

Tibet in Anglo-Chinese Relations:
1767-1842

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PART I

FROM 1764, WHEN the British position in Bengal was established beyond challenge, until 1842, when the Treaty of Nanking gave Britain the island colony of Hong Kong, the shortest route between British and Chinese territory lay across the Himalaya mountains. Until the Gurkha War of 1814-1816, the southern slopes of the Himalayas and the states that lay along them formed a narrow buffer between British territory and Tibet. As a result of the Gurkha War, British influence was brought right up to the Tibetan border, through the annexation of Kumaon in the western Himalayas, and through the establishment of a vague protectorate over the tiny hill state of Sikkim. Tibet had been evolving into a Chinese dependency since the beginning of the eighteenth century. This process, nearly complete by 1750, reached its final stage in 1792, when Tibet became, to all intents and purposes, an integral part of the Chinese Empire. The British in India were well aware of their proximity to this outpost of the power of the Chinese Emperor. In a period when British dealings with China were confined to trade at a single port, Canton, in conditions that were far from ideal, it would have been most surprising if no attempts had been made to develop Anglo-Chinese relations across the far from impassable barrier of the Himalayas.

The British began to appreciate the significance of Tibet in this respect as soon as they had established their rule in Bengal. A trade then flourished across the mountains between Tibet and the Gangetic Plain by way of the hill states of the Vale of Nepal, Katmandu, Batgaon, and Patan, at that time ruled by Rajas with the closest ties of religion, race, and culture to Tibet. This trade, unlike that of the East India Company with China at Canton, gave rise to a balance of payments in favour of India. A flow of specie into British territory resulted from it at a time when the Company was being criticized for exporting gold and silver to China.

No sooner had the British arrived in a position in which they could benefit from the trade across the Himalayas than it came to an abrupt end. The Gurkhas, a tribe from the west of the present

kingdom of Nepal, began to undergo in the 1760s a rapid process of expansion. Their warlike qualities, which seem to have long lain dormant, were suddenly made plain when Gurkha armies conquered, one after the other, the three states of the Vale of Nepal and founded a kingdom which was destined to go on expanding until it was checked during the years 1814 to 1816 by British arms.

In 1767 the Gurkhas had nearly completed their conquest of the Vale. The trade across the mountains to Tibet had come to an abrupt halt. Since this trade was "an advantageous trade . . . by which a considerable quantity of gold, and many other valuable commodities were imported", and since the East India Company had no wish to see its territories "deprived of the benefits arising from the former intercourse, at a period when a decline of trade and a scarcity of specie render it of the greatest importance that every spring of industry should flow freely and without interruption",¹ it tried to prevent the conquests of the Gurkhas.²

The Company, in fact, realized that not only did the trade with Tibet provide a source of specie which might be offset against the expenditure of the Chinese tea trade, but also that across the Himalayas there might be found a route for the introduction of British manufactures, especially British woollen textiles, into the Chinese Empire. The attempts to sell such goods at Canton had been most disappointing. As the Court of Directors had written to Bengal on 16th February, 1768: "We desire you will obtain the best intelligence you can whether trade can be opened with Napaul, and whether cloth and other European commodities may not find their way from thence to Tibet, Lhassa, and the Western Parts of China."³ When it became clear that the Gurkhas had closed the route through Nepal and that there was nothing to be done at that time to reopen it, the Court of Directors instructed the Bengal Government to search for alternative routes through the neighbouring Himalayan state of Bhutan.⁴

¹ Hodgson MSS (in India Office Library). Vol. 1, f. 26. Sketch of the Relations between the British Government and Nepal, quoting Select Committee to Home Government, 25th Sept., 1767.

² In 1767, in response to an appeal from the Raja of Patan, the Bengal Government dispatched Captain Kinloch and a small force to try to arrest the advance of the Gurkhas. J. Talboys Wheeler, *Short History of India*, London, 1889, p. 463.

³ Home Miscellaneous Series in India Office Records. Vol. 219, f. 325.

⁴ S. C. Sarcar. Some notes on the intercourse of Bengal with Northern Countries in the second half of the eighteenth century. *Proc. Indian Historical Records Commission*, vol. xiii, 1930, pp. 104-105.

To Warren Hastings fell the opportunity to carry out these instructions. In 1772 a war broke out between a Himalayan hill state, Bhutan, and the small Indian state of Cooch Behar. The latter, hard pressed, requested British help. In the following year, in return for a treaty which placed Cooch Behar under British protection, Hastings sent a small force of British troops against the Bhutanese, who were soon obliged to retire into the hills. The 6th Panchen Lama of Tibet, then the leading figure in Tibetan politics, the Dalai Lama being a minor, wrote to Hastings on behalf of the defeated Bhutanese, who were in some measure Tibetan dependents. When Hastings received this letter in March, 1774, he resolved to treat the vanquished Bhutanese with leniency and to send a friendly mission to the court of the Panchen Lama (or Tashi Lama, as Hastings called him) at Tashilhumpo near Shigatse in Tibet. To this task he deputed George Bogle, a young Scot in the Company's service whose ability and tact had come to Hastings' notice.¹

Hastings was influenced in his decision to send this mission partly by his curiosity as to what went on in Tibet, about which he had already learnt something from the accounts of the Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries who had resided in Lhasa before 1750, when the establishment of the Chinese protectorate brought down that barrier against foreign travel which already existed in other parts of the Chinese Empire. In part he was concerned with the role which the Panchen Lama might assume as mediator on behalf of the British among the warlike states of the Himalayas, Nepal and Bhutan. But there can be little doubt that his main interest was in finding an answer to two of the main problems besetting British trade at Canton, the adverse balance and the difficulty of selling British manufactures to the Chinese. In his instructions to Bogle, Hastings drew particular attention to the Tibetan wealth in gold and silver, and to the considerable trade which existed between Tibet and Western China. Bogle was told to inquire carefully into the relations between China and Tibet and the nature of the roads that linked the two countries together.²

The story of Bogle's mission has been told elsewhere. It suffices

¹ See : C. R. Markham, *Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet, and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa*, London, 1876. S. Cammann, *Trade through the Himalayas*, Princeton, 1951.

² Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., pp. 5-8.

to say that he reached Tashilhumpo in December, 1774, and that he remained in Tibet for five months, during which period he established a firm and mutual friendship with the 6th Panchen Lama. The Lama promised to use his influence in opening a trade route through the territory of the somewhat turbulent rulers of Bhutan and to see that the peace of the Himalayan frontier was maintained. Bogle acquired a great deal of accurate information about the people, religion, government, customs, and trade of Tibet which he presented to Hastings in a number of admirably clear reports. As far as the immediate object of creating a new channel for the trans-Himalayan trade was concerned the Mission was a moderate success. Bogle, however, came to a conclusion about the nature of the relationship between Tibet and China that gave to the establishment of Anglo-Tibetan relations a new significance.

The Panchen Lama, Bogle discovered, was not only the most important man in Tibet, during the minority of the Dalai Lama, but also he exerted an influence far beyond the Tibetan borders. The 6th Panchen was, moreover, a man of exceptional sanctity whose reputation stood higher than that of any of his predecessors. The Chinese Emperors, Bogle noted, "being of Tatar extraction, profess the religion of the Lamas, and reverence them as the head of their faith." This was especially so in the case of the 6th Panchen, whose "character and abilities had secured him the favour of the Emperor" so that "his representations carried great weight at the Court of Peking".¹ Bogle went as far as to describe the relationship of Lama and Chinese Emperor as being comparable to that of Pope and Medieval German Emperor. Here lay the germ of the idea that the Panchen Lama might be used by the British to pave the way for the establishment of a British representative at Peking, whose voice would reach the ears of the Emperor without undergoing the distortions imposed by the Chinese hierarchy that separated the British at Canton from the Chinese capital. While at Tashilhumpo, Bogle sounded the Lama on this question and the Tibetan pontiff promised to do all he could to help. He promised to write to a Lama friend of his in Peking, "who has great interest with the Emperor," in praise of the British and he held out the hope that it might eventually be possible for an envoy of the Company to make his way through Tibet to the Chinese capital.

¹ Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., pp. 195-6.

While Bogle was "not so sanguine" about the prospect of this, he did not quite despair of "one day or other getting a sight of Peking".¹

News that the Panchen Lama was about to go from Tibet to China to visit the Emperor led Bogle, in July, 1778, to return once more to this theme. In a memorandum to Warren Hastings he proposed to take advantage of the Lama's visit to obtain passports for himself to travel to Peking. The Lama, Bogle reported, had said he would try to get such documents; he doubted if Bogle would be allowed to travel overland by way of Tibet, but he saw no reason why the Company Envoy should not go to Peking through Canton. Bogle argued that there was a crying need for a British Envoy to negotiate in Peking for the repayment of the large debts which were then owing to Englishmen in Canton by Chinese merchants. He noted, furthermore, that "the Company's business (at Canton) is often harassed and oppressed, and its conductors are entirely without any channel of communication or representation to the Court of Peking". Even if the Lama did not get him passports, Bogle concluded, there was every chance that he might arrange some other means whereby the British case could be presented in Peking without distortion.²

Hastings welcomed these proposals. In April, 1779, he made it quite clear that the use of Tibet as the diplomatic back door to China had become the goal of his Tibetan policy and had dwarfed considerations of frontier policy and local Indo-Tibetan trade.

"The connection and friendship which have been formed with Teshoo Lama (Panchen Lama)," he wrote on this occasion, "may eventually produce advantages of a far more extensive nature," since "by means of the Teshoo Lama . . . I am inclined to hope that a communication may be opened with the court of Peking, either through his mediation or by an Agent from the Government; it is impossible to point out the precise advantages which either the opening of new Channels of Trade, or in obtaining redress of Grievances, or extending the privileges of the Company, may

¹ Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., p. 134.

² Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., pp. 207-210. Cammann, op. cit., p. 67, n. 64, makes out that this memorandum was dated July, 1779. This cannot be so, since it is quite clear the statement of Hastings, of April, 1779, which is quoted below, is an answer to Bogle's proposals. Cammann has only seen this document in a quotation from Sarcar, op. cit. p. 121.

result from such an Intercourse ; like the navigation of unknown seas, which are explored not for the attainment of any certain and prescribed object, but for the discovery of what they may contain. In so new and remote a search we can only propose to adventure for possibilities, the attempt may be crowned with the most splendid and substantial success, or it may terminate in the mere gratification of useless curiosity, but the hazard is small, the design is worthy of the pursuit of a rising state, the Company have both approved and recommended it, and the means are too promising to be neglected, while the influence of the Teshoo Lama joined to the favourable disposition which he has hitherto manifested to our nation, affords so fair a prospect, and that the only one which may ever be presented to us of accomplishing it.”¹

The opportunity that seemed so promising in 1779 came to nothing owing to an unhappy chain of events. The Panchen Lama, when he saw the Emperor in China, was to have sought the passports which Bogle needed to visit Peking. Once these had been secured, word was to have been sent to India and Bogle was to have set out to join his old friend at the Chinese capital, probably travelling by way of Canton. But the Panchen Lama died of smallpox in Peking in 1780, before he had made any progress in the matter of the passports—there was much rumour to the effect that he had been murdered by the Chinese because of the friendship he had shown to the British, but this is now generally discounted.² In the following year Bogle also died and Hastings was deprived of the services of the only Englishman with experience of Tibet. One may well speculate what would have been the outcome had Bogle been able to visit Peking. He would have done so as the envoy of the East India Company and not of the King of England and would, in consequence, not have been so concerned with questions of “ face ” which brought on the kow-tow crises and rendered abortive the missions of Macartney and Amherst. Bogle possessed the skill and the tact required in the tortuous conduct of oriental diplomacy, as his success with the Panchen Lama stands witness. He had the patience and the intelligence for the kind of negotiation that would produce results only by the establishment of a mutual good will over a long period of time. Acting under the command of

¹ Home Miscellaneous, vol. 219, f. 375. Extract from Bengal General Consultations, 19th April, 1779.

² Cammann, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-80.

Warren Hastings, he would have been allowed a freedom of action that was denied to later envoys, and his discretion was such that he would certainly have made the best use of any opportunity which lay to hand.

Hastings did not abandon his Tibetan schemes on the deaths of the Panchen Lama and George Bogle. The installation of the new Panchen Lama, an infant into whose body the soul of the 6th Panchen was thought to have migrated, provided him with the opportunity to send a second mission to Tashilhumpo to bring the good wishes of the Government of India on this happy occasion. The task of bearing this message was entrusted to Samuel Turner, a kinsman of Hastings, who set out for Tashilhumpo in 1783. There was no prospect of Turner repeating Bogle's triumphs since the Panchen Lama was an infant. The second mission to Tibet could do no more than reinforce the good will established by the first mission.

Turner was convinced that with patience the project which had been thwarted by the death of the 6th Panchen might yet come about. It was essential that every effort be made to continue the friendly contacts that had been established in 1774, and the surest means to do this would be by the encouragement of trade between India and Tibet. A mutually profitable trade was the most certain way to mutual friendship. As Turner put it, on his return from Tibet in 1784: "whenever a regular intercourse takes place between the agents of the government of Bengal and the chiefs of Tibet, I shall consider it to be the sure basis of an intercourse with China; and it will probably be, by the medium of the former, that we shall be enabled to arrive at Peking."¹

Turner's conclusion, in fact, was that the best way to bring about an improvement in Anglo-Chinese relations was for the Company to do all it could to encourage trade across the Himalayas. It is perhaps of significance in this connection, as an indication of the aspect of his Tibetan policy upon which Hastings placed the greatest emphasis, that until Turner's return, despite much correspondence on the subject, Hastings had taken no official action to encourage trade between Bengal and Tibet. In April, 1784,

¹ Samuel Turner, *An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet; containing a narrative of a journey through Bootan, and part of Tibet*. London, 1800, p. 373. Turner's report to Hastings on his return, dated 2nd March, 1784.

however, a month after Turner had returned from Tibet and reported to Hastings on the result of his mission, such official action was taken. On 22nd April, 1784, Hastings instructed that an advertisement should be circulated inviting native Indian merchants to join in an "adventure" in trade with Tibet through the recently opened Bhutanese route. The party of merchants was to assemble in February of the following year. A detailed list of goods likely to find a market in Tibet was included. The advertisement stated that this first venture, so that it should have every chance of success, was to be exempted from all duties.¹ In 1785 the "adventure" took place according to plan, and a flourishing and profitable trade seems to have resulted. But by then Hastings had left India for good and his plan to exploit this trade for diplomatic ends seems to have faded into the background.²

If Hastings' scheme to open direct relations with the Chinese Emperor through Tibet seems to have gone into eclipse following the departure of the Governor-General from India, there is still a certain amount of evidence to suggest that the possibility of Tibet playing a part in Anglo-Chinese relations was not completely forgotten by the East India Company. It is probable that the happy outcome of the two missions of Bogle and Turner suggested strongly that some good might derive from a British mission to the Chinese Emperor himself. Shortly after Hastings' return to England the difficulties of the Company's position at Canton in the face of the obduracy of the local Chinese authorities, which had been indicated in Bogle's memorandum of July, 1778, brought the Court of Directors and the Board of Control to the same conclusion that Bogle had earlier arrived at. A British mission must go to Peking. In 1787 Lt.-Col. Cathcart was deputed to this task. A hint to the effect that this mission was not completely unconnected with the earlier Tibetan ventures is provided by the suggestion that Cathcart might proceed to China by way of Tibet. When this was vetoed by the Board of Control on the grounds that such a journey would be "too long and hazardous to be entered upon, as well as very doubtful in the result",³ Cathcart then proposed

¹ Home Miscellaneous, vol. 219, f. 469. Hastings to E. Wheeler, 22nd April, 1784.

² Turner, *Embassy*, op. cit., pp. 419-433. Home Miscellaneous, vol. 608, f. 33.

³ H. B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China*, vol. ii. Oxford, 1926, p. 162. Quoted from Cathcart's instructions, 30th November, 1787.

that after reaching Peking by way of Canton he should send his secretary, Agnew, home through Tibet.¹

The establishment of relations between the British and the centre of Chinese power by means of a channel of communication through Tibet had obvious advantages for the East India Company. Any improvements in the condition of trade with China by sea which an Ambassador from the King of England might secure would have to be open to all the King's subjects. As Dundas told the Court of Directors in 1787, it was unthinkable that "in negotiating with the Emperor of China, the King of Great Britain is obliged to accept a settlement with such a restriction in it, as of necessity obliges him to carry on the trade of China by an exclusive Company".² But improvement in a trade of which one terminus lay within the Company's territory was clearly another matter. Improvement in the trade across the Himalayas carried no threat to the Company's monopoly.

The Cathcart Mission failed owing to the death of its leader while at sea on the way to China. The project was revived with the sending of Lord Macartney on a similar mission in 1792. Here again, while the immediate object was to improve conditions of trade at Canton, there are still hints that some thought had been given to the Tibetan route. In Macartney's instructions, as in those of Cathcart, Dundas at the Board of Control was at pains to state categorically that the British Ambassador should not travel to China by way of Tibet.³ And, as in the case of the Cathcart Mission, Macartney gave serious thought to the possibility of exploring the Tibetan route as a means of communication between Peking and the East India Company. He was musing on this idea on the voyage out to China; while off the coast of Sumatra he wrote to Dundas that he had just suggested to Cornwallis, then Governor-General of India, that Cornwallis should "communicate with me not only by way of Canton, but also by Tibet, and I propose to try that way also from Peking in order to let you know, if possible,

¹ E. H. Pritchard, *The Crucial Years of Early Anglo-Chinese Relations, 1750-1800*. Research Studies of the State College of Washington, IV, 1936. Pullman, Washington, 1937, p. 239.

² Morse, *Chronicles*, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 155.

³ Morse, *Chronicles*, vol. ii, op. cit., p. 235. Instructions to Macartney, 8th Sept., 1792.

the sooner of my arrival at that Capital, and what may be the likelihood of my success there".¹

When Macartney wrote to this effect he was not aware of the radical alteration in the situation in the Himalayas that had ruled out completely the Tibetan route. He knew of the policy of Hastings towards Tibet—he was Governor of Madras at the time of Turner's return from Tashilhumpo—but the slowness of communications had kept him in ignorance of the chain of events that not only upset the work of Hastings but also endangered the success of his own mission to China.

In 1788 the Gurkhas invaded the territory of the Panchen Lama in Tibet and occupied several points across the Tibetan border. The Tibetans had no forces with which to oppose them and only persuaded them to withdraw on the promise of the payment of a substantial indemnity.² Before this had been agreed to, the authorities at Tashilhumpo remembered the promises of friendship which had been made to them by the two envoys of Hastings and appealed to the British for help against the Gurkha invaders. Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General, replied in a somewhat ambiguous manner. It was clear that he did not want to be involved in a Himalayan war or take any action which might be construed as hostile by the Gurkhas; yet he wished to derive some benefit from this development in the Himalayan situation. He promised, in his reply to Tashilhumpo, that he would give no assistance to the

¹ CO. 77 79. (A collection of miscellaneous letters relating to the Macartney Mission, preserved in the PRO.) Macartney to Dundas. Off the coast of Sumatra, 25th March, 1793.

² The somewhat confused history of the two Tibet-Nepalese wars is discussed in: Cammann, *op. cit.*, chapters v and vi.

D. B. Diskalkar, *The Tibeto-Nepalese War of 1788-93, Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, vol. xix. Patna, 1933. This prints much of the correspondence between the Company, Tibet, and Nepal that took place during the war.

Home Miscellaneous, vol. 608, f. 33. A summary of correspondence.

Sir G. Staunton, Bart., *An authentic account of an Embassy from Great Britain to the Emperor of China, etc.*, 2 vols. London, 1797. Vol. ii, p. 211 et seq.

W. Kirkpatrick, *An account of the Kingdom of Napaul*. London, 1811, pp. 339-379.

Turner, *Embassy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 437-442.

BM Add. MSS. 39, 871. Warren Hastings Papers. Supp. Vol. I, f. 51. S. Turner to W. Hastings, 25th Nov., 1792.

W. W. Rockhill, *The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa, etc. T'oung Pao*, vol. xi, 1910, pp. 60-63. Gives extracts from Chinese sources.

M. C. Imbault-Huart, *Histoire de la Conquête du Népal, etc., Journal Asiatique*. Paris, 1878.

Gurkhas ; but he added that neither could he give any active help to the Tibetans. The Company could not afford the expense of a hill war ; it had received no provocation from the Gurkhas ; it did not want to intervene in a matter which concerned a dependant of the Chinese Emperor without first being asked to do so by that ruler. Perhaps, Cornwallis concluded rather disingenuously, his answer would have been different if the Company had possessed a representative in Peking and had been in a closer relationship with the Chinese Government. It was not too late, Cornwallis implied, for Tashilhumpo to use its influence to bring this about ; it was very much in its interest to do so.¹

It is clear from this correspondence that Cornwallis was less interested in the value of the local trans-Himalayan trade, of which he was well aware,² and which was bound to suffer from any increase in the power and extent of Nepal, than in the opportunity which the Tibetan hour of need promised to give for the establishment of a British representative in Peking through Tibetan mediation.³ In one sense, Cornwallis held a high card in his hand. If the British did not help, then it seemed that the Tibetans would have to turn to China. Any active intervention by the Chinese in such a crisis could only lead to an increase of Chinese control over Tibetan affairs and would surely damage the independent position of Tashilhumpo which had been built up in recent years on the foundations of the skill and patience of the 6th Panchen Lama.

But the reply of Cornwallis to the Tibetan appeal was sent too late to have any effect on Tibetan policy. By the time it reached Tashilhumpo the Tibetans had already come to terms with the Gurkhas. The only result of this response to the Tibetan call for assistance was, in all probability, to suggest to the authorities in Tashilhumpo that the friendship of the Company towards Tibet was not as disinterested as the professions of Bogle and Turner might have suggested.

In 1791 the Gurkhas once more invaded Tibet. Only part of the indemnity promised in 1789 had been paid and Lhasa, which was

¹ Home Miscellaneous, vol. 608, f. 33. Bengal Consultations of 6th Jan., 1789, and 9th March, 1789. Staunton, *Embassy*, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 217. Diskalkar, op. cit., pp. 367-369.

² A. Aspinall, *Cornwallis in Bengal*, Manchester, 1931, p. 178.

³ Perhaps because the balance of payments problem was already on the way to being solved, through the sale of Indian produce at Canton. See : M. Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China*, Cambridge, 1951, pp. 9-13.

the financial centre of Tibet, refused to provide the balance. Lhasa had watched with great suspicion the rise in influence and independence of Tashilhumpo, as is quite clear from Bogle's and Turner's narratives.¹ It must have appreciated that failure to pay the Gurkhas in full would inevitably result in a fresh invasion, which would provide an excuse for requesting Chinese intervention and the consequent squashing, once and for all, of the pretensions of Tashilhumpo. If this was the policy of Lhasa, it proved a complete success. The Gurkhas renewed their attack, and this time they advanced far into Tibet, capturing Tashilhumpo and Shigatse and plundering the monastery of the Panchen Lama. In early 1792, while the Gurkhas were withdrawing slowly to their own territory, loaded with their booty, a powerful Chinese army arrived in Tibet. The invading Gurkhas were decisively defeated and obliged to come to terms with the Chinese. They returned their loot and accepted the status of Chinese tributary with the obligation of sending a tribute mission to Peking once every five years. The Chinese took the opportunity afforded by their intervention to strengthen their control over Tibet, even to the extent of devising a method by which they could influence the process of incarnation whereby the Dalai Lamas were chosen. After 1792, until the end of the nineteenth century when the 13th Dalai Lama began his work of freeing Tibet from foreign control, an independent policy of the kind manifested by the 6th Panchen Lama became impossible. Tibet became, to all intents and purposes, an integral part of the Chinese Empire, as the British in Bengal were soon to realize.

British diplomacy during the second Tibeto-Nepalese war was no more successful than it had been during the first crisis of 1788-89. The British received letters from both the Gurkhas and the Tibetans and Chinese. The former sought British assistance and the latter, in an admonishing tone, requested British neutrality. British policy seems to have been to try to play off one side against the other. The mediation of the Company was offered to both sides while in secret the British seem to have hinted that they might give the Gurkhas armed assistance in return for a commercial treaty opening Nepal to British trade. The commercial treaty was duly signed in the spring of 1792; the Gurkhas, when they found that no help beyond Company mediation would be forthcoming, felt, naturally

¹ For example: Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., p. 132. Turner, *Embassy*, op. cit., p. 364.

enough, that they had been tricked. In Tibet, on the other hand, there seems to have been a definite impression that the British had sent troops to help the Gurkhas against the Chinese and Tibetans. The Company gained the good will of neither side.

Cornwallis, in fact, was serious in his offer of the Company's mediation. In September, 1792, Colonel Kirkpatrick was sent up to Nepal for this purpose, but by the time he got there the war had long been over and the Gurkhas had come to terms with the Chinese. Kirkpatrick saw clearly that a change had taken place in the Himalayas which was adverse to British interests. In the first place, the trade between Bengal and Tibet was now dead, and the only hope for its revival lay through Nepal: British goods could perhaps be carried to Katmandu for onward transmission to Tibet in the hands of Nepalese traders.¹ That this hope was a forlorn one was soon apparent; after a decade of futile and frustrating attempts to open trade through Nepal by means of commercial treaties little liked and less honoured by the Gurkhas, and through the employment of native agents with access to the Nepalese capital, the British in 1804 decided to give up the attempt and dissolved all their treaties with Nepal.² In the second place, the Chinese intervention seemed to have changed Tibet from a possible help towards the improvement of Anglo-Chinese relations to a positive danger to the position of the British traders at Canton. As Kirkpatrick perceived in 1792, when the extent of the new Chinese control over Tibet was not yet clear, if "the Chinese were to establish themselves permanently in our neighbourhood, the border incidents always incident to such a situation, would be but too liable to disturb, more or less, the commercial relations subsisting between them and the East India Company in another part of Asia".³ Kirkpatrick argued that this was a matter of sufficient gravity to be included in the agenda of subjects which

¹ Kirkpatrick, *Nepaul*, op. cit., pp. 371-9.

² D. Wright, *History of Nepal*, Cambridge, 1877, p. 52.

C. U. Aitchison, *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads*, 24 vols. Calcutta, 1931. Vol. xiv, p. 45.

Home Miscellaneous. Vol. 608, f. 38. Consultations of 10th Nov., 1793, and 10th March, 1796.

The best known of the native agents was Abdul Kadir Khan. See: C. H. Philips (Ed.), *Correspondence of David Scott, etc.* Royal Hist. Soc. Camden, 3rd Series. Vol. lxxv. London, 1951, p. 57.

Despatches to Bengal, vol. 31. Bengal Political Despatch, 4th Oct., 1797.

³ Kirkpatrick, *Nepaul*, op. cit., p. 372.

Lord Macartney, in his impending embassy to Peking, should discuss with the Chinese Emperor.¹

Macartney's Embassy coincided with these events in Tibet, but no information about them from a British source reached the Ambassador until he arrived at Canton in December, 1793, on his way home, his mission completed. Thus Macartney was most surprised to hear from the Chinese, when he was on his way to meet the Emperor at Jehol, that they were very angry at the way in which the British had fought against them in the recent war in Nepal. As he noted in his diary, on 16th August, 1793, "I was very much startled with this intelligence, but instantly told them that the thing was impossible and that I could take it upon me to contradict it in the most decisive manner." He then thought that the story that the British had helped the Nepalese might have been "a mere feint or artifice to sift me, and to try to discover our force, or our vicinity to their frontiers", and he was reinforced in this conclusion a few days later, when the Chinese asked him whether "the English at Bengal would assist the Emperor against the rebels in those parts". Since Macartney had denied the first charge on the grounds, quite untrue, that the distance between British territory and the scene of the recent war in the Himalayas made British intervention on either side quite impossible, he could only consider this second question as a trick to test his sincerity, and he was forced to say that the British could give no assistance to the Chinese.² Macartney, however was soon obliged to admit that the Chinese at Peking genuinely believed that the British had opposed China in the recent war, perhaps because of the deliberate misrepresentations of Fu K'ang-an, the Chinese commander in Tibet, who, Macartney suggested, might have been insulted by some Englishman during his recent tenure of office as Viceroy at Canton, and was now getting his revenge. He had met the Chinese commander, just back from the wars, and found him to be most unfriendly despite every exertion of the Ambassador's charm.³

¹ Kirkpatrick, *Nepaul*, op. cit., p. 377.

² J. Barrow, *Some Account of the Public Life and a Selection of the Unpublished Writings of the Earl of Macartney*, 2 vols. London, 1807. Vol. ii, pp. 203-204.

³ Barrow, *Macartney*, op. cit., pp. 228, 267.

E. H. Pritchard. The Instructions of the East India Company to Lord Macartney on his Embassy to China and his reports to the Company, 1792-94. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1938, p. 499.

Macartney to Sir John Shore, 3rd Feb., 1794.

Macartney was convinced that this misunderstanding on the part of the Chinese as to the nature of the British role in the recent Himalayan crisis was a major factor behind the failure of his mission. Staunton, who accompanied Macartney and later wrote the standard account of the Embassy, thought it was a tragedy that the Cathcart Mission had not reached its destination, for then there would have been a British representative in Peking at the time of the opening of the Gurkha attack on Tibet. The Emperor, he argued, would in such a case have surely asked for British assistance in defending his Tibetan dependants, rather than have relied on his own forces who had not been too successful on the field of battle in recent years. From the giving of such help the British would have reaped valuable diplomatic benefits.¹ The misunderstanding, moreover, in conjunction with the great increase in Chinese power so close to the borders of British India might have serious consequences for the future unless it was explained away. As Staunton put it: "should an interference take place in future, on the part of His Imperial Majesty (of China), in the dissensions which frequently arise between the princes possessing the countries lying along the eastern limits of Hindostan, . . . there may be occasion for much mutual discussion between the British and Chinese Governments; and no slight precaution may be necessary on their parts to avoid being involved in the quarrels of their respective dependents or allies." This danger was present on the Assam frontier as well as in the Himalayas.²

Macartney felt that the need to clear up this misunderstanding justified another mission to Peking, not only because no improvement of Anglo-Chinese relations could result until the Chinese had been disabused of their suspicions of the nature of British policy in the Himalayas, but also because the existence of such suspicions created a dangerous situation on the very borders of the Company's possessions in India. Once Chinese doubts had been removed, moreover, the British might begin to derive some positive benefit from the recent chain of events in the Himalayas. The Chinese had learnt, Macartney was clearly implying in his letter to Sir John Shore of 3rd February, 1794, that the British possessed great strength in an area which lay virtually on the Chinese frontier.

¹ Staunton, *Macartney*, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 229-230.

² Staunton, *Macartney*, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 227-8.

“Our political situation in Bengal,” he wrote, “may even contribute, with other motives, to procure for us the full extension, we desire, of our commerce throughout the Empire of China.”¹

While a second Embassy was not immediately sent, as Macartney advised, the misunderstanding about the Tibeto-Nepalese war was considered of sufficient importance in London to lead, in 1795, to a correspondence with Peking, in which the British case was stated. In the following year, in a letter to King George III, the Emperor, Ch'ien Lung, indicated in a most patronizing manner that perhaps the British had not helped the Gurkhas after all. British mediation had been offered, but it came too late to have any effect on the course of the war, and no debt of gratitude was owed to the British on this account.²

¹ Pritchard, *Crucial Years*, op. cit., p. 360. Pritchard, Macartney, *JRAS*, 1938, op. cit., p. 499.

² E. H. Parker, *China Past and Present*, London, 1903, pp. 149-150. See also E. H. Parker, Letter from the Emperor of China to King George the Third. *Nineteenth Century*, vol. xv, July-Dec., 1896. E. H. Parker, Nepal and China, *Imperial and Asiatic Quarterly Review*, vol. vii, 1899, p. 77. E. H. Parker, *China's Intercourse with Europe*, pp. 44-45. Morse, *Chronicles*, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 273-276. J. B. Eames, *The English in China*, London, 1909, pp. 129-130.

TIBET IN ANGLO-CHINESE RELATIONS :

1767-1842

BY ALISTAIR LAMB

PART II

The Macartney Embassy failed to bring about a significant improvement in Anglo-Chinese relations ; the correspondence of 1795-1796 was equally fruitless.¹ The reasons for this failure lay rather in the nature of the Chinese conception of foreign relations than in any misunderstandings about the British role in the Himalayan crisis of 1788-1792. The Chinese Emperor could have no relations with foreign powers on terms of equality ; to the Chinese foreign ambassadors were bearers of tribute, coming to Peking to recognize the supremacy of the Son of Heaven. On such terms no properly accredited embassy from the King of England to the Emperor of China could have had any result other than that achieved by Macartney. Only a mission of the type envisaged by Bogle and Hastings, opportunist and flexible, ready to sacrifice dignity to commercial advantage, stood any chance of success. Tibet and the Himalayas played little part in the failure of the first British Ambassador to China. But the reason why this should be so was not fully understood by the British at that time.² The memory of a causal connection between the crisis of the Tibeto-Nepalese War and Lord Macartney's failure remained, and it was to affect subsequent British policy.

Two lessons, somewhat contradictory in implication, seem to have been drawn from these events. In the first place, there developed in India a strong feeling that the extension of British influence into the Himalayas, and closer to the Tibetan border, might provoke a Chinese reaction either on the Indian frontier or at Canton. The English at Canton, on the other hand, seem to have concluded that their conditions of trade and residence might be improved if the Chinese were made to feel that the East India Company, with strong forces on China's Tibetan frontier, was in a

¹ P. Auber, *China : an outline of its government, laws and policy, etc.*, London, 1834, pp. 214-218. Eames, *op. cit.*, p. 129. There was a further exchange of letters between King and Emperor in 1805-1806. The Chinese reply pointed out that there was no need for a repetition of such correspondence.

² The younger Staunton, for example, writing in 1813, thought that Macartney's Mission could have been followed up with profit. Sir G. T. Staunton, Bart., *Miscellaneous notices relating to China*. London, 1822, p. 238.

position to protect its interests and assert its rights by force of arms if need be. The Chinese in Tibet, the argument went on, who were in closer touch with British power, might well be more willing to transmit without alteration British diplomatic correspondence to Peking than were the Chinese authorities at Canton. The idea still persisted that Tibet might be the route by which better relations with Peking could be established. In the correspondence concerning the British war with the Gurkhas of Nepal of 1814-1816 there is clear and abundant evidence of both these lines of thought.

The expansion of the Gurkhas, which had first brought the Himalayas to the notice of the East India Company, did not stop with the conquest of Nepal. Nor did the defeat by China in 1792 arrest the Gurkhas; checked in the north, they pursued their ambitions to the south of the Himalayan watershed with undiminished vigour. They spread their power westwards along the mountains as far as the Sutlej River and beyond; to the east they penetrated into the small hill state of Sikkim, took from its ruler most of his fertile and revenue-producing lands in the foothills of the Himalayas, and drove him to a fugitive existence among the high mountains. Gurkha expansion, moreover, was not confined to the hills. Even before 1792 they had been encroaching on land on the edge of the Gangetic plain; this process increased in intensity, especially after the dissolution of the British treaties with Nepal in 1804. By 1813, when Lord Moira, later Marquess of Hastings, became Governor-General, it looked as if "there could never be real peace" between the Gurkhas and the British who possessed treaties with several of the states that had suffered from Gurkha encroachments, "until we should yield to the Gurkhas our provinces north of the Ganges, making that river the boundary between us."¹ This was not a thought which the British were likely to accept for ever. War with Nepal, to which serious consideration had been given as far back as the time of Warren Hasting,² was inevitable. It finally broke out in 1814.³

When the war with Nepal broke out, the ambitions of the Gurkhas and the direction in which they hoped to extend their dominions

¹ Marquess of Hastings. Summary of the Administration of the Indian Government, etc. Edinburgh, 1825, p. 13.

² BM Add. MSS. Vol. 39, 892, ff. 22, 26. Two plans of proposed campaigns against Nepal are preserved among the papers of Warren Hastings.

³ Major Ross-of-Bladensburg. *The Marquess of Hastings*. Oxford, 1893, pp. 57-59. Short account of the immediate causes of the war.

had been apparent for many years. Memories of the dangers inherent in meddling in Himalayan politics, the apparent lesson of the Macartney Mission, and anxiety as to the possible Chinese reaction to an attack on their Nepalese dependant, doubtless contributed to the slowness with which the British reacted to the Gurkha threat. When war at last came the Indian Government felt much concern as to what the Chinese attitude would be. It had not forgotten that the Chinese had had it within their power to send a large force into Tibet and across the mountains against Nepal in 1792.

It is possible that the motive for journey of that intrepid traveller, William Moorcroft, to Gartok in Western Tibet in 1812 was in part the need for intelligence on the strength and policy of the Chinese in Tibet. It is certain that Lord Moira paid close attention to the reports, based on personal experience and information from native informants, which Moorcroft sent to his Government during the period of the war. Moorcroft thought that in the event of a British attack on Nepal, China would probably come to the aid of her dependant. He reported that in 1813 the Raja of Nepal had appealed to his Chinese suzerain for help in such an eventuality and that the Chinese had sent a favourable reply, asking him how much money and how many men he might need.¹

Dr. Buchanan was another expert on Himalayan affairs whose advice was at the disposal of Lord Moira—he had accompanied a British mission to Katmandu in 1801—Buchanan not sure that the Chinese would intervene; he thought they were probably “fully as tired of the insolence of the Goorka as the British Government appears to be”. He argued, however, that the Chinese could hardly be expected to accept with good grace the annexation by the British of the territory of one of their dependants: even if such an annexation did not lead to Chinese military intervention, “a frontier, indeed, of seven or eight hundred miles between two powerful nations holding each other in mutual contempt seems to point at anything but peace.”²

¹ Papers relating to the Nepal War. Printed in conformity to the resolution of the Court of Proprietors of East India Stock of the 3rd March, 1824, pp. 84-6. Moorcroft to J. Adam, 14th Sept., 1814. For an account of Moorcroft's life and travels, see: H. H. Wilson, (Ed.), *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan etc.*, by W. Moorcroft and G. Trebeck, 2 vols., London, 1841.

² Home Miscellaneous. Vol. 646. f. 747. Papers relating to Nepal War, p. 45. Buchanan to Adam, 9th Aug., 1814. Dr. Buchanan, who later changed his name

The Indian Government, in fact, saw clearly that the outbreak of the Gurkha War threatened to upset for the worse the existing pattern of Anglo-Chinese relations in just the way that the Himalayan crisis of 1788-1792 seemed to have upset the diplomacy of Lord Macartney. British action on this remote frontier of the Chinese Empire was particularly liable to misinterpretation by the time that news of it had found its way through the official hierarchy to Peking. An excellent example of how misunderstandings might arise was provided in 1815, when British troops advancing into Nepal captured a copy of a further appeal from the Raja of Nepal to the Chinese Emperor. This document, after acknowledging the "supremacy of the Emperor of China above all other potentates on earth", pointed out that the Gurkhas could not hope to hold out long against the British without Chinese help. It begged the Chinese to attack Bengal from Tibet, creating a diversion which would take the pressure off Nepal and spread "alarm and consternation among the Europeans as far as Calcutta". The Chinese would find it in their own interests to do this. The English, it went on to argue, have "subjugated all the Rajahs of the plains, and usurped the throne of the King of Delhi; and, therefore, it is to be expected that they would all unite in expelling Europeans from Hindostan"; otherwise "the English, after obtaining possession of Nepal, will advance . . . for the purpose of conquering Lassa . . . Lose no time in sending assistance, whether in men or in money, . . . otherwise, in a few years, they will be masters of Lassa".¹ There was sufficient truth in this argument to make it seem plausible to a Chinese official, especially to one with first hand experience of the Europeans at Canton. It was clearly not in the interests of the East India Company to allow the Chinese to become convinced by this sort of reasoning because of the failure to provide a British rebuttal.

The Chinese factor, in fact, dominated British policy during the course of the Gurkha War. Because of the possible Chinese reaction, both in the Himalayas and at Canton, Lord Moira decided to

to Hamilton, was the author of F. Buchanan, *An Account of the Kingdom of Napaul*, London, 1819.

¹ Papers relating to the Nepaul War, p. 556. Secret Letter from Lord Moira, 11th May, 1815.

J. B. Fraser, *Journal of a Tour through part of the Himalaya Mountains*, London, 1826. Quotes letter to the Emperor of China from the Raja of Nepal, 2nd March, 1815.

follow Dr. Buchanan's advice and not annex Nepal in the event of a British victory. He toyed for a while with the idea of returning Nepal to the Rajas who had ruled it before the coming of the Gurkhas in the 1760s—they too had been Chinese dependants—but no members of these former ruling families could be found and there was no alternative to leaving the Gurkhas in possession of Nepal. Thus Nepal survived as a sovereign state. By Nepal, however, Lord Moira understood only that territory in the hills which was in Gurkha hands at the time of the Sino-Nepalese treaty of 1792. He saw no reason, for instance, why the British should not annex or place under their protection the hill territory of Kumaon and Garwhal, land which the Gurkhas had conquered since 1792. Thus the war enabled the British to acquire a strip of hill territory along the Tibetan border from the present western frontier of Nepal to the River Sutlej, territory which was felt to be of potential value as a source of revenue, as a trade route to Western Tibet, and as a site for the development of hill stations where British officials could take refuge from the heat of the plains.¹

To refrain from annexing Chinese dependent territory was not enough by itself to prevent Chinese intervention. What would happen, for example, if British troops advancing in Nepal should happen to meet with Chinese troops, whose presence might be legitimately explained as the escort of a Chinese official come down from Tibet to observe the war at first hand? Lord Moira gave instructions that in such a case the British officers should be very careful to ascertain the intentions of such troops, whether they were hostile or neutral, before opening fire.²

The surest means of preventing any clash with the Chinese would be by presenting to the Chinese authorities, both on the Tibetan frontier and at Peking, a clear and detailed statement of British motives and intentions in the war against the Gurkhas. Once again, British Himalayan policy and the improvement of Anglo-Chinese relations were shown to be inextricably connected. Channels of communication had to be opened with the Chinese; neither of the two possible routes, Tibet and Canton, seemed very promising but the attempt had to be made.

¹ Papers relating to the Nepaul War, p. 551. Secret Letter from Lord Moira, 11th May, 1815.

² Papers relating to the Nepaul War, p. 721. Secret Letter from Lord Moira, 2nd Aug., 1815.

In the Gurkha conquests to the east of Nepal, in the hill state of Sikkim, Lord Moira thought he had discovered a means of exploiting one route whereby his letters might reach the Chinese in Tibet. It was only natural that British troops should help the Sikkim Raja to free his land from Gurkha invaders. A free Sikkim, under the guarantee of British protection, would be of great value in the future as a barrier against a renewed Gurkha attempt to expand eastwards. But the greatest advantage to be derived from British relations with Sikkim lay in the connection between Sikkim and Tibet. As Adam, Secretary to the Indian Government, noted in November, 1814, "the Princes of Sikkim are closely connected with the Lamas of Lassa and Bootan, and their restoration of their former possessions would, no doubt, be highly acceptable to the authorities in those countries, and induce them to regard our proceedings with satisfaction. With respect to Lassa, in particular, it will be advisable to conciliate that Government, as a means of evincing to the Chinese, whose power is predominant there, the moderation of our views, and to show that they are directed to no objects of aggrandisement in that quarter."¹

In early 1815 this policy was put into effect. A British force drove the Gurkhas from Sikkim and the Sikkim Government, in gratitude, agreed to act as a link between Bengal and Lhasa. Letters were sent from the Indian Government to the Chinese authorities in Lhasa by this route and replies received.² Lord Moira felt that the result of this communication had been favourable to British interests. Of the Chinese reply, he wrote to the Select Committee at Canton in June, 1816, "although expressed in a tone of loftiness, there is nothing offensive, still less hostile, in its tenor, and we are disposed to believe that the disposition of the Chinese Umpahs (Ambans or Residents) is as expressed in that letter, that our affairs with the Nepalese should be settled without their intervention".³ A similar, but unsuccessful, attempt was made to get letters to Lhasa through Bhutan, the traditional route for such communications in the days of Warren Hastings. A native agent, Kishen Kant Bose, was sent in 1815 to the Bhutanese capital for this purpose. The only result of this mission was a charming account

¹ Papers relating to the Nepal War, p. 258. Adam to Scott, 26th Nov., 1814.

² Papers relating to the Nepal War, p. 924. Letter to Adam, 19th Dec., 1815.

³ Morse, *Chronicle*, op. cit., vol. iii, p. 258. Lord Moira to Select Committee at Canton, 15th June, 1816.

of the government, manners, and customs of the Bhutanese.¹ Inquiries as to whether the Tibetan frontier officials on the new Tibeto-British border of Kumaon and Garwhal might transmit such letters were also instituted, but likewise with no result.² Sikkim was the only effective route for correspondence between Calcutta and Lhasa ; as such it was to play the dominant part in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations up to the opening of Tibet by Lord Curzon in 1904.

Lord Moira and his Government were much concerned lest the Chinese reaction to the British attack on Nepal should have an adverse effect on the conditions of trade at Canton. If the Chinese chose to interpret this as an attack on China, the trade at Canton might well be stopped and the position of the English merchants there become a dangerous one. In June, 1814, before the war had opened, Lord Moira was at pains to inform the Select Committee of the Supercargoes at Canton (as the governing body for the affairs of the East India Company in China was called) of the circumstances which made the war inevitable ; he told them that he feared lest it might make their position more difficult, a fear which the Supercargoes did not seem to feel.³

The British Home Government, however, seems to have shared Lord Moira's anxiety. In his instructions to Lord Amherst, who was about to set out for China on an embassy to the Chinese Emperor similar to that of Macartney, and doubtless with Macartney's experience in mind, Lord Castlereagh thought that one of the subjects "not unlikely to be brought before you by the Chinese Government" was the question of the nature of the British action in Nepal. He gave an outline of the British case on this matter, how the Bengal Government only acted after extreme and prolonged provocation, and then only out of necessity "to assert the honour, and provide for the future security of the British Possessions", which the Ambassador was to present to the Emperor.⁴ In June, 1816, Lord Moira sent to Canton further

¹ Home Miscellaneous. Vol. 650, f. 72. Scott to Monckton, 20th Jan., 1815. Papers relating to the Nepal War, p. 430. Scott to Adam, 12th Jan., 1815. The account of K. K. Bose is in : *Political Missions to Bootan*, Calcutta, 1865.

² Papers relating to the Nepal War, p. 673. Secret Letter from Lord Moira, 20th July, 1815.

³ Papers relating to the Nepal War, p. 272. Supercargoes to Lord Moira, 5th Oct., 1814.

⁴ Morse, *Chronicles*, op. cit., vol. iii, pp. 281-282.

details of the origins and course of the war and a copy of the treaty which had just been signed with Nepal, to provide fresh arguments for Amherst, should he need them.¹

There was no need for such anxiety. It seems most probable that at the time of the Amherst Mission no report of the events in the Himalayas had reached Peking.² On the only occasion when a Chinese official seems to have mentioned the Gurkhas to a member of Lord Amherst's mission, he made no reference to the war between the British and Nepal.³

The Select Committee at Canton had expressed, from the outset, no fear that the events of the Gurkha War would have a detrimental effect on their position in China. They very much doubted if any news of the war would ever reach Peking; they suspected that unwelcome reports from remote Chinese provinces met with the same fate as British letters to the Chinese Emperor. If such news did reach the Chinese capital, it could do no harm; there was, indeed, a chance that it would benefit the Company's position. The Chinese would realize that the British had at their disposal means of exerting pressure on Chinese territory, and this knowledge, they considered, was "the best if not only security for the preservation of their trade with this country".⁴ They welcomed the advance of British territory up to the Tibetan border in Kumaon and the communications which had been established with the Chinese at Lhasa through the mediation of the Raja of Sikkim. The Select Committee felt, Lord Moira wrote to the Chairman of the East India Company in August, 1816, when he was justifying the conduct of the war, that the opening of these new channels of communication with the Chinese at another point on the frontier of the Chinese Empire was "an important protection for the tea trade; because the Viceroy of Canton, comprehending the facility with which we could transmit representations to Peking overland, would fear to indulge himself again in those vexatious practices with which he had of late harassed the Supracargoes".⁵

¹ Morse, *Chronicles*, op. cit., vol. iii, p. 258.

² R. M. Martin, *China: Political, Commercial, and Social*, London, 1847, p. 25.

³ H. Ellis, *Journal of the proceedings of the late Embassy to China*, London, 1817, p. 196.

⁴ Papers relating to the Nepaul War, p. 272. Supercargoes to Lord Moira, 5th Oct., 1814.

⁵ Papers relating to the Nepaul War, p. 996. Lord Moira to the Chairman of the East India Company, 6th Aug., 1816.

There is a temptation, hard to resist, to connect in some way the touching faith of the Select Committee at Canton in the Tibetan route with the career of that pleasantly eccentric English scholar, traveller, and friend of Charles Lamb, Thomas Manning. Manning came to Canton in 1807, armed with a letter from the Court of Directors to the Select Committee, with the intention of learning the Chinese language and then setting out to explore the Chinese interior. Having failed to enter China from Canton or Macao, Manning made an abortive attempt to do so from Cochin China in 1808. In 1810, this time with a letter from the Select Committee to the Governor-General, Manning journeyed from Canton to Calcutta to try to make his way thence into the Chinese Empire across the Himalayas and through Tibet. While he did not get through to China, Manning, in the somewhat ineffective guise of a Chinese gentleman—Markham, who edited his journal, described him “with his broad English face and full flowing beard, . . . looking as little like a Tatar as any son of Adam one might meet in London”,¹ did manage to reach Lhasa in 1811, and to reside there for several months during which time he had interviews with no less a personage than the Dalai Lama. In his journal, Manning made it quite plain that he felt great advantage could be derived from relations between the Company and the Chinese in Tibet; of those Company officials who refused to give him any diplomatic commission or status when he was preparing for his journey, he wrote: “Fools, fools, fools, to neglect an opportunity they may never have again!”² Shortly after his return from Tibet to India he went back to Canton and remained there and at Macao until the Amherst Embassy came to China in January, 1817. He was attached to that Embassy in the capacity of an interpreter, accompanied it to Peking and returned with it to England. It is inconceivable that Manning did not tell of his experiences on his return to Canton from his Tibetan adventures. It is certain that there was no European alive at that time with a greater knowledge of Tibet.³

The Select Committee felt that the *Topaz* affair of 1821 was just

¹ Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., p. clviii.

² Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., p. 218.

³ For further details of Manning, see: Markham, *Narratives*, op. cit., pp. clv-clxi and 213-294. The latter reference is to Manning's journal of his Tibetan journey of 1811-1812, which Markham printed for the first time in 1876.

See also: Auber, *China*, op. cit., pp. 218-223. Auber implies that Manning failed to get as far as Tibet.

the sort of occasion on which great benefit would derive from a better means of communication with Peking.¹ A crisis had arisen at Canton as a result of an affray between members of the crew of H.M.S. *Topaz* and some Chinese at Lintin. Several Chinese were killed and the local authorities demanded that those responsible for the deaths be handed over to the tender mercies of Chinese justice. This particular situation had arisen several times in the past and the British had sometimes sacrificed one of their subjects for the sake of peace ; on this occasion, however, they stood firm, refusing to hand over any British seaman to be tried in a Chinese court. The Supercargoes found themselves, as a result of their firm stand, obliged to leave Canton and the trade there was closed for several months. They sent off a long dispatch to the Government of India, outlining the causes of the present dispute and showing the difficulties which faced them in getting for their point of view a fair hearing from the Chinese. They described how at one time they had been obliged to submit any petition they wished to make to Peking to the local authorities, and in the English language. They were convinced that severe distortion took place in the process of translation into Chinese. At present they were permitted to petition in Chinese, but they still had to rely on the agency of the Canton officials for the transmission of such petitions to Peking and they had no guarantee that they reached their destination unaltered, or, indeed, ever reached it at all. They asked the British authorities in Bengal about " the practicability and expediency of transmitting their representations overland to the Chinese frontier opposite Thibet, or by way of Sylhet and the province of Yunan whenever a crisis should occur of importance sufficient to require a reference to the Court of Peking ". The Bengal Government looked into the possibilities of Nepal and Sikkim as routes for this kind of communication ; they concluded that one letter could probably be sent to Peking by this way but that the development of a regular channel of communication depended entirely on the wishes of the government of the Chinese Emperor at Peking.² There is no record of the matter having been carried any further than this. In 1830

¹ Morse, *Chronicles*, op. cit., vol. iv, pp. 18-41.

² This correspondence is in Board's Collections, vol. 843, No. 22,566. Bengal Political Letter, 10th Sept., 1824, Supracargoes to India, 26th Dec., 1822, E. Gardner to India, 5th April, 1823, D. Scott to India, 24th March, 1823. Also : Despatches to Bengal, vol. 103. Commercial Dept., 24th Oct., 1826.

the English merchants at Canton were probably given a first-hand account of the extreme difficulty of establishing any form of diplomatic communication across the Himalayan frontier. In that year Mr. Inglis, a Canton merchant on holiday in India, travelled up the Sutlej Valley to the Tibetan frontier with the intention of crossing a little way into Tibet; he was firmly refused admittance by Tibetan frontier guards, who made it clear that Englishmen and their letters were not welcome in Tibet.¹

The Gurkha War was over by the summer of 1816, but its conclusion did not remove all danger of Chinese intervention. In the concluding stages of the war the Gurkhas again appealed to the Chinese for help, claiming that the reason for the British attack had been the Nepalese refusal to grant passage to British troops across their country. The British had been bent on an invasion of Tibet and only stubborn Gurkha resistance had prevented them from achieving their object. This appeal, unlike the ones which had preceded it, arrived in China, probably at Chengtu. A senior Chinese official, supported by a large body of troops, was dispatched to investigate the situation on the Himalayan frontier. By the time he arrived in Tibet the Gurkhas had come to terms with the British, peace had been agreed to, and a British Resident had been established at Katmandu. News of the impending arrival of a Chinese force, so unwelcome in Nepal now that its need no longer existed, led the Gurkhas to appeal for help from their former enemies, admitting frankly that the danger was entirely due to their misrepresentations. News of the Chinese approach had also reached the British through the Raja of Sikkim, and a letter had been dispatched at once through that ruler to the Chinese in Lhasa in denial of the Gurkha allegations. In November, 1816, a reply came back from Lhasa observing that "all was well between the Chinese and the English, which latter were a wise and moderate people, never assailing others without provocation", and the real culprits were the Gurkhas, who should be punished. So the Marquess of Hastings, as Lord Moira had become on the successful conclusion of the war, recorded in his diary on 8th November, 1816.²

¹ V. Jacquemont, *Voyage dans L'Inde*, vol. ii, Paris, 1841, p. 340. Jacquemont met Inglis in the Sutlej Valley while he was engaged on a similar, and equally abortive, attempt. Jacquemont's account gives a good picture of the difficulties met with by would-be Tibetan travellers at this time.

² The Marchioness of Bute, (Ed.), *The Private Journals of the Marquess of Hastings*, 2 vols., London, 1858. Vol. ii, pp. 137-148.

A correspondence on this question, and on the desirability of the stationing of a British representative at Katmandu, continued between Calcutta and Lhasa until 1818. It concealed a veiled hostility and, on the part of the Chinese, contempt, beneath a cloak of courteous and friendly phrases. The Chinese certainly showed no desire to make such a correspondence into the sort of channel of communication which the Select Committee envisaged in their letter of 26th December, 1822.¹ It is not clear what was the precise significance of this reported arrival of a Chinese force on the Tibetan frontier. It seems most unlikely that the Chinese had any serious intention of sending an army across the Himalayas in the way they had in 1792.² Perhaps it was merely the exaggerated report of the arrival of a Chinese inspecting official with escort suitable to his rank. But whatever its nature, the British were convinced that an extremely difficult situation had been avoided by the existence of a method whereby their letters could reach the Chinese in Tibet, and they appreciated the value that such diplomatic links would have on the newly established common frontier between India and Tibet in the Western Himalayas, one of the fruits of victory over Nepal.

After the war the Government of India continued in its efforts to develop such contacts across the Kumaon and Garwhal frontier, while the route through Sikkim fell into abeyance. A treaty had been made with the Raja of Sikkim in 1817, in which, in exchange for the return of Sikkimese territory which the British had retaken from the Gurkhas, the Raja agreed to place himself under British protection. But the ambiguous position in which he found himself, with ties to both the Chinese and the British, prevented the Raja from developing too close a relationship with his southern neighbour; Lord Hastings, while still believing that this relationship with the Raja of Sikkim " may be of great use, from the communication which it ensures by way of Tibet with Peking ", sympathized

¹ On the correspondence between the British and the Chinese in Tibet during and immediately after, the Gurkha War see : Martin, *China*, op. cit., pp. 24-28. Ross-of-Baldensburg, *Hastings*, op. cit., pp. 82-83. H. T. Prinsep, *History of the Political and Military Transactions in India during the Administration of the Marquess of Hastings : 1813-23*, 2 vols., London, 1825. Vol. i, pp. 209-213. H. H. Wilson, *The History of British India from 1805 to 1835*, 3 vols., London, 1846. Vol. ii, pp. 79-80.

² E. H. Parker, *Nepaul and China*, op. cit., p. 78.

with the difficulties of the Raja's position.¹ Until 1835, when the acquisition of Darjeeling placed the British into close contact with the day-to-day politics of Sikkim, this tiny hill state did not again play much part in trans-Himalayan diplomacy.² The western frontier, however, acquired some commercial importance since it provided a potential route of access to Gartok and Western Tibet, where the shawl wool was produced that formed the raw material for the immensely profitable shawl industry of Kashmir.

The value of this industry had attracted the notice of the Company some time towards the end of the eighteenth century, and in the decade before the Gurkha War a great deal had been learnt about it.³ In 1815 the Company established a factory at Kotgarh on the Sutlej to try to coax the trade in this valuable raw material away from the traditional route to Kashmir through Ladakh, and down on to British territory.⁴ The Sikh conquest of Kashmir in 1819, and the famine which followed, drove many shawl weavers into British territory and gave further stimulus to the Company's plans to develop a shawl industry of its own. The only obstacle to this plan lay in Tibetan reluctance to export the raw shawl wool, of which Western Tibet possessed the monopoly, to new markets. This inevitably gave rise to British attempts to open commercial negotiations with the Tibetan and Chinese authorities along their common frontier, either through British officials or through the mediation of native states like Bashahr, which possessed close ties with Tibet.⁵

¹ Hastings, *Journals*, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 146.

² It is probable that Indo-Tibetan trade if not Indo-Tibetan diplomacy was an important factor in the acquisition of Darjeeling. See: H. V. Bayley, *Dorje-ling*, Calcutta, 1838. Appx. A.A.

³ Bogle and Turner both refer to Tibetan shawl wool. In 1799 the Bengal Government were requested to obtain specimens of the shawl sheep of Western Tibet with a view to their being bred in England. Bengal Despatches, vol. 34. Bengal Commercial Despatch of 31st Oct., 1799. Moorcroft's journey to Gartok in 1812, published in 1816, gave much publicity to this industry. *Asiatic Researches*, vol. xii, Calcutta, 1816.

⁴ The site was selected in 1815. Trade does not seem to have started until 1820-21. *Punjab States Gazetteer*, vol. viii, Lahore, 1911, No. 2, p. 8. Enclosures to Secret Letters from India, Vol. 89, No. 38, Enclosure No. 114. Cunningham to Clerk, 30th July, 1842. R. H. Davies, *Report on the Trade and Resources of the Countries on the N.W. Boundary of British India*, Lahore, 1862. Appx. XXIV, pp. ccxxi-ccxxii.

⁵ For example: Major Sir W. Lloyd and Capt. A. Gerard, *Account of a Journey from Caunpoor to the Boorendo Pass, etc.*, 2 vols., London, 1840. Vol. ii, pp. 91, 125, 155-156, 178.

Nothing resulted from such attempts, unless it was the emergence of a clearer understanding of the unwillingness of the Chinese and their Tibetan dependants to have anything to do with the British in this part of their territories. This was a conclusion the British seemed determined not to accept, to judge by the way British officials continued to try to establish friendly relations with their Tibetan counterparts. It seems likely, moreover, that the British, whenever they did manage to meet a Tibetan functionary on the frontier, continued to try to turn such chance encounters into a regular channel of communication with Peking, often without official approval from Government. In 1827 the Tibetans, through the agency of the British protected state of Bashahr, protested against the way in which British officials were continually crossing into Tibet to try and open talks with Tibetan officials. They warned that the British should take care if they did not want to provoke war with Tibet, possessing great forces of her own and the support of the Chinese Emperor. If they wanted to enter into relations with the Chinese Emperor, the letter concluded, the British should do so by sea by Canton and not through Tibet.¹ On the rare occasions when a British mission was sent to Bhutan or other hill districts to try and bring about an end to raids by hillmen on to the bordering plains, there are hints that the needs of Anglo-Chinese diplomacy were not quite forgotten. Pemberton, who went up to Bhutan in 1838, for example, had orders to go to Lhasa if he could get permission to cross over into Tibet from Bhutan. Since one of the objects of Pemberton's visit to Bhutan was to find out its relations with the Chinese, it seems likely that his projected trip to Lhasa, for which he failed to get permission, had a similar object.²

By 1838, when Pemberton was sent to Bhutan, the need for diplomatic relations across the Himalayas had lessened considerably. In China the signs were that some forceful solution would soon be found to the old problems of Anglo-Chinese relations. In Western Tibet there had suddenly developed a rapid increase in the shawl wool exported to British India, and this was the sole aspect of

¹ Board's Collections. Vol. 1181. No. 30, ^{743.}₉ Bengal Political Letter of 3rd July, 1828. See also : J. D. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, revised edition, London, 1918, p. 183n.

² R. B. Pemberton, *Report on Bootan*, Calcutta, 1838, p. 90. India and Bengal Despatches. Vol. 15, f. 654. India Political Despatch No. 18 of 28th March, 1838.

Indo-Tibetan trade in which the Company then retained much interest.

The dramatic increase in the Tibetan shawl wool trade with British territory was due to a chain of events in which the British had played little part; yet it was destined to lead to the final crisis in the Himalayas, of 1841-42, which marked the last occasion on which, until the Communist "liberation" of Tibet in 1951, the presence of Chinese troops in Tibet was thought to create a serious problem in the defence of India.

In 1834 Gulab Singh, Raja of Jammu and feudatory of the Sikh kingdom of Lahore, invaded the kingdom of Ladakh, that strip of mountainous territory dividing Kashmir from Western Tibet. Ladakh was then an independent kingdom with the closest political, dynastic, commercial, and religious ties with Tibet. It had long enjoyed a monopoly of the transit trade in the shawl wool exported from Western Tibet to Kashmir; to gain control of this valuable traffic had been a dominating motive in Gulab Singh's attack. The outcome, despite the easy conquest of Ladakh, was a financial disappointment to the Jammu Raja; he found that his invasion had resulted in a diversion of the shawl exports from Ladakh to British territory by means of the route down the Sutlej. Between 1837, when the first figures were kept, and 1840, the value of shawl passing through Rampur, the chief mart on the Sutlej route, increased by over 200 per cent.¹ This development led Gulab Singh, in the spring of 1841, to carry his conquests a stage further and invade the shawl producing areas of Western Tibet. But he had overreached himself. In December, 1841, the invading force was met by a combined Chinese and Tibetan army, and suffered a catastrophic defeat. In the following spring the Chinese and Tibetans carried the war into Gulab Singh's territory, invading Ladakh and besieging its capital, Leh. At this point Gulab Singh decided he had had enough. He came to terms with the Chinese and Tibetans and signed a treaty in which, in return for a revival of the shawl trade through Ladakh, he became some sort of Chinese tributary; a fact which was to cause much annoyance to the British when Gulab Singh's possessions eventually came under British protection.²

¹ J. D. Cunningham, Notes on Moorcroft's travels, etc., *Journal of the Asiatic Society, Bengal*, vol. xiii, pt. i, 1844, p. 208.

² See: Cunningham, *Sikhs*, op. cit., for a general account of this war.

The Indian Government watched these events with close attention and considerable disquiet. In the first place, Gulab Singh's attack had resulted in a stoppage of the shawl supplies to British territory at a time when many of the Indian subjects of the Company had become economically dependent upon such supplies. This was a matter in which British prestige was involved once it became apparent that the Company could not protect its subjects from the consequences of the actions of the upstart and irresponsible ruler of Jammu.¹ But there were graver political issues than this involved.

In 1841 the British were involved in wars with Afghanistan and with China. Their military resources were strained to the limit. Gulab Singh's attack on Tibet threatened to involve the British in further military commitments. The Sikh kingdom of Lahore, of which Gulab Singh was a dependant, was a British ally. The Chinese might well interpret his attack on Tibet as a concealed British offensive against China. The Chinese might be tempted to create a diversionary attack on India to weaken the British effort in China itself. Nepal, China's tributary, was eager to undertake this task on behalf of her suzerain and had already offered her services.² Even if war did not break out on the Indian frontier, the action of Gulab Singh, wrote Clerk, who was responsible for the Company's policy in North-Western India, "might prove embarrassing under such circumstances as an approaching pacification at Peking; for that Government (China) will, of course, in the present state of affairs there, impute the invasion of its territories by the Sikhs (Gulab Singh), to the instigation of the British Government".³ The danger of a clash with China increased when the Chinese defeated Gulab Singh, and remnants of his army sought refuge in British territory.⁴ This danger further increased when Chinese troops started to invade Ladakh. Serious thought had to be given to the possibility of British troops being sent to Gulab Singh's assistance.⁵ But, as in 1792, the British finally decided to

¹ Enclosures to Secret Letters from India. Vol. 79, No. 76. Thomason to India 4th Sept., 1841.

² Enclosures to Secret Letters from India. Vol. 78, No. 65. Hodgson to Clerk 2nd Aug., 1841. Parker, *Nepaul and China*, op. cit., p. 80.

³ Enclosures to Secret Letters from India. Vol. 79, No. 76. Clerk to India 4th Sept., 1841.

⁴ Enclosures to Secret Letters from India. Vol. 89, No. 38. Clerk to India 31st Aug., 1842.

⁵ Enclosures to Secret Letters from India. Vol. 90. Secret Dept. Confidential News Letter No. 3 of 22nd Jan., 1842.

confine themselves to an offer of mediation. A British officer was sent up to the Tibetan border. As in 1792, he took no part in the settlement which was eventually made between the defeated invaders and the Chinese.¹

On this occasion British inactivity seemed to have been justified by the event. The Chinese did not attack India; nor did their Nepalese tributaries, of whom, in any case, the Chinese had conceived a deep distrust. The crisis in the Himalayas had no perceptible effect on the war in China or its settlement by the treaty of Nanking.

With the signing of the Treaty of Nanking Anglo-Chinese relations were placed on a new footing. No longer did it seem necessary to look for channels of communication with Peking other than those through China proper. The importance of Tibet to the British became predominantly commercial; within four years of the signing of the Nanking Treaty the Indian Government was trying to use the new means of communication with the Chinese to secure better relations between India and Tibet.² There was, in fact, a complete reversal in policy. Previously it had been hoped to a varying degree that through Tibet, China might be opened. After 1842 it was hoped that through Chinese mediation Tibet might be opened to Indian commerce.

The British fear of Chinese military action on the Indian frontier of the Himalayas dwindled away. Such anxiety played but the smallest part in determining British policy during the Sikkim War of 1861 and the Bhutan War of 1865 despite the fact that the British appreciated that both these states had ties with China. The Nepalese, moreover, soon realized that their Chinese suzerain was never going to encourage or support them in any plans for territorial expansion at British expense. In 1854-56 the Gurkhas again turned their eyes to the north. Their war with Tibet during those years brought about no Chinese reaction. Thereupon Nepalese policy looked to expansion to the north and firm friendship with the British to the south.

From 1842 until 1951, except during Lord Curzon's tenure of office as Viceroy when it seemed as if Tibet might become the field of vigorous Anglo-Russian competition, the Himalayas posed

¹ This was J. D. Cunningham, the future historian of the Sikhs.

² Sir J. Davis, *Chinese Miscellanies*, London, 1865, pp. 47-48.

no serious problem to Indian frontier defence. To-day, however, when the Chinese Communists have established themselves firmly in Tibet, a situation exists which has many similarities to that which arose in 1792. Once more the Himalayas dominate the relations between two powerful states. Once more the status of Nepal and the other Himalayan States with ancient ties to the north is a matter of prime political importance. The former period, when Tibet played some part in Anglo-Chinese relations, is not without some relevance to modern problems.