions of a neutral territory that it was the object of the two governments to establish, as its frontiers were ill-defined'. This led to a discussion of the alignment of the northern Afghan frontier, followed by an agreement in 1873 by which Russia virtually gained her point by conceding Badakshan and Wakhan to form part of the Afghan Kingdom.

Despite this agreement, Russian pressure on the outlying semi-independent areas of Afghanistan continued to increase in the following years. On March 30, 1884, the Russians attacked a body of Afghan troops and drove them out of Panjedh. The consequent excitement in India and Britain was so great that for a moment it appeared that a war was almost inevitable. Even Gladstone, who was generally a pacifist, called up the reserves and moved a vote of credit for special military preparations. But a compromise was ultimately worked out and a protocol signed by which although Russia obtained Panjdeh, Afghanistan retained the pass of Zulfikar.

This protocol was followed by a short period of comparative quiet; but in 1892, there was a revival of the dispute regarding the Pamirs, which led on to a series of crises during the next three years. The British feared that the imminent Russian annexation of the Wakhan Valley would, by outflanking the frontier agreed upon in 1873, bring the Czarist empire into actual physical contiguity with the Indian. To offset this danger, a serious attempt was made to interest the Chinese in the 'game', so as to create a Chinese buffer between the Russian and British spheres of interest; but failing effective Chinese response, the two contestants signed an agreement on March 11, 1895, by which 'the spheres of influence of Great Britain and Russia to the east of Lake Victoria (Zor Koul)' were divided by a line which, starting from a point on that lake near its eastern extremity, was to 'follow the crests of the mountain range running somewhat to the south of the latitude of the lake as far as the Bendersky and Orta-Bel Pass'. In effect, the Pamir agreement created an Afghan buffer by extending a small finger of Afghan territory in Wakhan eastwards to touch on the Taghdumbash Pamir which was taken as the western limit of the Chinese province of Sinkiang. The line agreed upon then has remained unaltered ever since. The Russians, both Czarist and Soviet, have stood by the 1895 demarcation as far as it concerned both their own claims and the British Indian claims. The British, too, right up to the end of their rule in India, stood by the new Wakhan valley frontier with Afghanistan and had no further contact with the Russians across the buffer.⁶⁰ Years afterwards,

⁶⁰ For the full text of the Pamir agreement, see Alder, *op.cit.*, Appendix VII, pp. 334-35; see also O. Lattimore, *Pivot of Asia* Appendix III, and *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, XXXVIII (1951), pp. 73-81; also *Report of the Proceedings of the Pamir Boundary Commission, 1896* (Calcutta, 1897).

however, the Chinese referred to this important agreement as a 'secret partition' and showed on some of their maps the Chinese claim to the Wakhan valley.

With regard to the second, viz., the possibility of invasion through Eastern Turkestan, the overall British policy was to support and bolster up Chinese hegemony in the region so that it might serve as a bulwark against further Russian expansion. Unfortunately, in the second half of the nineteenth century China had become the 'sick man' of Asia, and it seemed doubtful if she could withstand the advancing tide of Russian expansionism. Even though the Chinese had reconquered Eastern Turkistan, their hold on the country was, as Captain H. Ramsay stated, 'the reverse of firm',⁶¹ and Russian influence in Kashgar, as years rolled by, seemed to become more and more dominant. Russia's absorption of Kokhand and Kuldja had, in a way, established her strategic grip on Eastern Turkestan; and the Treaty of St. Petersburg (1881) marked the establishment of Russian commercial domination in the area. By 1884, the Russians had become, in the words of Lord Kimberley, 'the uncontrolled masters of the situation' and their consul, Petrovsky, 'the virtual ruler of Kashgar'.⁶² Reporting to W. J. Cunningham on August 1, 1890, Francis Younghusband stated that he got a rather surprising account of the way the Russians treat the Chinese in Kashgar. '... they simply treat them as dogs... they use the most forcible means of getting what they want out of the Chinese, and state openly that this method is the only way of carrying on business with them.'⁶³ In fact, most British travellers and officials felt that Russia had established a strangle hold on Eastern Turkestan and a complete take-over was only a question of time.

The position of Eastern Turkestan, as outlined above, became a matter of grave anxiety to the Government of India. As already stated, there were vast no-man's lands beyond the Indian frontier extending from the Pamirs to Shahidulla and beyond, on which Hunza, Kashmir and China had conflicting claims but on which none of them exercised any real jurisdiction. Should the Russians conquer Eastern Turkestan, as seemed possible, they might put forward a claim to these no-man's lands on the basis of Chinese

⁶¹ S. F., June 1887, Nos. 167-178.

⁶² P. T. Etherton, *In the Heart of Asia* (London, 1925), p. 111.

⁶³ S. F., October 1890, Nos. 141-170.

claims and thus establish that conterminity of the Russian and the British frontiers, which it had been the persistent endeavour of the Indian Government to avoid.

The principal areas of such conflicting claims were the Taghdumbash Pamir, Raskam and the barren terrain between the Karakoram Pass and Shahidullah. The only inhabitants of these areas were the Kirghiz—a pastoral people who ranged from one country to another, regardless of political boundaries, whether demarcated or not, and owned a very shadowy allegiance to any one who seemed to be momentarily powerful. Hunza and China both claimed Taghdumbash Pamir and Raskam; and Kashmir and China claimed the region between Shahidulla and the Karakoram Pass.

But there was an element of ambiguity about Hunza's own position. This small hill state, situated in the extreme northwest of Kashmir, derived its importance from its geographical position in the region 'where three Empires meet'. To the north east it marches with the Sarikol district of Eastern Turkestan, while to the north it stretches up towards the junction of the Mustagh and Hindu Kush ranges, and is divided only by a narrow wedge of Afghan territory from the Russian Pamirs. The people are usually called Kanjutis, who were feared as frightful robbers.

Hunza had been tributary to China since almost the beginning of the nineteenth century; and although this tributary relationship lapsed when Yakub Beg made himself master of Kashgaria, the Chinese sought to revive their former claims after their reconquest of Eastern Turkestan. In the meanwhile, however, Hunza had owned the suzerainty of Kashmir and had become a tributary to the Maharaja. But even after this change of allegiance, the Mir of Hunza, obviously with British consent, used to send the 'customary annual present' to the Taotai of Kashgar and receive from the latter 'customary return presents'. It may be noted that Hunza was a considerable gainer by this interchange of presents. In 1898 the Hunza 'tribute' to China was valued at Rs. 120, and the return presents from China at Rs. 1,070.⁶⁴

In spite of his dubious position, however, the Mir of Hunza possessed certain 'indefinite but rather extensive' rights in the main range of the Taghdumbash Pamir and the Raskam valley,⁶⁵

⁶⁴ I. O. A. 170 (1911).

⁶⁵ I. O., Secret No. 198, October 27, 1898.

and about the year 1887, the Chinese authorities in Sinkiang had admitted his right to levy tribute on the Kirghiz or the Sarikulia living in these areas. In a letter dated June 29, 1896, addressed to the Resident in Kashmir, the British Agent in Gilgit explained the position of Hunza vis-a-vis Taghdumbash Pamir and Raskam thus :

I will briefly state all information we are in possession of concerning the claim of the Kanjutis to portions of the Taghdumbash and Raskam. The Mir of Hunza himself declares that, in the time of Salim Khan I, son of Ayesho, and before the Chinese occupation of Kashgar, the Raskam country was taken by Hunza, and that subsequently when the Chinese occupied Kashgar an agreement was drawn up in the time of Mir Salim Khan II, which admitted the rights of Hunza in Raskam and on the Taghdumbash. In the time of Mir Ghazan Khan, a document was signed and sealed by various representative Sarikulis which admitted Hunza's claim to the territory mentioned. This document was kept in the fort of Baltit (Hunza), but has been lost since 1891. The Mir believes that it was sent to Simla in that year with a mass of papers which were found in Hunza at the end of the Hunza Nagar expedition. The Mir asserts that forts were built by the Hunza people without any objection or interference by the Chinese at Dabdar (Dafdar), Kurghan, Ujadbhai, Azgat, on the Yarkand river, and at three or four other places in Raskam. . . . The Wazir Humayun says that he has frequently been to the Raskam country by the Shimshal route and could point out at once the Hunza boundary there. Dabdar, or just to the north of it, seems to be the limit claimed by Hunza on the Taghdumbash Pamir.⁶⁶

George Macartney, Special Assistant for Chinese Affairs to the Resident in Kashmir and a *persona gratissima* with the Chinese, writing from Kashgar on April 16, 1895, noted :

Kanjut, it may be remembered, used before our occupation of it to levy taxes as far as Dabdar on the Taghdumbash Pamir, a portion of Sarikul known as Pakpah and Shakshah was app-

⁶⁶ S. F., October 1896, Nos. 533-541.

arently once tributary to it. A stronghold at a place called Darwaja, situated near and on the northern side of the Shimshal Pass, seems still to be in the possession of Kanjutis. The jurisdiction of the Maharaja of Kashmir used to extend to Shahidulla, where there is still a fort built by him.⁶⁷

The whole question of Hunza's claims and what should be the British attitude towards them continued to be discussed in Indian official circles in the following years. Captain (later Sir) Henry McMahon, then Political Agent at Gilgit, wrote in May, 1898, a 'complete history' of the Hunza claims to the Taghdumbash and Khinjerab Pamirs and to Raskam.

He narrated how in about 1885, the Taotai of Kashgar laid down that Hunza's rights extended over the Taghdumbash and the Khinjerab Pamirs to Dafdar and an agreement to that effect was drawn up and signed by him and the Sarikoli headmen. The existence of this document has been admitted by the Taotai; but unfortunately it is not forthcoming. Notwithstanding, certain taxes payable to Hunza by inhabitants of the Pamirs are to this day levied by the Chinese and forwarded to the Mir of Hunza.⁶⁸

Similar opinions were expressed by Sir A. Talbot, then British Resident in Kashmir, in a letter (dated 24th May 1898) to the Secretary to the Government of India, Foreign Department.

A note on the Hunza claims to the Taghdumbash and Raskam, compiled before any question had arisen between Hunza and China concerning that valley, shows that the people of Hunza attacked and defeated the Kirghiz of the Taghdumbash Pamir and that the Chinese sent Salim Khan, then Tham of Hunza, a present for having defeated the enemies. . . . According to Hunza accounts, they have invariably drawn revenue from the Kirghiz since the time of the conquest of Salim Khan I, except during the period when the Chinese were dispossessed of Kashgar by Yakub Beg, and this revenue was again levied by Hunza when the Chinese re-acquired their ascendancy in the New Dominion.

⁶⁷ F. O. 17/1255.

⁶⁸ S. F., July, 1898, Nos. 306-347.

So far their claim seems good, and there appears little doubt that, *were other influences not at work*, Hunza could gain possession of the Raskam Valley without any real or effective opposition on the part of China, for the Hunza allegiance to China was practically guaranteed by profit to the former, and not by fear of the latter country.⁶⁹

The most important among the 'other influences', referred to above, was British policy itself. For, despite the facts cited and the opinions put forward by the officers on the spot, British policy in regard to Hunza or Kashmir's claims beyond the great ranges, which form the northern watershed of the Indus basin, remained fundamentally negative. The crests of the Eastern Hindu Kush, the Mustagh and the Karakoram provided the most formidable natural frontier that any country could look for; and further extension of Kashmir's boundary beyond these ranges, the British thought, would entail more disadvantages than advantages. It would strain Anglo-Chinese relations at a time when the British needed Chinese goodwill to counteract Russian moves in Central Asia, and would certainly prejudice British commercial interests in Sinkiang. It was also argued that any forward move by the British in Taghdumbash Pamir, Raskam or Sarikal might be answered by a speedy Russian occupation of Kashgar and all the adjoining country. The best solution of the problems posed by these areas, therefore, was to allow the Chinese to establish their authority over them. Indian strategic interests required that there should be 'at least a strip of Chinese territory between Russia and the northern frontier of India. But while allowing the Chinese to establish their claims over these areas, the British did not formally surrender the Hunza claims. These, it was thought, could be used as a lever at the time of an all-round border settlement between India and China.

The British attitude towards the Shahidulla-Karakoram Pass region was much the same. Here was a no-man's land, stretching from the Yarkand valley to the Karakash, more or less uninhabited except by a few hundred Kirghiz nomads. But it was a little more important than the two other territories, referred to above, because through it ran the main trade route between Ladakh and Eastern Turkestan. Here, too, Hunza had certain claims over parts of the

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

area, and the men of Hunza, the Kunjuts, were in the habit of raiding caravans passing through it. In 1863, Maharaja Ranbir Singh sent an army across the Karakoram Pass and established a fort at Shahidulla, slightly to the north of the Suget pass, in the Kuenlun mountain range. In effect, this brought the area between the Karakoram and the Kuenlun ranges under Kashmir's sovereignty. But the British, who seem to have had an uncanny feeling about this extension of Kashmir's influence beyond the Karakoram Pass, made it known to the Maharaja that the Government of India were not prepared to commit themselves in any way 'as to the boundaries of his possessions'.⁷⁰ When Yakub Beg built up his power in Kashgaria, the Maharaja, knowing the British attitude, withdrew his garrison from Shahidulla to south of the Karakoram Pass, and Turkistan troops seized control of it. When the Chinese returned to Sinkiang in 1878-80, they, however, extended their claims upto Kilian, Kogyar and Sanju passes north of the Kuenlun, which in contemporary Chinese view was the southern boundary of Eastern Turkestan. Shahidulla consequently remained deserted and the intervening area between it and the Karakoram Pass reverted to the position of a no-man's land.

In 1885, the Wazir of Ladakh strongly urged that Kashmir troops should be sent to re-occupy Shahidulla but was told by Ney Elias, the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, to desist from taking any such step. In 1886 and 1887, Captain H. Ramsay, British Joint Commissioner in Ladakh, thrice pleaded that the boundary between Ladakh and Sinkiang should not be at Karakoram Pass but at Shahidulla, 79 miles beyond, and the current uncertainty about the boundary should be removed without delay. He was, however, informed that 'the Governor General in Council does not desire at present to discuss the boundary between Ladakh and Kashgar'.⁷¹ Even as late as April, 1893, the State Council of Jammu and Kashmir discussed the question of this sector of the frontier and the Maharaja sent a Memorandum to the Resident explaining why he thought the Kashmir frontier should extend to Shahidulla. He stated that there was a Kashmiri fort at Shahidulla constructed before either Yakub Beg or the Chinese put forward any claims to that area and that in 1873 the British mission to Yarkand was escorted by Ladakh officials to Shahidulla and only

⁷⁰ Enclosure 6 of 25, India, 17 May 1870, LIM/6, p. 381.

⁷¹ S. F., June 1887, No. 176.

there it was met by Yarkand officials, signifying thereby that Eastern Turkistan's jurisdiction extended at best upto that point. But the Government of India stuck to its view that 'it was not desirable that the Kashmir state should add to its responsibilities by assuming control over the country beyond the Karakoram.'⁷²

Meanwhile, however, the Russian interest and presence in the region came under British observation. In 1887, Grum Grijimailo explored along the upper reaches of the Yarkand river, and in the following year Grombtchevsky 'crossed the Aghil pass over the range between the Karakoram and Kuenlun mountains, explored the valleys on the northern side of the Yarkand river, and then made his way to Shahidulla; from there he explored up the Karakoram Pass and some of the neighbouring valleys.'⁷³ This made the Government of India sit up and take two immediate steps. Firstly, Francis Younghusband was deputed to the area to watch and report and, secondly, the Chinese were encouraged to push south and take over the no-man's land. Lord Lansdowne was clearly of the view that the British should

encourage the Chinese to take it, if they showed any inclination to do so. This would be better than leaving a no-man's land between our frontier and that of China. Moreover, the stronger we can make China at this point, and the more we can induce her to hold her own over the whole Kashgar-Yarkand region, the more useful she will be to us as an obstacle to Russian advance along the line.⁷⁴

About 1890, with tacit British support, the Chinese erected a small fort at Suget at a distance of three *kos* from Shahidulla, 'in which some Kirghiz men and two or three Chinese officials remain as a Chauki (guard)'. On a visit to the area immediately thereafter, Francis Younghusband reported the Chinese advance to his Government with considerable satisfaction. 'The Government of India', he wrote, 'may...take as an accomplished fact that the boundaries of Kashmir and Chinese Turkistan meet at the Indus watershed.'⁷⁵ The Governor-General, Lord Lansdowne, was

⁷² S. F., January 1898, Nos. 160-169.

⁷³ S. F., October 1890, Nos. 141-170.

⁷⁴ Memorandum by Lord Lansdowne, S. F., October 1889, Nos. 182-197.

⁷⁵ India Office, Enclosure 2 of 39, 11 March 1891, PFI/62, p. 793.

equally pleased and told Lord Cross in private that he attached the 'greatest importance' to the extension of Chinese influence in the gap.⁷⁶

This was, however, no substitute for an agreed boundary between Kashmir and Sinkiang and a section of the Anglo-Indian officials clearly saw the danger which might arise if Sinkiang, already under heavy Russian influence, was absorbed in the Czarist empire. In the absence of a formally delimited boundary, they argued, following the occupation of Sinkiang Russia would be able to push as far south as she could, for political reasons, even if no military advantage was sought, thereby creating a situation which it had been the consistent objective of British policy to avoid. The Governor-General-in-Council, supported by the British Foreign Office, however, maintained the view 'that the present condition of the Chinese Government is such as to make it impolitic for Her Majesty's Government to bring the question before them.'⁷⁷

The signal defeat suffered by China at the hands of Japan (1895), highlighted the utter hollowness of Chinese power. The defeat was followed by a serious Mohammedan rebellion in the provinces of Kansu and other disturbances in the neighbourhood. In the summer of 1896, rumours were current of an impending Russian advance into Kashgaria. Some British strategists and policy-makers now saw more clearly than before the futility of trusting to China as a possible ally or buffer, and underlined the importance of a boundary settlement between Kashmir and China without further delay. 'If we delay, we shall have Russia to deal with instead of China, and she will assuredly claim upto the farthest extent of the pretensions of her predecessor in title, at least to the very summits of the Mustagh and the Himalayas'.

A number of positive proposals were now put forward regarding the boundary settlement between Kashmir and China, one of the most important among them being that made by Sir John Ardagh, Director of British Military Intelligence in 1896-7. Ardagh based his proposals on two primary considerations, viz., the claims of the Mir of Hunza and the Maharaja of Kashmir on large areas beyond the crests of the mountains, already referred to, and the desirability from a military point of view of establishing

⁷⁶ Alder, *op.cit.*, p. 279.

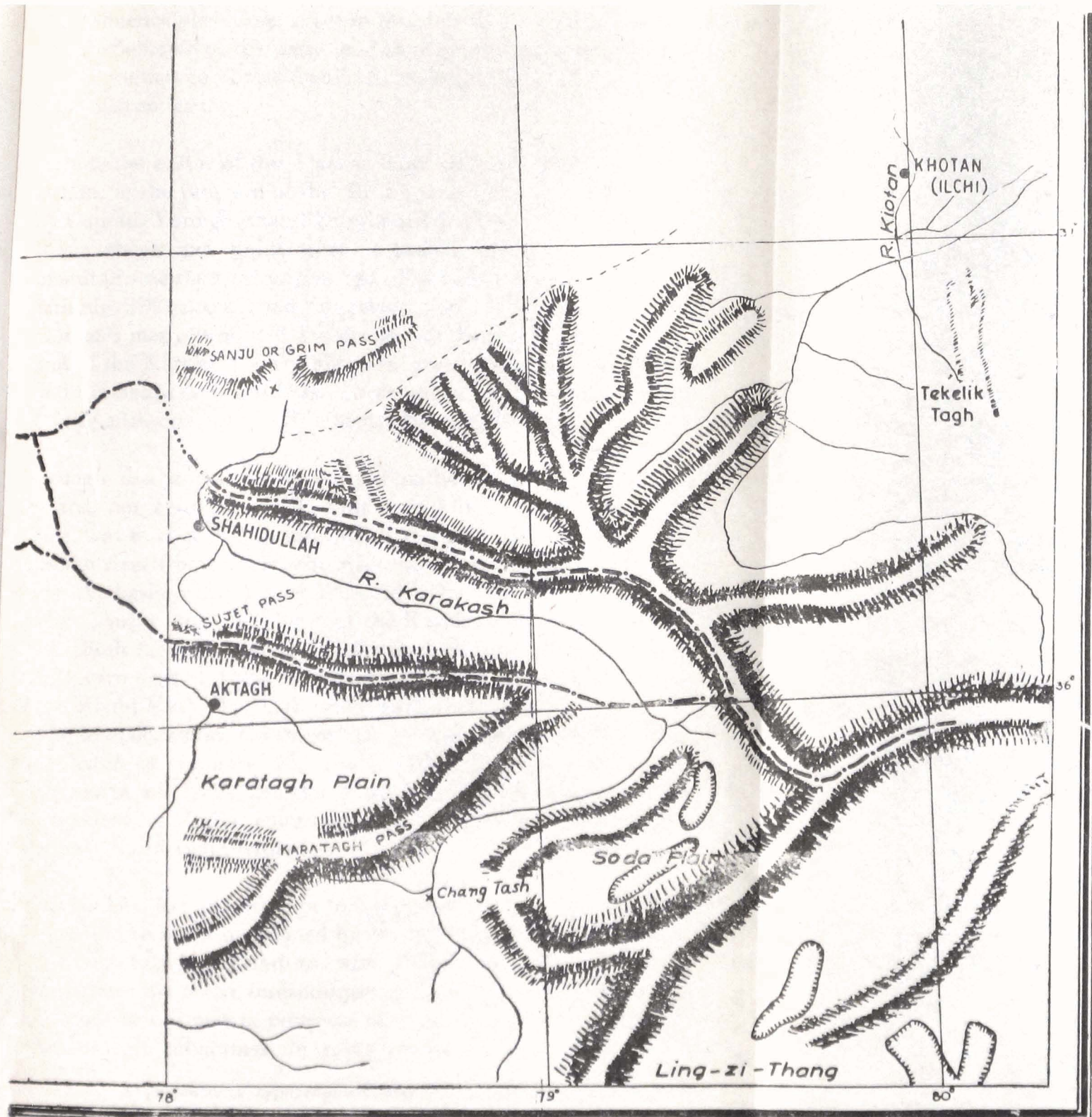
⁷⁷ S. F., October 1896, Nos. 533-541.



The Pamirs, Central Asia and India (1896)—Map I (North-Western portion)



The Pamirs, Central Asia and India (1896)—Map II (North-eastern portion)



The Pamirs, Central Asia and India (1896)—Map III (North-eastern portion)

British influence over these areas so as to be able 'to circulate freely on the further side of the passes and thus obtain information of any intended attempt to force them'. Accordingly he proposed that the line of frontier :

include the basins of the Danga Bash and its affluents above Dehda, at the junction of the Ili Su and Karatchukar, called by Captain Younghusband Kurghani-Ujadbai; of the Yarkand River above and point where it breaks through the range of mountains marked by Sargon and Ilbis Birkar Passes, at about latitude 37° north and longitude $745^{\circ} 50'77^a$ east on Mr. Curzon's map, published by the Royal Geographical Society; and of the Karakash River above a point between Shahidulla and the Sanju or Gomi Pass. These three basins would afford a fully adequate sphere of influence beyond the main crests.

Ardagh also proposed a second alternative line in the event of the first not being accepted. This second line, as defined by river basins, was to comprise within British territory the basins of the Mustagh river from its junction with the Yarkand river or *Raskam Daria*, the basin of the Upper Yarkand river above the ruins of Kugart Auza, and the basin of the Karakash above latitude 36° north. Both the proposed alternative lines were calculated to give the Government of India a 'glacis' in front of the main watershed of the Hindu Kush, Mustagh and Karakoram ranges.⁷⁸

The Memorandum was forwarded by the Foreign Office with their letter of January 26, 1897, asking for the views of the Government of India on the proposals. On December 25, the Government of India communicated their views, rejecting the proposals. Lord Elgin wrote :

We believe that any attempt to incorporate within our frontier either of the zones mentioned by Sir John Ardagh would involve real risk of strained relations with China, and might tend to precipitate the active interposition of Russia in Kashgaria, which it would be our aim to postpone as long as possible . . . we see no strategic advantage in going beyond mountains over which

^{77(a)} This is obviously a typographical error in the original. It should read longitude $76^{\circ} 50'$ east.

⁷⁸ S. F., January 1898, Nos. 160-169.

no hostile advance is ever likely to be attempted. . . . An advance would interpose between ourselves and our outposts a belt of the most difficult and impracticable country, it would unduly extend and weaken our military position without, in our opinion, securing any corresponding advantage. No invader has ever approached India from this direction where nature has placed such formidable barriers.⁷⁹

The Ardagh proposals thus fell through. But before long another set of proposals was formulated by the Government of India and despatched to the Secretary of State for India in London for his approval. These new proposals were primarily based on a mutual renunciation by China of her shadowy suzerainty over Hunza and by Hunza of her claims on the Taghdumbash Pamir and Raskam, and territorial concessions to China at the North-eastern end of Ladakh between the Lakzhung range and the Kuenlun mountains in exchange for Chinese concessions at the end of the Taghdumbash Pamir so as to bring 'the entrance of the passes leading to Hunza' under Indian control. Giving details of the frontier proposed, the Government of India in their despatch dated October 27, 1898, stated that it was designed to run from the end of the Pamir line demarcated in 1895, broadly following the crest of the main range of mountains along the east of Hunza and Nagar and north of Baltistan and Ladakh to the Karakoram pass. From the Karakoram pass the line was to run due east along the crests for about half a degree and

then turn south to a little below 35th parallel of North Longitude. Rounding then what in our maps is shown as the source of the Karakash, the line of hills to be followed runs north-east to a point east of Kizil Jilga and from there, in a south-easterly direction, follows the Lok Tsung range until that meets a spur running south from the Kuen Lun Range which has hitherto been shown on our maps as the eastern boundary of Ladakh. This is a little east of 80° East Longitude.⁸⁰

It is clear that the proposed alignment conceded the headwaters

⁷⁹ S. F., Frontier, No. 170 of 1897; F. O. 17/1356.

⁸⁰ S. F., No. 198 of 1898.

of the Karakash to China and then ran south, north-east and again south-east following what was thought to be the Lokzung range. On the other hand, it included within India the western part of the Taghdumbash Pamir making a deviation from the main crest of the Mustagh near the Shamshal pass to Darwaja, partly because it contained a settled Hunza post there but more because this area was regarded as more important from the strategic point of view than the area of Ladakh conceded to the Chinese.

The above proposals (sometimes called Macdonald alignment and sometimes Macartney-Macdonald alignment), however, fared no better than the Ardagh alignment. They were indeed communicated to the Tsungli Yamen on March 14, 1899, through Sir Claude Macdonald, the British Minister in Peking. But as was usual with the Chinese, they just sat over them without making any response; and the British, who seem to have soon changed their mind, withdrew the offer and reverted to claiming Aksai Chin upto the Kuenlun mountains and upholding the rights of Hunza.

Alastair Lamb in his essay, already referred to, seems to have seized upon these abortive proposals as offering a key to the solution of the current Sino-Indian border dispute in Ladakh. It is to be emphasised, however, that the proposals themselves were based on defective and inaccurate geographical data. In Dr. Lamb's opinion the Lokzung range provides a convenient geographical feature, which if accepted as a dividing line, should go a long way towards the solution of 'the Aksai Chin dispute, since it places on the Chinese side the entire territory through which passes the Sinkiang-Tibet motor road'. This suggestion suffers from two obvious defects. Firstly, the recent Indian survey maps such as No. 52M (Aksai Chin) and No. 52N (Lanak La) of 1939, which reduced the mountains to a maximum of 16,340 feet and split up the ranges, do not show the presence of any Lokzung range. Secondly, the Macdonald alignment of 1899 ended 'east of 80° East Longitude'. It, therefore, follows that even if it did not run along the Kuenlun range but south of it along the so-called Lokzung range, it would still leave a large part of Aksai Chin within India, cut the roads which the Chinese have recently built and exclude China from the large slice of territory which the Chinese forcibly occupied later. To lend some plausibility to his proposition, Dr. Lamb has changed the text of the 1899 abortive

offer from 'a little east of 80° East Longitude' to 'a point near 80° Longitude' and then on the map, which he provides to illustrate his point, shifts the end of the line to a point west of 80°. The Lokzung range was shown on the maps of the period under discussion running to a point just south of the Kuenlun range and east of 80° East Longitude and not as Dr. Lamb shows in his map as running downwards to the Lanak La. It may be added that even if the Government of India were to agree to such a suggestion, it would not be any more acceptable to the present Chinese Government than it was to the Manchus. In their note of December 26, 1959, the Chinese Government referred to the British proposal of 1899 and then added: 'It is inconceivable to hold that the territory of another country can be annexed by a unilateral proposal'. In other words, that which was offered by the British as a concession is now considered by Communist China as an expansionary move. The construction of new roads parallel to the original highway, with branches to the military posts set up by the Chinese, suggests that their designs are much wider than Dr. Lamb is prepared to credit them with.

The Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon was marked by fresh attempts for a clear definition of the frontier between Chinese Turkestan and Hunza. On March 14, 1899, the British Minister in Peking addressed a note to the Chinese Government setting forth proposals for a clear understanding as to the frontier between Kashmir and Sinkiang, and stating that to obtain this it is necessary that China should relinquish her shadowy claim to suzerainty over the state of Kanjut. The Indian Government, on the other hand, will, on behalf of Kanjut, relinquish claims to most of the Taghdumbash and Raskam Districts. As usual the Chinese Government sent no reply to the note. Thereafter, the Hunza boundary question remained in abeyance for sometime particularly because 'His Majesty's Government considered it inadvisable to make any communication to China on the subject of the boundary.'⁸¹

The Indian Government, however, was keen on a settlement of the border between Sinkiang and Kashmir and on January 26, 1905, addressed the British Government, adducing reasons for the inclusion, on the British side of the border, of the Ghorzerab

⁸¹ Letter from the Secretary of State in London to the Government of India, dated 9th August, 1904.

Valley, just beyond the watershed near Darwaza, where the Shingshalis had, from time immemorial, grazed the flocks which were their main source of livelihood. In exchange, it was stated, the Government of India were prepared to abandon the claims of Hunza to Raskam and the Taghdumbash. In the event of Chinese non-compliance or silence, it was proposed to carry into immediate execution the severance of Hunza from China, and to maintain the claims of Hunza at all points beyond the Mustagh range. It would thus appear that by 1905 the Macdonald line was practically forgotten and the Ardagh line was resuscitated as the northern frontier of Kashmir.

In 1912, the situation in Sinkiang again took a grave turn. The revolution in China in 1911 was followed by a violent upheaval in Kashgar. Magistrates, both Manchu and Republican, were killed and the entire machinery of Chinese government broke down. This, coupled with the isolated attacks on Russian subjects, provided an excuse for the reinforcement of the Russian consular squads; and 700 men with artillery arrived in Kashgar, while smaller reinforcements were sent to various consular posts. There was thus a real apprehension that Russian occupation of Sinkiang was imminent. As there had been no boundary agreement with China and nothing would be gained by having one now, the Government of India felt that Indian interests should be ensured by coming to an understanding with Russia regarding the boundary line between Sinkiang and Kashmir. In a telegram to the Secretary of State dated September 12, 1912, Lord Hardinge (the Viceroy) stated that as a preliminary to negotiations

the first essential is to demand recognition of a boundary line which will place Taghdumbash, Raskam, Shahidulla and Aksai Chin within our and outside Russian territory. A line similar to the line that was proposed in 1897 by Sir John Ardagh will obtain this object. . . . A good line would be one commencing from Baiyik Peak, running eastwards to pass, leaving Taghdumbash and Dehda on British side, thence along crest of range through Sargon pass and crossing Yarkand river to crest of Kuenlun range north of Raskam and along crest of that range through passes named in that map, Kukahang, Dozakh, Yangi, Kilik Passes to Sanju or Grim Pass; from there along Kuenlun watershed to Tibet frontier, crossing Karakash

river, including Aksai Chin plain in British Territory.⁸²

The Imperial Government in London, thereafter, initiated negotiations with the Russian Government to secure a boundary agreement on the lines suggested by Lord Hardinge; and although this seemed to promise some result at the beginning, the negotiations broke down owing to the vicissitudes of the World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917.⁸³

Almost a decade later, in 1927, the Government of India are said to have discussed the question of Kashmir's northern boundary and broadly decided to withdraw their claims from some of the areas to the north of the main Karakoram range, but these did not include Aksai Chin. They stuck to the *de facto* frontiers as these had emerged in the preceding decades. Accordingly, when the civil war broke out in China and spread to Sinkiang, posts were built and occupied by mounted constabulary all along the border at Dafdar, Bayik and Mintaka Karaul with advanced pickets just outside the Chinese border—one between Mintaka Karaul and Lugalaz facing the Mintaka Pass and another facing the Kilik Pass and the Wakhjir Pass into Afghanistan. In 1935, the Mir of Hunza openly denounced his shadowy connection with China and declared in the Durbar that he had altogether 'divorced' Sinkiang. The Government of India compensated him for his alleged loss of rights in the Taghdumbash Pamir by increasing his subsidy and by grant of jagir in Gilgit and Matamdas.⁸⁴

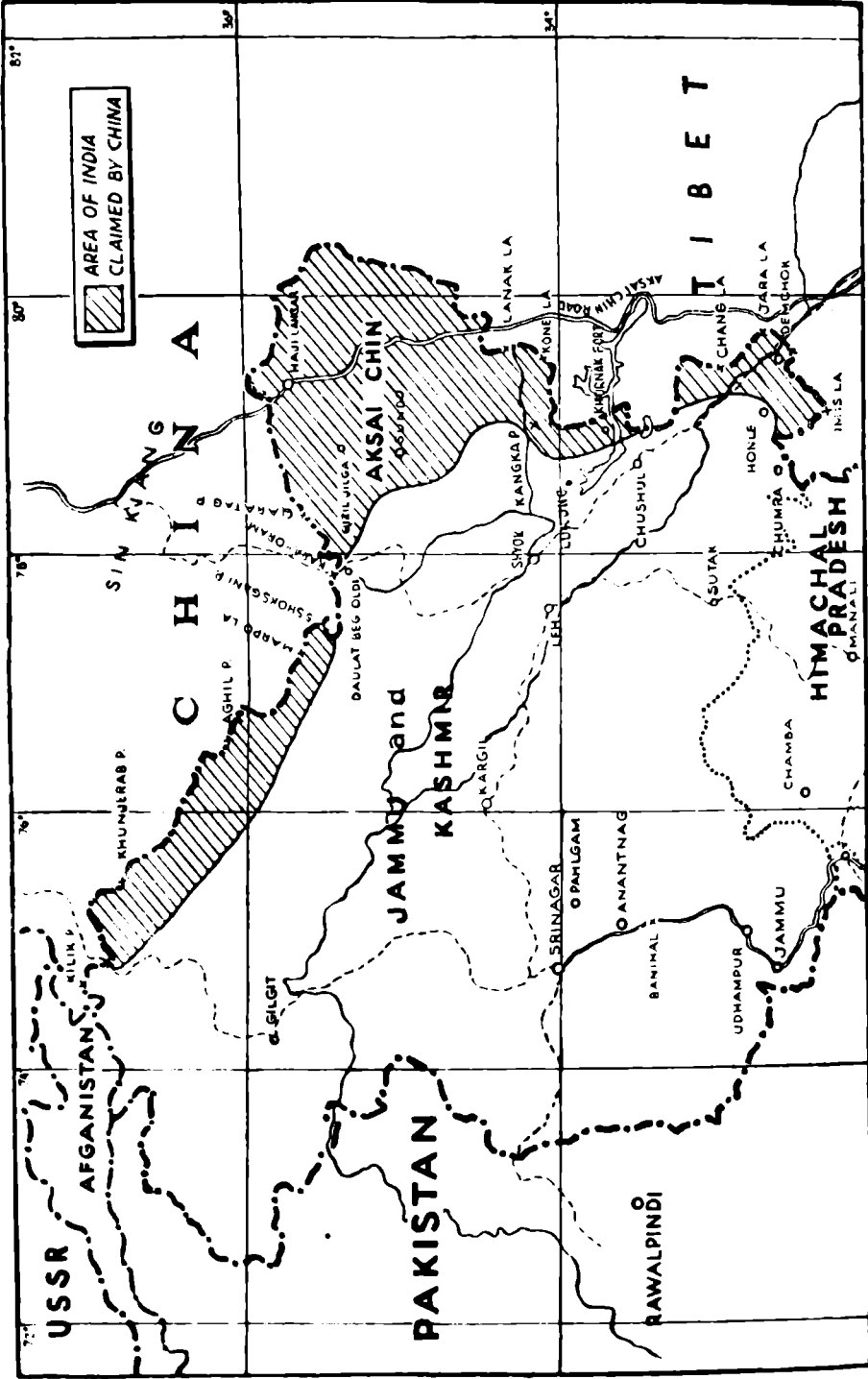
⁸² S. F., February 1913, Nos. 1-67; I. O. P 3545/12, The line was re-affirmed in 1915, Sec. I. O. P 3758/15.

On the suggestion of Archibald Rose, Acting British Consul at Tengueh in Yunnan, the Government of India in 1912 drew up a scheme under which the Mir of Hunza was to abdicate his rights in the Sarikol district (Taghdumbash Pamir) in favour of China, while in exchange (the latter was to give up her claims to Pienma (Hpimaw) in Burma (Viceroy to the Secretary of State, 6 February, 1912). The scheme did not receive the support of the Home authorities and was abandoned. But the fact that a scheme of this kind was drawn up by the Government of India in 1912, clearly shows that the British regarded the Sarikol area as lying within their territorial jurisdiction. A. Rose, "The Chinese Frontiers of India," *Geographical Journal*, Vol. 39, 1912.

⁸³ Lamb, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

⁸⁴ J. R. C. A. S., Vol. 38 (1951), pp. 80-81. K. P. S. Menon in his journey through Kashmir to Sinkiang, in 1944, found Misgar as 'the last inhabited

INDIAN BORDER—WESTERN SECTOR



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It would appear from the above documentary analysis that when the British left India in 1947, the Hunza-Sinkiang frontier lay along the Kilik-Mintaka-Karakoram line. It would further seem that from the Karakoram Pass the boundary followed the watershed between the Shyok and the Yarkand and then along the Qara Tagh range, till it reached the Kuenlun mountains. It then ran along the crest of the Kuenlun upto a point east of 80° east longitude, from where it took a southward direction till it reached the Lanak Pass. There is hardly any evidence in contemporary Indian or British documents to support the Chinese contention that from the Karakoram Pass the frontier between Sinkiang and Ladakh ran 'for its entire length along the Karakoram Mountain range'.⁸⁵

To build up their case for such a frontier, the Chinese have relied on three types of evidence of doubtful validity. They have cited, in the first place, a few isolated extracts from some of their annals such as *Chin-Ting Huang-Yu Hsi-Yu Tu-Chih* of 1782, *Chia-Ching Chung-Hsin Ta-Ching Yi Tung-Chip* of 1820 and *Sinkiang Tu-Chin* of 1911, which state that the southern part of Hotier extended upto the mountains, sometimes named as Nimangyi (meaning 'snow-clad') and sometimes as Tsung Ling.⁸⁶ The Chinese contend that these Nimangyi or Tsung Ling mountains were no other than the Karakoram ranges and then conclude that the Karakoram 'for its entire length' constituted the traditional boundary between Ladakh and Sinkiang. This identification of Tsung Ling with the Karakoram is, however, open to grave doubts. In a number of nineteenth century Chinese maps the term Tsung Ling is found written along the Kuenlun ranges and both the Yurangkash and the Qara Qash rivers are shown as cutting through these mountains, thus contradicting the current Chinese identification. It is well to remember also that the testimony of these nineteenth-century Chinese maps is in perfect consonance with the evidence of British surveyors, spot and the last telegraph office in India'. He spent his last night in India at a place called Gulkhwaja. 'There was no rest-house here', he writes, 'only a rock shelter from which the shepherd and the sheep had been hastily removed, in order to provide shelter to the Agent-General for India in China for his last night in India before crossing over into his agency'. K. P. S. Menon, *Many Worlds* (Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 196-97.

⁸⁵ *Official Report—CR.*, p. 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34.

geographers and travellers, cited in the foregoing pages.

Secondly, the Chinese have cited the evidence of some early British maps such as the map of 'Panjab, Western Himalaya and adjoining parts of Tibet', compiled by Walker and published in 1854. It is to be borne in mind, however, that these maps were drawn up at a time when the British Government knew little about the eastern and northern parts of Ladakh. They had assumed suzerainty over Jammu and Kashmir State, to which Ladakh belonged, only a few years earlier and their knowledge of the more inaccessible parts of Ladakh was of necessity imperfect when these maps were drawn. It was only after the survey of the Kashmir State, undertaken by the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, that it became possible to produce more accurate maps; and from 1865 most British Indian maps show the frontiers of Ladakh as they are shown today. It may be added that Walker himself revised his earlier erroneous maps on the basis of these surveys and in his maps of 1866 and 1868 showed the boundaries of Ladakh as claimed by India at present.

Curiously enough, the Chinese have also sought to base their claims on two secret maps, embodying the strategic ambitions of their War Office rather than the realities of the existing political situation. One of these was the map of China in the scale of 2 million to 1, prepared by the Cartographic Bureau of the Chinese General Staff, and the other a map of China in the scale of 1 million to 1 compiled in 1943 and printed in 1948 by the Bureau of the Survey of the Chinese Ministry of National Defence. We need hardly say that secret maps of this nature are nowhere admitted as having any evidentiary value in the delimitation of the territorial boundaries of states.

Even more curious than the above, is the Chinese argument that the Uighur origin of a few place-names in Aksai Chin shows that the area had been traditionally a part of Sinkiang. The Chinese know that if Aksai Chin possesses some place-names of Uighur origin, there are many more place-names in the same area which are of Ladakhi origin. There are some place-names even in Sinkiang and Tibet (e.g., Khotan and Ari) which are of Indian origin. This provides no excuse to India to claim these territories as her own.

Five

Conclusion

THE FACTS cited in the preceding pages and the overall conclusions emerging from their analysis hardly leave any doubt (1) that India's northern boundary is essentially a product of environmental and historical factors operating over the centuries, (2) that although sections of the boundary had already become traditional even before the British took over the administration of the country, other sections took their present shape under the impact of new threats from Inner Asia in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and the new concepts of security which the British brought with them, and (3) that the end-product was, by and large, the formulation of the principle of the highest crest watershed line of the stupendous northern mountains as the logical expression of the boundary for political purposes.

It is well to remember that the crest, watershed line boundary, as claimed by India, is in consonance with international law and practice. Most authorities on international law agree that when mountains or hills lie between two organised states, failing special treaty arrangements, the watershed constitutes the boundary. Bluntschli, for instance, says that 'where two countries are separated by a mountain chain, it is, in case of doubt, admitted that the highest ridge and the watershed line mark the boundary'.¹ Taylor similarly maintains that 'where there is a real doubt or ignorance as to a frontier and no express agreement concerning it, some general rules have been accepted which have been summarised as follows: where two states are separated by ranges of mountains or hills, the water-divide line marks the boundary line or frontier.'² Other distinguished writers on international law such as Oppenheim, Hyde and Fenwick share the same view.³ Nor is

¹ Cited by K. Krishna Rao, *The Sino-Indian Boundary Question and International Law*, p. 34.

² K. Taylor, *A Treatise on Public International Law* (1901), pp. 298-99.

³ L. Oppenheim, *International Law: a Treatise* (1948), Vol. 1, p. 534; C. G.

international practice different and history is replete with examples of states which have used watershed alignments to mark the limits of their territorial sovereignty. The Pyrenees and the Alps provide excellent examples. Much use of the principle was also made in Africa during the colonial era—for instance, in fixing the boundary between the former Belgian Congo and Northern Rhodesia, between the former Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and French Equatorial Africa—as well as in Latin America: for example, in the boundary settlements between Columbia and Costa Rica; between Guatemala and the Honduras; and between Argentina and Chile at the Treaty of Buenos (1881).

It may be noted that China also conformed in the past to the watershed principle in entering into boundary agreements with neighbouring states, as, for instance, in the Sino-Russian treaty of August 27, 1689; the Sino-French Convention of June 20, 1895, relating to the boundary between Tonkin and China; the Sino-British Conventions of 1894 and 1897 concerning the boundary between Burma and China and the Sino-British Convention of 1890 defining the frontier of Sikkim. Even in the Sino-Burmese boundary agreement of 1960, the watershed was accepted by China as the basis of delimitation. As the McMahon Line is based on the same principle, the Chinese in effect accepted the McMahon Line without calling it by this name. It may be that from the Chinese point of view what is good for the gander is not necessarily good for the goose.

We have referred earlier to some of the arguments used by the Chinese to challenge the Indian case for the boundary alignment which she claims. Apart from these, they have used two other arguments of a more general nature which merit attention. One of these, repeated almost *ad nauseum* in Chinese notes and memoranda, is that 'the Sino-Indian boundary has never been formally delimited'. It is not made clear, however, what the Chinese really mean by delimitation. Delimitation may be achieved by demarcation on the ground, by precise definition in the form of coordinates of nodal points or prominent features along the alignment in a descriptive statement, by a formal definition in a negotiated bi-lateral instrument embodying the agreed definition of the boundary, or by delineation on a map of sufficient accuracy.

Fenwick, *International Law* (1952), p. 371; C. C. Hyde, *International Law Chiefly as Applied and Interpreted by the United States* (1951), I, pp. 441-42.

It is true that except for some sections such as the McMahon Line, the Sikkim-Tibet boundary and parts of the border between Garhwal (a district in Uttar Pradesh) and Tibet, the Indo-Tibetan boundary, was not delimited by means of agreements with Tibet or China. This was partly due to the fact that (i) large sections of the boundary, as already stated, were traditional and customary, and (ii) the Chinese themselves, as in the case of the Ladakh-Tibet frontier, had been opposed to any further delimitation of traditional frontiers by agreements. Then from one end to the other the boundary is marked by outstanding natural features, was generally known to the Governments concerned, and was seldom questioned until the late nineteen-fifties. Boundaries of many states in the world, are not based on agreements and no one has questioned their validity on that ground alone.

The other omnibus argument which the Chinese have put forward, times without number, is that India's northern boundary is a product of 'imperialist aggression'. In his letter to Nehru, dated September 8, 1959, Chou En-lai stated : '...using India as a base, Britain conducted extensive territorial expansion into China's Tibet region, and even in Sinkiang...China and India are both countries which were long subjected to imperialist aggression. This common experience should have naturally caused China and India to hold an identical view of the above-said historical background...Unexpectedly, however, the Indian Government demanded that the Chinese Government give formal recognition to the situation created by the British policy of aggression against China's Tibet region as the foundation for the settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary question.' In an earlier letter of January 23, 1959, Chou had said that 'the McMahon Line was the product of the British policy of aggression against the Tibet region of China and aroused the great indignation of the Chinese people'.

Frequent reiteration by the Chinese leadership and press of such catch-phrases as 'imperialist', 'product of imperialism' or 'imperialist aggression', so irritated the anti-imperialist Nehru at one stage that he retorted by saying that the Chinese empire did not emerge out of the mouth of Brahma, meaning thereby that if the British empire was the result of aggression, the Chinese empire was no less so. But irritation apart, the fact is that from the point of view of international law, it is irrelevant whether a particular boundary

is the product of imperialism or of aggression. 'In order to achieve some measure of stability and observance of treaties, it is assumed that the parties to a treaty are completely free agents and, unless pressure is brought against the person of the negotiators, duress does not invalidate the agreement.'⁴ We have recounted in earlier chapters the facts relating to the Indo-Tibetan Boundary Agreement of 1914, delimiting the McMahon Line. It was a freely-negotiated agreement, based on a careful examination of geographical, historical and ethnic realities, and there is not an iota of evidence to show that Lonchen Shatra or the Government of the Dalai Lama was coerced into accepting the agreement against their will.

It has been argued by some commentators that in some areas along the Indo-Tibetan or Indo-Sinkiang boundary such as Aksai Chin and parts of NEFA, the evidence of Indian administration has been too slender to justify Indian claims. To be sure, these areas were, to begin with, what is called *res nullus* in international law. The law recognises that effective occupation in a *res nullus* need not extend to every nook and corner. The Permanent Court of International Justice admitted that in a relatively backward territory it is not necessary to establish the same elaborate control and government as in more developed areas. Snow-bound or uninhabited or scantily inhabited regions clearly need a less elaborate and permanent machinery than do settled regions of a state. Again, as was indicated by the International Court of Justice in the *Minquiers and Ecrohos* case between Britain and France, sovereign rights do not need to be exercised without interruption in such inhospitable areas.⁵ In fact, international tribunals are satisfied with very little in the way of actual exercise of sovereign rights, provided the other state cannot make out a superior claim of having exercised such rights.⁶ And the Chinese have not produced any worthwhile evidence to prove that they ever exercised such rights to the south of the Kuenlun range or in the tribal belt of the Assam Himalaya upto the foothills.

The Sino-Indian Agreement on trade and intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India, which included a solemn

⁴ L. C. Green, "Legal Aspects of Sino-Indian Border Dispute", *China Quarterly*, 1960, No. 3, p. 48.

⁵ *International Court of Justice, Reports*, 1953, p. 47.

⁶ Eckelen, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

promise to respect each other's territorial integrity, was concluded on April 29, 1954. China signed the agreement with full knowledge of what India regarded as her boundaries before that date, for these were clearly shown on the pre-1954 official Indian maps and asserted in various statements made by the Indian Prime Minister. As China made no official counter-claims, nor any request for border negotiations, the unconditional signing of the agreement precluded her from quietly occupying territory which India had claimed as her territory.

'If the objection were raised', says Eekelen, 'that in 1954 India did not mention the border either, for fear of provoking Chinese demands for concessions, it may be said that she had given an official intimation of what she regarded as her traditional boundary in her maps and statements while upto 1954 China had produced no official maps or claims which substantially conflicted with Indian interests. In the context of a bilateral agreement specifically relating to Tibet and respecting each other's territorial integrity, the uncontested Indian position could not be challenged unilaterally. The wording of the undertaking in the Panchsheel treaty seemed sufficiently clear and unambiguous to stop China from entering the Aksai Chin. There is no room for the plea that the border question was left open by the parties, as neither side made any reservation to this effect.'⁷

The Chinese, of course, argued that silence on their part did not mean acquiescence. 'Can it be said', their officials asked in 1960, 'that a sovereign state has no right to reserve its position concerning questions of its own sovereignty and to raise it on suitable occasions?'⁸ But such reservations, it must be pointed out, are not valid unless they are formally, clearly and promptly stated; and the changing statements of Chinese reservations, made more than five years later, can by no means be described either as prompt or clear.

It is indeed curious why the Chinese did not officially make known to the Government of India the full extent of their territorial demands until the lapse of a decade after the 'peaceful

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁸ *Report, CR.*, p. 31.

liberation' of Tibet. That they had not forgotten the glory of the old Chinese empire, when diverse regions and peoples in Asia owed direct or indirect allegiance to the Dragon Throne, and foreign ambassadors from far-off independent kingdoms had to proceed to the imperial court, kow-towing all the way, is well-known. As early as 1939, Mao affirmed in *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party* that large parts of Asia such as Mongolia, Tibet, Korea, French Indo-China, Thailand, Burma, Ceylon, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim were areas stolen from China by the imperialists. In 1941, the Chinese Communist Party declared that 'recovery of territories lost by China represents a sacred task of the Chinese people'. In 1950, in course of an address to a large gathering in Peking, Chu Teh went a step further and announced '*The great people's Liberation Army shall march to further victories until the liberation of all Asia is completed.*' That Irredentism, like Marxism, forms one of the basic motivations of Chinese policy, few will deny. Why then did the Chinese not come forward with their demands earlier?

'Time was not ripe' was Chou En-lai's cryptic reply when Nehru asked him this question. Consolidation of Chinese position in Tibet was a pre-condition to any further forward move beyond the Himalayas. By 1959, that consolidation was well under way. A network of military roads and air fields had been constructed; the Chinese army in Tibet had been considerably re-inforced; thousands of Chinese immigrants had been brought and settled along Tibet's border-lands, thus creating a *junker* class who would safeguard Chinese interests. Above all, the backbone of Tibetan resistance to the steadily growing Chinese despotism had been broken. The time was 'ripe' for the next forward move.

A more plausible explanation may be that the Chinese were not clear in their own mind regarding the legitimacy and extent of their territorial claims on the Indian border-lands. Their pre-1959 intrusions were followed by claims only to the intruded areas and nowhere beyond. But when the Sino-Indian relations reached a breaking-point in 1959 for a variety of complex reasons—to some of which we shall presently refer—the Chinese decided to formulate and later inflate their territorial claims, not so much because they could be historically or legally substantiated but because they needed a *casus belli* to pressurise India.

In spite of frequent invocation of 'eternal' and 'historic' friend-

ship, Sino-Indian relations since 1949 were never as close as is usually supposed. It was a relationship in which India conferred most of the benefits and received most of the injuries. At the initial stage the Chinese Communists viewed India as a lackey of Western imperialism and entertained deep suspicion both about her internal policy of democratic socialism and her external policy of non-alignment. Early in 1949, Ch'en Pota, a prominent Chinese Communist theoretician, defined China's attitude towards democratic socialism in the following terms :

Our party is founded after the traditions of Bolshevism and Leninism without the traditions of social democracy. . . . This Bolshevism was forged through long struggle against social democracy, which betrayed Marxism and which advocated social reform. . . . opposed social revolution and co-operated with imperialism. . . . (Bolshevism) is entirely in contradiction to social democracy.⁹

The Indian policy of non-alignment similarly remained suspect in Chinese eyes. 'To sit on the fence is impossible;' Mao had said many years ago 'not only in China but also in the world, without exception, one either leans to the side of imperialism or to the side of socialism. Neutrality is a mere camouflage and a third road does not exist.'¹⁰

Nehru, who believed that Sino-India co-operation was essential for Asian peace and stability, made an all-out effort to remove misgivings from the Chinese mind by offering them his assistance and friendship in abundance. He exulted in China's recovery and resurgence, gave her an honoured place among the newly-independent Asian nations, and strove hard to secure for China her rightful place among the nations of the world. As Indian friendship began to pay dividends, the Chinese attitude towards India slowly changed ; and Chinese pronouncements and press comments lost some of their former abrasive quality. But during the half decade of Sino-Indian honeymoon, the Chinese do not seem to have ever lost sight of the basic contradictions between Indian

⁹ Quoted in *Red Dust : Autobiographies of Chinese Communists* (Stanford University Press, 1952), p. 21.

¹⁰ Quoted in C. Brandt, B. Schwartz and J. Fairbank, *A Documentary History of Chinese Communism* (Harvard University Press, 1952), pp. 453-54.

objectives and Chinese global aims and long-term strategy to achieve them. The present writer has examined a great deal of the vast output of the Chinese Communist daily press from 1951 to 1957 when relations with India were at their best, and although he has come across references to exchanges of diplomatic personnel and cultural exchanges of diverse kinds, he has not seen any serious, let alone sympathetic, discussion of either India's internal affairs or external policy.

From 1957, relations between India and China again seemed to deteriorate; this was in a large measure due to the emergence of new trends within the hitherto monolithic communist bloc. Mao had found Khrushchev's address at the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (denouncing Stalin as a tyrant, emphasising the need for peaceful co-existence among nations and accepting that there were roads to socialism) to be quite unacceptable. Such doctrinal deviations, according to Mao, amounted to nothing less than a faint-hearted betrayal of the world communist movement. In November 1957, while speaking in Moscow on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution, Mao stated that the 'East Wind now prevailed over the West Wind,' and unless the Communists took time by the forelock and struck, the West Wind would again prevail over the East Wind. A new strategy and a new dynamic policy was the need of the hour, he declared,—more so in the newly-liberated countries of Asia, where, unless a positive militant line were taken, Communism would lose to the nationalist, *bourgeois* satellites of the United States. He returned from Moscow determined to pursue this policy, to prove its validity as well as to carry on simultaneously an intra-party struggle to win over the confused, soft-hearted communists of Eastern Europe. In May 1958, he began his ideological crusade against Yugoslavia, partly because of the inner character of Yugoslav communism, but more because Tito was guilty of the unpardonable sin of practicing neutrality between the two world camps. In August, he sparked a crisis in the Far East by his attacks on the Nationalist-held, off-shore islands of Quemoy and Matsu.

At the time when the Chinese seemed to be girding up their loins to follow the hard line, Soviet policy appeared to be moving in the contrary direction. Khrushchev had already indicated his acceptance of the supreme need of avoiding wars and relaxing the

cold-war tensions. Pointing to the dangerous international situation existing then, Bulganin urgently appealed to the western nations in 1958 for 'joint efforts to put an end to the "cold war", to terminate the armaments race, and to enter resolutely upon the path of peaceful co-existence'. By the beginning of 1959, signs of an approaching *detente* between the East and the West could be discerned on the international horizon. The Chinese were greatly perturbed, for, were such a calamity to happen, it would mean a serious set-back to their own hard-line policy and an indefinite shelving of their territorial and international ambitions.

Other factors complicated the situation further. Following the landing of American troops in the Lebanon in July 1958, Khrushchev had demanded a summit conference of the three Western Powers, the Soviet Union and India to discuss the problems of the Middle East. It hurt the Chinese to see their ally and big brother proposing non-communist India in preference to communist China, as a member of the Big Five Summit to settle an Asian problem. Although the conference was never held, Peking could not possibly forgive Khrushchev for having made such an insulting proposal. The Chinese became even more sore with the Soviet Union for the way its aid policy was changing its direction. In 1956, when China was designing her second Five Year Plan, the Kremlin was pre-occupied in Eastern Europe with political movements which were brought into line only after the offer of short-term credits totalling almost \$ 1,000 million. This unforeseen expenditure had prevented the Soviet Union from including China in its foreign aid programme of the year. But the next year the Soviets, instead of making good this loss, appeared to evince a new interest in the economic development of some South and South-east Asian countries, including India. The Kremlin explained this by stating that they favoured widely distributed aid, to eliminate American influence, to aid limited to socialist countries. The Chinese, on the other hand, argued in favour of socialist unity (all aid to the socialist bloc) and party militancy in the new states. For the moment, Peking's acquiescence was purchased by a secret nuclear agreement. But when in 1958, and again in 1959, the Soviet Union increased the quota of its aid to India, the Chinese could no longer conceal their bitterness and disgust, for they felt it derogatory to their honour to accept a lower position than India's in the Soviet assistance programme.

What made this enhanced Soviet assistance to India particularly galling to the Chinese, was the fact that Indo-American relations which were at their worst in 1956 and 1957, registered a marked improvement in 1958. American assistance to India during the serious financial crisis of 1958, signalled the beginning of a new appreciation by the United States of India's needs and led to considerable increase in cordiality and breadth in the relations of the two countries. What else could it be, the Chinese asked, but a collusion among two Super Powers to build up India as a counter-weight to China? And India was no mere passive beneficiary of the developing situation; Mao suspected India's hand in the approaching *detente* between the United States and the Soviet Union. He charged India with having extended its sympathy and support to the growing resistance movement in Tibet, although basically it was the product of Chinese misrule.

Simultaneously with these external difficulties, the Chinese were also confronted with acute internal difficulties. The internal dialogue in the 'Hundred Flowers' period had produced dissension and required embarrassing suppression. China's economic development under the first five year plan had not been as satisfactory as her leaders had promised. The widely advertised 'backyard furnaces' were an utter failure. The series of gigantic dams and other projects constructed with break-neck speed, did not solve the problem of recurring floods and droughts. The masses were tired and disillusioned. Faced with these problems, a dominant group within the Chinese Government adopted radical policies at home—the 'Great Leap Forward' and the communes. But something more was needed to keep alive the faith of the people in the leadership, and what could be better than an external conflict? The Chinese found the ideal external conflict in a border dispute with India. Fighting in the Formosa straits was altogether too hazardous; open conflict with the Soviet Union was yet premature; but in India, Communist China had an adversary which, it believed, could be hit without any fear of serious retaliation.

In this setting, the timing of Chou En-lai's refusal to recognise the McMahon Line and his demand for approximately 50,000 square miles of Himalayan borderlands, five years after the so-called *Panch Sheel* agreement, become explicable. By 1959, it was clear to the Chinese leadership that the time was 'ripe' to

devise a *modus operandi* to humiliate India and weaken her as an alternative democratic magnet attracting the smaller Asian nations. In other words, the primary motivations of the border dispute were political rather than territorial. It was an offshoot or a facet of a broader, deeper, multi-dimensional conflict, which was perhaps implicit in the new geopolitical complex created by the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950-51, but made explicit by new pressures generated in and outside China. Were it a mere border dispute, it could have been settled peacefully—as was done in the case of Burma, Nepal and Pakistan—after a careful scrutiny of the claims and counter-claims of the two sides, supported by unimpeachable documentary evidence, or by a reference to the International Court of Justice or neutral arbitration, as India had proposed. Were it a mere border dispute, the Chinese policy towards India since 1959 need not have unfolded in the shape of a continuing pressure, despite the fact that Aksai Chin, which China considered as strategically important for itself, has been under Chinese occupation since 1956 and India has done little to dislodge her from the occupied area. The entire Chinese strategy towards India—tarnishing India as the ‘running dog of American imperialism’, and Nehru as ‘a liar, rumour-monger and renegade to Afro-Asian solidarity’, the chain of border intrusions, invasion of 1962, the open collusion with Pakistan, the ultimatum to India during the critical days of the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, persistent and largely successful efforts to detach Nepal from her former pro-Indian orientation, subversive anti-Indian propaganda in Sikkim and Bhutan, clandestine assistance to the hostile Nagas and Mizos in Assam and incitement to all disruptive, centrifugal forces in India—is designed not to acquire a few thousand square miles of barren mountainous territory, but to eliminate India as a rival from the Asian scene and re-establish China as the proud and powerful Middle Kingdom, surrounded by tribute-paying, barbarian, political satellites. Speaking at Rawalpindi in June 1966, Chou En-lai is reported to have assured his Pakistani friends that ‘in about two years there would be no India worth bothering about’.¹¹ Whether this prophecy comes true or not, there is hardly any room for doubt that dismemberment and elimination of India as a significant factor in Asian politics has been one of the

¹¹ *The Statesman* (Calcutta, July 8, 1966).

fundamental objectives of Chinese policy, particularly since 1959, for Peking knows that once India is humiliated and knocked out, China will not need to resort to force to pull the smaller countries of South and South-east Asia into the Sino-Communist bloc. Mao is well aware of the classical Chinese strategy of Ts'ao-Ts'ao, a gambit which seeks to 'capture the Emperor in order to control the nobles'.

The answer to Chinese strategy is thus not what some commentators have pleaded for — willingness on the part of India to surrender some of the territories which China has demanded or another *Panch Sheel* over Ladakh, Sikkim and NEFA, but rapid enhancement of India's internal strength and defence capability and forging of closer ties with powers which are as concerned about Chinese expansionism as we are. Those who believe that mere territorial concessions will lay the foundation of a stable peace between India and China are, in the opinion of this writer, labouring under the same delusion as those who believed that Munich would save 'peace in our time'.

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Index

- ABDALI, AHMAD SHAH, 5, 113; invasion of India, 5
- Abors (tribe), 5, 28, 32, 34, 88; British expedition against, 47, 48; eleven clans of, 25
- Adhesion Agreement, 1906, 74
- Afghan Boundary Commission, 134
- Afghanistan, 6, 9, 86, 129, 135, 136; boundary with British India, 6, 86; relations with the British, 9, 129, 135, 136; role as a buffer between British India and Russia, 9; second Afghan War, 9, 129
- Agnew, Vans, 117, demarcation of boundary between Ladakh and Spiti by, 94, 117, between Ladakh and Tibet, 117
- Ahmad, Zahiruddin, 111
- Aitchison, 117
- Akas (tribe), 5, 24, 31, 33
- Aksai Chin, 118, 121, 147; accounts of foreign travellers, 118, 125, 126; Chinese claims over, 123-5; geological surveys of, 122; historical background, 124, 125; position in the early Chinese maps of Sinkiang 129
- Aman-ul-Mulk, 129
- Anglo-Chinese Convention, of 1890, 71, 72n, 78, 101; of 1906, 56, 57
- Anglo-Chinese Relations, 53-7, 60, 62, 66, 71, 72n, 78, 101, 124, 143, 145-7, 150
- Anglo-Sikh Wars, First, 93, 101; Second 109
- Anglo-Tibet Convention, 73, 74
- Apa Tanis (tribe), 24
- Ardagh, Sir John, 144-6, 149; on British India's boundaries, 144, 145
- Assam, acquisition of mountain passes by the British, 36; Ahom Kings, 29-31, 35, 38, expedition sent into Dafia territory, 29; annexation by the British, 32; Baliapara Frontier Tract, 49, British administration in, 88; British relations with Assam tribes, 32-42, 49; collection of *posa* by the tribes from plainmen, 34; cultural penetration in tribal territory, 31; expeditions against Abors 37, 47, 48, against Akas 37, against Daffas, 37, against Mishmis, 37; explorations of tribal areas by travellers and Missionaries, 37; invasion of Mir Jumla, 29; relations with Northern tribes, 29, 30, 31; Sadiya Frontier Tract, 49, British administration in, 88; Sadiya Khowa Gohains, 30; relations with the tribes, 31; Treaty of Yandaboo, 32; tribal population in, 31
- BAILEY, A. F., 38, 49, 81; on Chinese expansion towards India, 44
- Bara Hoti, 12, 20, 93, 98, 99; Chinese intrusion in, 12; historical evidences 99
- Bashahr, 7
- Beg, Yakub, 130, 131, 138, 142; administration of, 131; revolt against Chinese suzerainty over Eastern Turkistan, 130
- Bell, Charles, 57, 62, 63, 78, 84-6, 99; on Chinese non-adherence to Simla Convention, 62; on Chinese threat to North-Eastern Frontier, 45; estimation of Lonchen Shatra, 57
- Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 39
- Bhutan, 7, 36, 92, 101, 102; boundary with India, 102, 103, demarcation of, 36; boundary with Tibet,

- 102; British-Indian protectorate over, 102; relations with British India, 36, 53, war with India, 36, Treaty of Sinchula, 36
- Bhutiya, 36
- Biddulph, Captain, explorations in the Pamir region, 134
- Border incidents, 12-14, 16
- Bower, Captain Hamilton, travel into Aksai Chin, 126
- Bower, General H., expedition against Abors, 47
- Bray, Danis, on negotiations between Tibet and Tehri Garhwal, 76n, 77n
- Bronson, Rev. M., on the language of Assam, 31
- Butler, S., 23; on geographical features of Assam, 23; on Mishmi tribes of Assam, 29
- CAREY, A.D., travel in Ladakh, 125
- Caroe, Sir Olaf, on Indo-Tibetan boundary, 86
- Cayley, Dr. 119
- Chao, Erh-feng, 50, 54, 58, 60, 90; invasion of Tibet, 42, 43, 44n
- Chefoo Convention, 71
- Ch'en Pota, on democratic socialism, 159
- China, attitude to demarcation of the southern boundary of Tibet, 65; civil war in China, 150; claims over Hunza, 138, 147, 148; attitude towards Vassal states, 76; expansion in Central Asia, 130, 131, 137; expansion towards India in the 19th and the 20th century, 42-6; intrigues on Bhutan and Nepal borders, 43; Manchu Empire, 50, 69, 130; 1911 Revolution, 50; Simla Conference, acceptance of the principle of watershed at, 78, Counter proposals against Simla Convention, 67, non-adherence to Simla Convention, 62, territorial claims made at the Conference, 57, snags in the Chinese territorial claims, 66, 67, 77, 79, 90, 91; suzerainty over Nepal, 4; Tibet, attempted conquest by 1910, 42, 43, evacuation of Chinese forces from, 51, incursions into during 1908-11, 42-4, relations with 50, 51, 55, 69; Tibetan borders in early Chinese maps, 27, views on Tibet's competence to conduct foreign relations, 68
- China, Peoples' Republic, annexation of Tibet, 9-12, 18, 19, 163; construction of strategic roads in Tibet, 11, 13; expansionist programme, 9; global perspective of the Chinese foreign policy, 160, 161; relations with India, 11-18, 158-61, 163, border disputes with India, 12-15, 18-20, cartographic aggression, 90, 100, claims over Ladakh, 109, 151, 152, early stance on border disputes, 14, 18, 19, 20, 90; gradual enfolding of territorial claims, 20, 21, 90, 100, 158, implicit adherence to McMahon Line in early stages, 18, 20, 90, interest in Bhutan and Sikkim, 100, 101, intrusions into Indian territory, 12, 13, invasion of Indian frontiers 17, reaction to Colombo proposals, 17, 18, reaction to India's peace proposals, 17, refusal to discuss Sikkimese and Bhutanese boundaries with Indian officials, 100, road through Aksai Chin, 13, snags in the Chinese territorial claims, 77, 90, 99, 107, 108, 125, 151, 152, 154-7
- Chou En-lai, 13-14, 20, 66; assurances of safeguarding Indian interests in Tibet, 19; on Chinese border maps, 21; on Chinese territorial claims, 158; exchange of letters with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, 13, 14; on McMahon Line, 158
- Cockerill, Lieut. George, 134
- Colombo proposals, 17; participant countries, 17
- Cooper, T. T., on the position of Walong, 79

- Cunningham, A., 117, 137; demarcation of boundary between Spiti and Ladakh, 94, between Tibet and Ladakh, 117
- Curzon, Lord, 6, 9, 54; on Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, 72; frontier policy of, 148; on North-West frontiers of British India, 6; on Russian menace to India's security, 72; on three-fold frontiers, 6
- DAFLAS (TRIBE), 5, 24, 28, 29, 31; expedition into Dafla area by the Ahom Kings of Assam, 29,
- Dalai Lama, 50, 54, 69, 72; flight in February 1910, 43, in 1959, 43, position during the Manchu rule, 69, visit to India 1956, 12
- Dalgleish, Andrew, 131
- Dalton, E. T., 28; on inter-tribal trade on the Northern frontier, 28
- Davis, Sir John, 117
- Deasey, H. H., travelling account of, 126
- Demchok, 118
- Desideri, Ippolito of Pistoria; travelling accounts of journey into Eastern Tibet, 26, into Ladakh, 113, 114
- Dogras; 105; claims over Western Tibet, 105, 106; relations with Tibet, 106; treaty with Tibet, 106
- Drew, Frederick, map of Kashmir by, 122-24
- Dundas, W. C. M., 49, 80
- Durand Line, 6, 86
- EAST INDIAN COMPANY, 116; dominions of 93; relations with the Sikhs, 93; transfer of territories to Maharaja Gulab Singh, 93; wool trade with Ladakh, 116
- Elgin, Lord, on British frontier policy, 145
- Elias, Ney, explorations in the Central Asia, 134
- FENWICK, views on the principle of watershed, 153
- Fidal Khan, 113
- Fisher, on the validity of treaties concluded by Tibet, 107n
- Forsyth, Douglas, 128, 133; geographical survey in Ladakh, 128, second survey mission, 133
- Frontier Tract Regulation, 40
- GARHWAL, 97, 98
- Gauri Nath, King, 35
- Gerard, Alexander, visit to Shipki pass, 95
- Gilgit, under the Sikhs, 129
- Godwin-Austen, 120-22; survey of Jammu and Kashmir by, 120
- Graham, Brigadier, 38, 71
- Great Britain, Anglo-Russian Convention, 54, 74; Central Asian policy, 132, 134; consolidation of the British Indian territories, 4; defence policy for British India, 6; frontier policy for India, 5-8; geological survey on the Northern boundaries of Kashmir, 133, 134; policy regarding Tibet, 7, 53, 54; recognition of Chinese suzerainty over Tibet, 7, 53, 54; relations with China, 53-7, 60, 62, 66, 71, 72n, 78, 101, 124, 143, 145-7, 150
- Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, 83, 119, 122, 126, 128, 152; mapping of the Kashmir territories 120, 122; survey in Tawang district of Assam, 83
- Griffiths, Dr., explorations in the North Western Frontier, 37
- Grijmailo, Grun, explorations in the Karakoram region, 143
- Grombtchevsky, exploration in the Karakoram region, 143
- Gurkhas, dominion of 92
- Gutzlaff, Dr. Ch., on the position of Shipki pass, 95
- HALL, on border settlements in international law, 90, 91
- Hamilton, 30; on the tribes of North Eastern Frontier, 30

- Hardinge, Lord F., frontier policy of, 149
- Hare, Sir Lancelot, on North Eastern Frontier, 40; on tribal policy of British Indian Government, 41
- Hay, W. C., on Spiti Valley, 94
- Hayward, G. W., 119
- Hedin, Sven, travel into Ladakh and Tibet, 126
- Hertz, expedition on the Burma-China frontier, 46
- Himalayas, 1; Hindu Kingdoms in, 96, 97; Hindu shrines in, 81, 96; impact on Indian traditions, 1
- Hiuen Tsiang, on Hindu kingdoms in the Himalayas, 96, 97
- Holdich, Sir Thomas, on Northern Frontier of India, 8
- Hunza, 129, 132, 133, 138, 146-8, 151; British stand on, 139-42, 147, 149; early relations with China, 138, 141; frontier with Sinkiang, 151; geographical situation, 138; Mir of Hunza, 7, 138, denunciation of relations with China by, 150
- Hyde, views, on the principle of watershed, 153
- IBRAHIM KHAN, 112**
- India, (British), acquisition of Garhwal, 98; adherence to the principle of watershed, 8; annexation of Assam, 32, of Punjab, 109, of Sind, 109; Central Asian policy, 7, 132, 135, 142; evolution of boundaries, 8, 32, 36, 39, 40, 115; explorations in, Ladakh; 119, in North Eastern Frontier and Tibet, 38, 47, 49, in Pamir regions, 6; frontier policy, 5, 6, 8, 9, 36, 39, 52, 115, 117, 132, 135, 138, 143-5, demarcation of boundary between Ladakh and Tibet, 117, 118, impact of Russian menace on the frontier policy of, 7, 132, three-fold frontiers in the North-West, 6; North Eastern frontier of, 6, 39, British maps of North Eastern Frontiers, 39; Inner Line of administration in, 39-42, Outer Line of control, 40-2; protectorate over Sikkim, 101; reaction to Chinese expansion towards India, 44-9, 79; relations with Afghanistan, 9, 129, 135, 136, boundary with Afghanistan, 6, 86, 135, Second Afghan War, 9, 129; relations with Assam tribes, 32-42, 49, British administration in tribal territories, 49, 87, 88; expedition against Abor tribes, 47, 88, relations with Nepal, 101, boundary agreements with, 101; relations with the Sikh Kingdom, 108, 109, 116, 117; Tibet policy of, 7, 52-6, 60, 63, 64, 73
- India, Republic of, Indo-Tibetan relations, 11-13, 89; natural boundaries, of, 1; stand on the validity of customary boundaries, 3, 4; India's legal competence to administer the tribal belt, 90; relations with China, 10-18, 156-61, 163, Agreement on Trade and Intercourse with the Tibetan region of China 1954, 10, 156, 157; border disputes with China, 12-21, 90, 100, 109, 151, 152, 156-8, border incidents, 16, border posts in the central sector, 20; Chinese invasion 17, meeting of the Prime Ministers of India and China, 16; recognition of Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, 11, 12, stand on Aksai Chin dispute, 147, 148
- Indo-Tibetan boundary, 15, 92; Agreement of 1914, 156
- International Court of Justice, 17, 156
- International law, principle of watershed in International Law, 153, 154; significance of maps in border disputes, 22
- Ivan Chen, 56-9, 65, 66, 81; acceptance of the principle of watershed, 78

- JOHNSON, W. H., 98, 122, 124, 126, 127; atlas prepared by, 124; surveys in Garhwal, 98, of northern boundaries of Ladakh, 119, 127, 128, of Jammu and Kashmir, 120; visit to Khotan, 121, 126-8
- Jordan, Sir John, 56, 62; on Chinese activities, 46
- KANJUTIS, 5
- Kashmir, British protectorate over, 109, 129; claim over Hunza, 138, 142; conquest by Afghans, 113, by Ranjit Singh 104n, 113; geological survey of, 120-24, 133; Indian surveys of the northern borders 133; northern boundaries of, 129-52; relations with British India, 120, 129, 130, with Ladakh, 109-13; territorial claims of, 7
- Kautilya, on natural boundaries, 2
- Kazim, Muhammad, on Daffas, 29n
- K'e-ying, 117
- Kennedy, Captain, exploration of Tawang Valley by, 49
- Khalsa Durbar, 105; occupation of Ladakh, 105, 109; relations with Tibet, 105
- Kimberley, Lord, on Russian influence in Central Asia, 137
- Krick, Father M., explorations in North Eastern Frontiers and Tibet, 37
- Kublai Khan, 69
- Kumaon, 97
- LADAKH, 17, 94; as an independent state, 112; boundaries of, 111, 113-29, 142, 146, 152, with Tibet, 3, 111, 126, 142, demarcation of boundary with Spiti, 94, Johnson Boundary, 122; European travellers of 18th and 19th century, 113, 114, 118; geological survey of, 120, 121, 128; history of, 110-13; intrusions by the Chinese, 13, 17; rebellion of Imamuddin, 117; relations with the Mughal Empire, 112, 113, with Tibet, 94, 110-12; trade routes to Central Asia, 119; Treaty of Tingmosgang, 112; under Dogras and Sikhs, 105-7
- Lal Bahadur Shastri, 18; offer to China for negotiations, 18
- Lamb, Alastair, 36n, 61, 122, 124, 147, 148
- Lansdowne, Lord, on British frontier policy, 143
- Lapthal, 93, 98, geographical situation of, 99
- Lhasa Convention, 52, 76, 102; recognition of the boundary demarcation between Nepal and Bhutan, 102
- Lockhart, Colonel, explorations in Hindu Kush region, 134
- Lomaki, General, 132
- Longju, intrusion of China at, 14, 20
- Low, James, survey of Jammu and Kashmir, 120
- Lu Cheng-Hsiang, 56
- Lyall, Sir Alfred, on the concept of buffer territory, 9
- Lydekker, Richard, Geological surveys of, 120
- Lytton, Lord, on boundaries of India 132
- MACARTNEY, GEORGE, 124, 125; on the position of Hunza, 139
- Macdonald, Mr., 51
- Macdonald, Sir Claude, 147; proposals on Hunza dispute between China and Kashmir, 147, 149
- Mackenzie, A., 36
- Maomaris, 31
- Mao Tse-tung, attitude towards India, 162; on the frontiers of China, 158; on Nepal, 100; on non-alignment, 159-61
- Masson Kenneth, on W.H. Johnson's survey maps, 122
- Mayo, Lord, 128, 133.
- McMahon, A. H., 47, 53, 56-61 66; on British policy towards frontier tribes, 47; on Chinese refusal

- to ratify Simla Convention 61; estimation of Tibetan Foreign Minister Lonchen Shatra, 56; on Russian influence in Tibet, 52, 53
- McMahon Line, 8; 14, 15, 18, 19, 27, 185-7, 103, 154, 156; basis of, 78, 154; geographical co-ordinates of, 77, 78; legality of, 68-77
- Menon, K.P.S., journey to Sinkiang, 151
- Michell, 30; on Mishmi tribes, 30
- Mijis, 24
- Minto, Lord, Frontier policy of, 46
- Miris, 5, 24, 28-32; Ahom expedition against, 29; British expedition against, 49
- Mishmis, 5, 25, 21, 30; Butler, on, 29; expedition against, 48
- Monbas, 24, 25; religion of, 25
- Mongolia, 50; agreement with Russia, 50, 152; Mongol-Tibetan Mutual Assistance Agreement, 52; proclamation of independence from China, 50
- Montgomerie, Lieut., survey of Jammu and Kashmir, 120, 121
- Moorcraft, William, 114, 115; on Ladakh frontiers, 114
- Morse, J.B., on foreign relations of the Chinese Empire, 75
- Morshead, Captain H. T., 49
- Mughal Empire, 2, 112, 113; boundaries of, 2; suzerainty over Ladakh, 112, 113
- NAGAS, 31**
- Namgyal, Delegs, 94
- Namgyal, Rinzin, explorations in Bhutan and Sikkim, 38
- Needham, Francis Jack, 37, 38, 40; explorations in the North Eastern Frontier, 37, 38
- Nehru, Jawaharlal, China policy of, 10, 12-14, 17, 18, 155, 158, 159; on Chinese arguments, 155; letters to Chou En-lai, 13, 14; on McMahon Line, 18; offer to refer Indo-Chinese border dispute to International Court of Justice, 17; talks with Chou-En-lai on Sino-Burmese frontier, 19-20; Tibet policy, 11-13, 89; reference to China maps in 1954, 19
- Nepal, 5, 7, 9; boundary with Sikkim, 102; Chinese suzerainty over, 5, 70; Mao Tse-tung on, 100; relations with British India, 9, 53, 93, Anglo-Nepalese War, 1814-15, 93, 116, Treaty of Segauli, 93; relations with India, 101, with Tibet, 70
- Nevill, Capt., on British administration in Beliapara Frontier Tract, 88; explorations of, 38, 49, 83; on Monba tribe, 25; on the tribal administration of Tawang, 83, 84
- Nilang-Jadhang, 93, 97
- North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), 23, 24; accounts of early travellers, 23; ethnic groups in, 24, 25; geographical features of, 23; trade routes with Tibet, 14; tribal population of, 24, 25; early accounts, of the tribal culture by European travellers, 26, differences from Tibetans and the Chinese, 26, relations with Tibet and Assam, 25-32
- O'BECKETT, J., 98
- O'Callaghan, T.P.M., 80, 81
- Oppenheim, on treaty obligations, 91; views on the principle of watershed, 153
- PAKISTAN, 163**
- Panchsheel Agreement, 162
- Panikkar, K. M., 19
- Pauw, E. K., on Garhwal, 98
- Penna, Horace Della, travelling accounts of, 26
- People's Liberation Army, 17, 18, 20; march into Tibet, 90
- Permanent Court of International Justice, on the principle of effective control over territory, 156
- Peyton, J., survey of Spiti Valley by, 94

- QOSOT MONGOL KHAN, 107
- REID, ROBERT, on tribal population of the Northern frontiers, 26
- Ramsay, Captain H., on Russian expansion in Central Asia, 137
- Rawling, Captain G. G., travelling accounts of, 126
- Richardson, Hugh, on Chinese claim over Tibet, 50, 51
- Rose, Archibald, 27, 150; his map of Tibetan borders, 27
- Rowlatt, Lieutenant Z. A., exploration of North Eastern Frontier, 37
- Russia, Agreement with Mongolia, (1912) 50; Anglo-Russian Convention, 52, 54, 74; Crimean War, 131; expansion in Central Asia, 6, 7, 9, 72, 124, 128, 130-33, 135, 137, 143, 149, formation of Russian Turkestan province, 131, occupation of Tashkent, 131; geological surveys in Central Asia, 134, 143; indirect influence in Tibet, 52, 72; relations with China, 50, 72, 137; relations with Great Britain, 7, 52, 131, 135; Revolution of 1917, 150
- Ryall, E. C., surveys in Garhwal, 98
- Ryder, C.D.H., on the position of Shipki Pass; 95, 96
- SAMUDRA GUPTA, empire of, 2
- Sangchamalla, 93, 98, 99; geographical situation, 99
- Schlagintweit Brothers, explorations in the Aksai Chin region, 118
- Scott, D., (Governor of Assam), tribal policy of, 33
- Shah, Nadir, 131
- Shatra, Lonchen; 27, 56, 58, 61, 63-6, 78, 82, 84, 99; on Lhopa tribes, 82; policy towards the British, 60, 63, 64, 78; Tibetan claims made at the Simla Conference, 57
- Shihabuddin, on the tribes of Assam, 29
- Shipki Pass, 93, 95, 96; accounts of Alexander Gerard, 95; geographical situation of, 95
- Sikh Empire, 129; annexation of Gilgit, 129, relations with the British, 108, 109, 116-17, 129; I Anglo-Sikh War, 93, 108
- Sikkim, 7, 9; boundary with India, 102, with Nepal, 102, with Tibet, 7; British Indian protectorate over, 101; Chinese interest in, 100, 101; relations with British India, 9, 101
- Simla Conference, 27, 56-65, 68, 81, 87; application of the principle of Watershed, 78; British proposals, 59, 60; Chinese claims at, 57, 58; Tibetan claims 57, 58
- Simla Convention, 66-8, 76, 85; Tibetan boundaries in the maps of, 66
- Singh, Gulab, 93, 104, 106, 108, 109, 129; attainment of sovereign status, 108; career of, 104, 105; mapping the territories of, 120; relations with the British, 108, 109, 115-17, agreement with the British, 108, 109, 115; relations with Tibet, 105, 106, 115, treaty with Tibet, 106
- Singh, Maharaja Dalip, 108
- Singh, Maharaja Ranjit, 70, 104, 108, 113; conquest of Kashmir, 104n, 113, of Ladakh, 104, 118
- Singh, Pandit Kishen, explorations in Tibet, 38
- Singh, Pandit Nain, 24, 38, 82, 83, 114, 115; on boundary between Ladakh and Tibet, 115; explorations in North Eastern Frontier and Tibet, 38; Survey of Tawang district, 82, 83; on the tribal administration of Tawang, 83
- Singh, Zorawar, 113; invasion of Western Tibet, 105, 116; occupation of Ladakh by, 104, 105, 113
- Sinkiang, boundary with Kashmir, 144, 148
- Sino-British Conventions 154

- Sino-Burmese Frontier, 20, Boundary Argeement, 1960, 154
- Sino-Russian Treaty, 154
- Soviet Union, economic assistance to India, 161, 162
- Spiti, 93, 94, 109; as part of Ladakh, 94; demarcation of boundary with Ladakh, 94; historical and numismatic evidences, 93, 94; under British administration, 94, 109
- Strachey, R., Survey of Mansarover area, 98
- Strahan, L., on the position of Aksai Chin, 125
- Stratchey, Lt. Henry, maps of northern boundaries by, 118
- Suzerainty, concept of, 74, 75
- TALBOT SIR A., on the position of Hunza, 140
- Tawang district, 82-5, 89; British Administration in, 89; Monpas tribe of, 82, 83; tribal population of, 82; visit of Pandit Nain Singh, 82, 83
- Tehri-Garhwal, 97, 98
- Tibet, accounts of early European travellers, 26; as buffer between India and China 9; boundary with Ladakh, 3, 111, 126; boundaries in Simla Convention maps, 66, 67; clash with the Sikh Empire, 108; *de facto* status before Chinese occupation, 65-8, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 77; Dogra-Tibet war 1841-42, 70; early history of, 110; early rule over Ladakh, 109-11; foreign relations of Tibet before Chinese occupation, 65, 70-4; Indo-Tibetan trade, 68; legal status after Sino-Indian Agreement, 1954, 91; Mongol-Tibetan Mutual Assistance Agreement, 52; pilgrimages, 81, 82; relations with British India, 51-4, 63, 71, 73, 74, 76, 82, 84; demarcation of boundary with India, 63-6, 72, 82, 84, 85; request to British Indian Government for arms, 51; relations with China, 67, expulsion of Chinese forces from, 51, 54, history of relations with China, 58, 59, 69, 70, 73; relations with Dogras, 105-7, with Nepal, 70, with tribal population across the southern borders, 26, 28, 29, 82, 84; stand taken at Simla Conference, 57, 58; suzerainty over Bhutan and Sikkim, 4; Tibet-Sikkim border alignment, 71; Tibetan boundaries in early Chinese maps, 27; Treaties, Anglo-Tibetan Border Agreement, 85, Anglo-Tibetan Convention, 73, 74, Chinese-Tibetan Treaty of 822 A.D., 58, 66, Manchu Settlement, 1727, 58, Tibet-Kashmir Treaty, 1842, 15, Tibet-Nepal treaty, 1856, 70, Treaty of Tingmosgang, 107, 108, 112, Younghusband Mission to Lhasa, 42, 54, 73
- Trail, G. W., role in revenue settlements in Garhwal, 98
- Treaty of Lahore, 108, 109
- Treaty of St. Petersburg, 137
- Treaty of Tingmosgang, 107, 108, 112
- Treaty of Versailles, 22
- Trotter, Captain, Geological survey of Ladakh, 128
- Tsari District, controversy over, 81, 82
- Tso Tsung-tang, 131
- UTTAR PRADESH, Chinese intrusions in, 12; mountain passes, 98; controversy over Spiti, 93, 94, 109; surveys by foreign travellers, 98; total area claimed by the Chinese in, 93
- VAN EEKELLEN, W.F., on the basis of McMahon Line, 78; on Sino-Indian boundary disputes, 157; on Sino-Tibetan relations during Manchus, 69; on Tibet's status, 70
- Vassal-dom, concept of, 74, 75

- WADE, SIR THOMAS, 71
Wai Chiao-pu, 44, 60, 62, 67
Wakefield, E.W., on the position of Shipki Pass, 97
Walker, Colonel J. T., on Johnson's geological survey, 126
Walong, 89; British administration in, 89; historical background of, 79, 81
Warwick, Alan R., 73; description of Younghusband Mission, 73, 74
Watershed, adherence to the principle of Watershed in the demarcation of Indo-Tibetan borders, 64, 78; Bluntschli on, 153, 154; contribution in the evolution of customary boundaries, 4; practical application in international treaties, 154; Principle of, 4, 8; Suttlej-Ganges watershed, 97, 98, 100; Teesta-Watershed, 101
Watson, Francis, on the Chinese territorial maps, 90
Wellby, travel accounts of journey into Tibet, 126
Wilcox, R., explorations in North East Frontier, 37; on the tribal population of Northern frontier, 26
Willoughby, Colonel, on Chinese expansion towards India, 44
Wu-je, See Bara Hoti
YOUNGHUSBAND, F.E.; 73, 134, 137, 143; exploration in Central Asia, 134; Mission, to Lhasa, 42, 54, 73
Yuan Shih-kai, 50-55; Tibet policy of, 50, 55