
*The Establishment of the British Trade Agencies in Tibet: A Survey**

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The popular image of pre-1950 Tibet is of a remote land seldom visited by outsiders. But more than a hundred British officials served in Tibet during the early part of this century. Between 1904 and 1947¹ Agents from the Indian Political Service, and supporting staff, were stationed in Gyantse and Yatung, under the control of the Political Officer in Sikkim.² An Agency was also maintained at Gartok in Western Tibet, where a native officer was posted as the Trade Agent. After 1936 a mission was stationed at Lhasa. The last British official in Lhasa, Hugh Richardson, departed in 1950 following the Chinese invasion of Tibet. For the British Trade Agents, an almost forgotten section of British colonial administration in Asia, Tibet was an official posting. Their isolation, and the lack of trade, meant that they had the time to study a variety of aspects of Tibet, and to gain a great knowledge of the country and its people. The myth of Tibet as an unknown land of mystery depends on ignoring the presence of these officials. Their role has not been entirely unknown, the main academic controversy regarding the Trade Agents has concerned their role as gatherers of intelligence. Colonel Gerald Morgan, writer on the "Great Game", wrote in *Asian Affairs* in 1973 that while "all diplomats have the recognised duty of collecting and sifting information", on present available evidence, "there never was a centrally organised intelligence network in Central Asia". Morgan states that Political Officers "always organised a local spy network", mostly composed of Indian traders. However Lars-Erik Nyman, in a reply later that year, stated that the Political Officer in Gangtok was a "spider in the web" of a loosely constituted information gathering service, which served as an unsophisticated, but, given the conditions, successful "British spy network in Chinese Central Asia". Sir Olaf Caroe and Hugh Richardson followed with criticisms of Nyman's approach.³ During Richardson's time in Tibet,

* I gratefully acknowledge the guidance of Dr Peter Robb (School of Oriental and African Studies, London), in the preparation and editing of this paper; in addition Mr Hugh Richardson has kindly given me valuable advice. ¹ The positions passed to the responsibility of the new Indian government on 15 Aug. 1947.

² The difficulties in rendering Tibetan into English are well known. I have used the most commonly accepted spellings, generally those favoured by the Agents at the time, except that I have used the term Panchen Lama, for the then favoured "Tashi Lama".

³ See G. Morgan, "Myth and reality in the Great Game", *Asian Affairs*, LX (1973), p. 59; L-E. Nyman. "The Great Game: a comment", *ibid.*, pp. 299-301; Comments by O. Caroe & H. Richardson, *Asian Affairs*, LXI (1974), pp. 119-21. Also see G. Morgan, *Anglo-Russian Rivalry in Central Asia 1810-1895* (London, 1981), pp. 133-49.

British–Tibetan relations were good and information freely available to British Agents; but they were then resident in Lhasa itself.⁴

This essay is concerned with understanding the circumstances, influence and role of the British Trade Agencies in Tibet, from the creation of posts after the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa in 1904, until personnel changes among the Agents in late 1909. The paper will not explore specific events such as the Younghusband Mission, which have been thoroughly examined elsewhere.⁵ Rather it will show that by understanding the lives of the Trade Agents, the conditions in which they lived and their duties in this unique setting, we can resolve the question of their role and importance, and reveal much of the nature of British policy in this region, in the early period of engagement with Tibet.

Establishment of the Agencies

Tibet at this time was under the nominal suzerainty of China, although increasingly travellers were warning that China had no effective control there. Tibet had no formal foreign relations with India, maintaining only localised contact in the frontier areas. Foreign travellers were prevented from visiting Tibet's heartland. The British Trade Agencies in Tibet were originally established as part of a "Forward" policy, which involved British efforts to secure the Indian frontier by the establishment of buffer states between India and the empires of Russia and China. British attempts to open Tibet to trade, and to define its northern frontiers, became more urgent as the Russian Empire expanded eastwards and British fears grew of a Russian move against India.

In 1886 Tibetan forces occupied a position in Sikkim, over which British suzerainty had been established in 1861. The British eventually dispatched an expeditionary force, which expelled the Tibetans in 1888–9. John Claude White was posted "on loan to the Political Department" as an Assistant Political Officer to accompany the mission to Sikkim, and, on its completion, offered the newly created post of Political Officer Sikkim. Following these developments, China, fearing a direct British–Tibetan settlement, agreed to negotiations which finally resulted in an agreement in 1893. Britain conceded that only one trade mart in Tibet would be opened, and was then manoeuvred into accepting that it would be located at Yatung, even though Phari, the site of Tibet's trade taxation office, was obviously a superior site. Yatung was in an isolated valley off the main trade route, and the Tibetans were able to prevent it becoming of any importance.⁶ On 1 May 1894, when White visited Yatung for the opening of the trade mart, he found the Tibetans had built a wall to keep people out. Nolan, the Commissioner at Darjeeling, visited Yatung in 1895, but the situation had not improved. The Tibetans continued to obstruct the market and, even if the Chinese had wished to enforce its opening, they were not in a position to do so.⁷ Under the 1893 Regulations, British officials were to reside in Yatung,

⁴ Personal correspondence, H. Richardson, 19 Oct. 1990.

⁵ The 1903–4 British expedition to Lhasa made by members of the Tibetan Frontier Commission is commonly referred to as the "Younghusband Mission", after its Commissioner, Colonel (later Sir) Francis Younghusband. For details of this, see P. Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa* (Oxford, 1986, first published London, 1961); for a summary see H. Richardson, *Tibet and its History* (London, 1962), pp. 82–90.

⁶ See P. Addy, *Tibet on the Imperial Chessboard* (Delhi, 1984), p. 48; A. Lamb, *Britain and Chinese Central Asia* (London, 1960), pp. 198, 208–9; A. K. J. Singh, *Himalayan Triangle* (London, 1988), p. 221; S. F. Wright, *Hart and the Chinese Customs* (Belfast, 1950), pp. 620–2.

⁷ See Singh, *Himalayan*, p. 10.

but none were appointed. (L. A. Waddell, then considered an expert on Tibet, claims that he was to have been posted there.)⁸ It was apparently always envisaged that the Political Officer Sikkim would be in overall control of British officials in Tibet, as the treaty regulations specified that he was to discuss any dispute arising at Yatung, with the Chinese Frontier Officer.

In the ensuing years attempts to solve the Tibetan problem through China were abandoned. The Viceroy, Lord Curzon (in office 1899–1905), tried to open direct communications with the Dalai Lama, and, having failed, began to plan what became the Younghusband Mission to Lhasa. The outcome was the 1904 Convention signed at Lhasa between Britain and Tibet. Under Articles 2 and 5, trade marts, and British Trade Agents, were to be provided at Gyantse and Gartok, as well as at Yatung. Under Article 6, Tibet was required to pay an indemnity of Rs 750,000, and Britain occupied the Chumbi Valley as security for the indemnity and the opening of the trade marts.⁹ The Trade Agencies were established as the Mission withdrew.

Curzon and Younghusband hoped that, as a result of the Mission, a British Agent could be stationed in Lhasa with access to the Dalai Lama; but the British Government in London was opposed to that on grounds of cost and security. Nonetheless, Younghusband made a formal agreement, attached to the Convention, permitting the Agent at Gyantse to visit Lhasa when necessary, to solve questions that could not be agreed in Gyantse. On 3 November 1904 the British Cabinet rejected this separate agreement and instructed the Viceroy to revoke it. The new Gyantse Trade Agent's first official duty was to inform the Tibetan government that the British would not make use of the separate terms.¹⁰

On 9 June 1905, White, the Political Officer Sikkim, was given overall command of the Trade Agencies in Tibet, and of the Chumbi Valley.¹¹ But White was not given the power to control Tibet as he controlled Sikkim, and he soon became involved in long-running acrimony with Captain O'Connor, the Trade Agent at Gyantse. This conflict must have hindered O'Connor's performance at a crucial time in the struggle with China for influence in Tibet.

At the end of Curzon's viceroyalty, in November 1905, with an apparent decline in the Russian threat and the election of a Liberal government in Britain, the predominance of the "Forward school"¹² was ended, and the British sought a disengagement from Tibetan affairs. The Dalai Lama had fled into exile in Mongolia, and central authority in Tibet was naturally weakened. The Chinese moved to restore their position in Tibet. The British, having refused to accept the right of access to Lhasa, had no real political influence in Tibet and began to seek agreement with Russia over Central Asian questions, as a bulwark against Germany. In May 1906, a treaty was signed between China and Britain which had the effect of giving China a free hand in Tibet, and in August 1907 Britain and Russia

⁸ See L. Waddell, *Lhasa and its Mysteries* (London, 1905), p. 48.

⁹ For a copy of this treaty see Richardson, *Tibet*, pp. 268–71.

¹⁰ See W. F. O'Connor, *On the Frontier and Beyond* (London, 1931), p. 78; Richardson, *Tibet*, pp. 83–5; Singh, *Himalayan*, pp. 27–32, 61–2; Younghusband to Younghusband snr, 9 Oct. 1903, IOLR: MSS Eur. F 197–145.

¹¹ Singh, *Himalayan*, p. 249, states that Waddell himself had suggested this.

¹² The term "Forward school", which is closely associated with Curzon's policies on the North-east frontier, refers to those who favoured a British expansionist policy, or at least, active response to the perceived Russian threat. The Younghusband Mission was an example of the policy in practice.

recognised Chinese suzerainty in Tibet. Thus the Trade Agents, who generally supported a "Forward" policy, were often at odds with government policy.

Britain had voluntarily surrendered the political gains it had made as a result of the Younghusband Mission, and China, not Russia, became the enemy of what remained of British interests in Tibet.¹³ In 1907 the new *Amban* Chang Yin-tang, while he was en route to Lhasa from India, insulted both the Yatung Trade Agent Campbell, and Charles Bell, the Political Officer Sikkim. In Gyantse the cutting edge of Chinese policy was the *Amban's* Agent at the Trade Mart, Gow, who set out to make life as difficult as possible for the Trade Agents.¹⁴ When Gow arrived in Gyantse in November 1906 he shouted complaints about the Agency before Lieutenant F. M. Bailey, acting as Gyantse Trade Agent in O'Connor's absence, even knew who he was. He demanded that all the Trade Agency's supplies be obtained through him, and soon forbade the Tibetans to deal with the Agency except through him.¹⁵ When O'Connor returned in December he refused to meet Gow and they communicated only in writing. Gow's actions were often petty, and personal as, for example, when he prevented O'Connor from obtaining willow cuttings for his garden.¹⁶ A Medical Officer, Captain Robert Steen had accompanied O'Connor to Gyantse and set up a small dispensary which mainly treated poorer Tibetans, the wealthy preferred to become private patients of the M.O. The dispensary was unpopular only with the monks of Gyantse, who lost exorcism fees. Gow decided to prevent Tibetans from using it.¹⁷

O'Connor understood that his government's aim was to keep Gyantse quiet and he attempted to maintain diplomatic relations with all parties. In an account of these events written in 1908, he denied developing any anti-Chinese sentiments, but privately he recorded his frustration, describing their hostility as "due to jealousy – they recognise us as their superiors in science and honesty".¹⁸ Desperate to prevent China's control over the Tibetans, he conjured up a plan for the British to arm the Panchen Lama's supporters to encourage them to break away from Lhasa rule, and then to recognise them. White described this as "an extremely mad scheme" and grounds for O'Connor's dismissal.¹⁹ John Morley, Secretary of State for India (1905–1910), was "horrified" and the plan was abandoned.²⁰ But attempting to enlist the Panchen Lama's support would have been a typical "Forward" policy; it was a tactic tried by the Chinese in 1907, when they offered to make the Panchen Lama Regent.²¹

O'Connor became increasingly isolated. He was hampered not only by British policy but by his long-running feud with White at Gangtok, who sought his dismissal; even his supporter Louis (later Sir Louis) Dane, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, was forced to warn him against "his insubordinate style of writing", although it was admitted that "a saint could quarrel with Mr White", according to one report from the Foreign

¹³ Addy, *Tibet*, pp. 150, 170–1.

¹⁴ Notes by Major O'Connor regarding Tibet, 13 Mar. 1908, IOLR: L/PS/7/216–1024.

¹⁵ Singh, *Himalayan*, p. 43; A. Swinson, *Beyond the Frontiers* (London, 1971), p. 51.

¹⁶ A. Lamb, *The McMahon Line* (London, 1966), i, p. 133.

¹⁷ Gyantse Annual Diaries 1908–9, 1910–11, IOLR: L/PS/7/249–1151, 229–923; Gyantse Agency Diary, 5 Jan. 1908, MSS Eur F 157–304b. ¹⁸ Gyantse Agency Diary, 4 Apr. 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/201–901.

¹⁹ White to Government of India, 1 May 1907, IOLR: R/1/4/1091 (Personal file of W. F. O'Connor).

²⁰ Lamb, *McMahon*, i, p. 136.

²¹ Telegram, Viceroy to Sect. of State, London, 24 July 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/203–1258.

Department. Viceroy Minto (1905–10) accepted that dismissing O'Connor would be seen as surrender to Chinese pressure. But the government merely asked the two officials to work together;²² they did not address the Agent's problems.

By mid-1907 O'Connor's position had become impossible. His personal relations with the Tibetans, always good, were now interrupted. Even his coolies were singing "You'd better not go to *Changlo* (the Trade Agency post) if you don't want your throat cut".²³ On 31 May 1907 he was not invited to a sports day held in Gyantse as part of Tibetan holiday celebrations, but, as his diary noted plaintively, "Mr Gow however, was present at the sports and presented the prizes".²⁴ Judging from the tone of his diary entries, O'Connor was personally upset by these symbolic acts. In July/August 1907 he was withdrawn from Tibet to accompany the Maharajah of Sikkim's son on a world tour, and replaced at Gyantse by Bailey. He never returned. Eventually the Foreign Office protested to Peking over Gow's behaviour, and he was withdrawn,²⁵ but not before he had greatly assisted in establishing China as the primary authority in Tibet.

In contrast to Central Tibet, however, there was little Chinese influence in Western Tibet. The Gartok Trade Agent was affected by Chinese hostility only in the sense that it backed up local opposition, which was from economic, not political, motives. However, in the British administered Chumbi Valley (a wedge of Tibetan territory which divides Sikkim and Bhutan and provides the easiest route from India to Lhasa), China sought to reestablish control. First the Chinese had manoeuvred to gain influence, but Campbell's proximity to India and his knowledge of Chinese language and customs enabled him to maintain his position. Eventually however the Chinese paid the indemnity (for which the Valley was held as security), and the British troops were ordered to evacuate the Chumbi Valley on 3 February 1908.²⁶ Bell and other members of the "Forward School" favoured retaining the Chumbi, justifying this legally because of treaty breaches by the Tibetans, and morally because they felt the inhabitants of Chumbi preferred British administration to Tibetan;²⁷ but this option was never seriously considered by the Government of India. After the withdrawal, somewhat delayed by the usual shortage of pack-animals, Campbell transferred power direct to the Tibetan authorities on 8 February 1908, without recourse to the Chinese, whom he advised by letter.²⁸ This device failed to secure the British position. The Chinese portrayed the withdrawal as due to their efforts and British prestige suffered. When Macdonald took over as Trade Agent Yatung, village headmen demanded shop rent and payment for firewood from British subjects in the bazaar, both having previously been free, and some days later the locals made use of a traditional cremation ground on the Agency premises to burn a body. Bell, returning to Gangtok from a visit

²² Foreign Department comment by H. Butler, 23 Mar. 1908, IOLR: R/1/4/1091 Government of India Foreign Department to White, Aug. 1907. IOLR: R/1/4/1091.

²³ Gyantse Agency Diary, 5 Apr. 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/201–901. Satirical songs were a recognised form of political comment or popular expression among the general populace in Tibet.

²⁴ Gyantse Agency Diary, 31 May 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/203–1203.

²⁵ Although a report from Bailey suggests that he resigned as part of an unrelated scandal in the Lhasa Amban's office; see Gyantse Agency Diary, 9 Apr. 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/201–901.

²⁶ Annual Report of the Yatung Trade Agency 1907–8, IOLR: L/PS/7/219–1490.

²⁷ But as a contemporary report notes, "Was there ever a pioneer of the forward policy who did not find the trans-border people dying to be annexed?"; Foreign Department margin note, 18 Jan. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/173–388.

²⁸ Frontier Confidential Report, 14 Feb. 1908, IOLR: L/PS/7/210–602.

to Chumbi, had difficulty in obtaining the transport normally supplied. However, MacDonald persevered and seems to have gained the respect of the Tibetans, paving the way for his later assistance to the Dalai Lama in his flight to India, after the Chinese attacked Lhasa in 1910.²⁹ Nonetheless, as a whole the political influence of the Trade Agents was weak and declining, both locally in Tibet, and with the British and Indian governments.

The Agents, their lifestyle and role

The basis of the administration of the Trade Agencies was the Indian Political Service which had been created by the East India Company in 1820, and the Government of India had inherited the department, which was concerned with the self-governing states and with those neighbouring states whose affairs could affect India; such as Afghanistan, Nepal, and Tibet.³⁰ The Political Department was in effect the diplomatic corps of the Government of India and was ultimately answerable to the Viceroy. By the period with which we are concerned (1904–9), personnel were recruited from the Indian Civil Service and from officers of the Indian Army. They combined in a small, élite force of around 150 men. Candidates applied for admission (or were advised to apply if they appeared particularly suitable), and were required to pass a classically based entrance examination.³¹ Persons particularly suited for a position could be appointed on a temporary basis, pending permanent admission to the service. Three Agents with whom we are concerned, O'Connor, Bailey and Campbell, entered in this way.

Typically the Agents were bachelors (at least in their early careers). They came from a professional middle-class background, and were educated at the public schools and traditional universities, or in military colleges such as Sandhurst. As other studies of colonial service have shown, the majority were Scottish or Irish, and most appear to have had family connections with service in India.³² The Political Service attracted men who sought an independent and often adventurous life, especially on the frontiers. The North-West Frontier is better known, but by the turn of the century the North-East Frontier Provinces also had their appeal,³³ not only in the life of the Himalayas, but because of prospects held out by policies, which during Lord Curzon's viceroyalty demanded increased contact with Tibet. The men initially chosen to represent British interests in Tibet were all associated with the Younghusband Mission, the outstanding expression of Curzon's "Forward" policy. All of them appear to have been ambitious and they supported Curzon's policy during their period of involvement with Tibet. Five of them are worthy of particular attention: White, Bell, O'Connor, Bailey and Campbell.

John Claude White,³⁴ an engineer attached to the Public Works Department Bengal, gained experience of the region through road-building work in Sikkim, and by his service

²⁹ See Yatung Agency Diary, Aug. 1909, IOLR: L/PS/7/231–1447.

³⁰ See T. Coen, *The Indian Political Service* (London, 1971), pp. 20–1; B. J. Gould, *The Jewel in the Lotus* (London, 1957), p. 3; C. S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service 1601–1930* (London, 1965, first published 1930), p. 160. ³¹ See E. Blunt, *The I.C.S.* (London, 1937), p. 174; Gould, *Jewel*, p. 3; O'Malley, *Indian*, p. 160.

³² See Coen, *Indian*, p. 35; E. Spangenberg, *British Bureaucracy in India* (Manohar, 1976), pp. 19, 31–2.

³³ P. Collister, *Bhutan and the British* (London, 1987), p. 117; Morgan, "Myth", p. 58.

³⁴ Born in Bareilly (India), on 1 Oct. 1853; died in England on 19 Feb. 1918. Educated at Rugby, Bonn (Germany) and Cooper's Hill College of Engineering. Arrived in India on 17 Nov. 1876.

with the 1888–9 expeditionary forces, after which he became Political Officer for Sikkim.³⁵ In June 1903, he was attached to the Tibetan Frontier Commission under Younghusband, though he was himself an obvious candidate for the leadership.³⁶ After returning from Lhasa, he resumed his normal duties, and remained in the post in Gangtok until he went on leave prior to retiring when he turned 55. His character and achievements were mixed. Younghusband found him “appallingly unfit” for the Mission and “arrogant” in his dealings with the Tibetans.³⁷ Thus, while he remained a dominant figure at Gangtok, White had little official support. He was severely reprimanded for misinforming the government about details when the Panchen Lama visited India in 1906.³⁸ The Viceroy, Minto, considered White had furthered his own interests while serving in Sikkim.³⁹ He had taken pride in turning Sikkim into a revenue-producing state,⁴⁰ but showed an equal concern for personal finance. His efforts to obtain an increased wage or pension began in October 1898 and continued until 1912 (long after his retirement). At the end of his life, he was dismissed by the King of Bhutan from a position as the King’s Agent in a revenue-producing scheme, over an expenses claim.⁴¹

Charles Alfred Bell’s⁴² introduction to the area was more academic. Posted to Darjeeling, he studied Tibetan, compiling a dictionary and grammar, and in August 1902 made his first, brief, visit to Tibet. He was called upon to survey a possible cart route from Bhutan to the Chumbi Valley; his subsequent report was a model of clear and concise reporting and his reports were ever prompt, thorough and even-handed. In White’s absence he was appointed Acting Political Officer in Sikkim, based in the Chumbi Valley, and he remained in Chumbi as Assistant Political Officer until 1905, replacing White as Political Officer Sikkim in 1908, after twice acting in this position in White’s absence.⁴³ In this period Bell was laying the foundations of his later eminence as a diplomat, a friend and confidant of the 13th Dalai Lama, and the greatest Tibetan scholar of his generation. Already, Bailey referred to him as a “babu”.⁴⁴ He seems to have been a painstaking, reserved and somewhat private character. There is little evidence of his relations with other British officials, but he seems to have learnt from White, to have had only formal association with Campbell, and to have had only minor differences with Bailey, with

³⁵ Collister, *Bhutan*, p. 137; J. C. White, *Sikkim and Bhutan* (London, 1909), p. vii–viii; White to Morley 31 Jan. 1907, IOLR: L/PS/11/1919–2191; Indian Public Works Department Services 1905–6, V/12/53.

³⁶ P. Fleming, *Bayonets*, p. 72.

³⁷ Younghusband to Younghusband snr, 19 Jul. 1903, IOLR: MSS Eur F 197/145. Younghusband later contributed a laudatory obituary of White, in *Geographical Journal*, LI (London, 1918), pp. 407–8. This was however typical, in that personal disputes between members of the “Political” were not aired publicly.

³⁸ Addy, *Tibet*, p. 166; Report by L. Dane, 24 Jun. 1907, IOLR: R1/4/1091.

³⁹ Singh, *Himalayan*, p. 349. ⁴⁰ This is one of the recurring themes of White’s *Sikkim and Bhutan*.

⁴¹ Collister, *Bhutan*, p. 173, Singh, *Himalayan*, p. 358; records of White’s attempt to gain an increased pension are found in IOLR: L/PS/11/1919/2191.

⁴² Later Sir C. Bell, K.C.I.E., C.M.G. Born in Calcutta on 31 Oct. 1870; died in Victoria B.C. (Canada) on 8 Mar. 1945. Educated at Winchester and Oxford. Joined the I.C.S. on 18 Sept. 1891 and arrived in India on 3 Nov. 1891, served in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa before he was posted to the Himalayas for health reasons.

⁴³ For details of Bell’s career see IOLR: The Bell Collection, MSS Eur F 80, and Bell’s History of Service file 1912, 1913, V/12/12; also see C. Christie, “Sir Charles Bell; a memoir”, *Asian Affairs*, LXIV (1977), pp. 48–62.

⁴⁴ M. Edwardes, *Bound to Exile* (London, 1969), p. 196, states that “In the latter part of the nineteenth century... ‘Babu’ began to take on an offensive connotation. Originally... a native clerk who wrote English... it was applied... in particular to the Bengali... something to laugh at”.

whom he was later to break. Bell considered "Our correct line in Tibet is friendly courtesy combined with a strict insistence on our rights"; he expected to be treated with the "proper respect" with which he treated the Tibetans.⁴⁵ After 1909, outside events provided him with a fresh opportunity to restore British prestige, but in the period 1904–9 Bell was an administrator rather than a driving force. He was growing into the job.

The involvement in Tibet of Captain William Frederick Travers O'Connor⁴⁶ dates from his posting to Darjeeling in 1895. There he learned Tibetan, and was admonished for crossing the Tibetan frontier without permission; but soon after he was summoned to work in the Intelligence Branch of the Quarter Master General's Department in Simla. There, under the command of General Bower, himself a Tibetan explorer of note, he compiled maps and reports of the Tibetan border area. Through service at Malakand and in Kashmir he retained an interest in Tibet and came to the attention of the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, with whom he had several meetings. Tipped off by White at the Durbar in December 1902 that action on Tibet was likely, he applied for service there in the event of a mission.⁴⁷ His application had the backing of Curzon, Kitchener and Dane.⁴⁸ By January 1903 he was in Darjeeling preparing the ground for the Mission to Tibet. As the only British Officer capable of acting as a translator, he became an important asset to the Mission and worked closely with Younghusband. He was the obvious choice of the "Forward school" for the newly-created post as British Trade Agent at Gyantse, and remained there after the conclusion of the Mission, entering the "Political" with effect from 1 October 1905. O'Connor too was a somewhat private character who, despite what now seems the arrogant tone of some of his written references to them, got on well with all classes of Tibetans. However, he ultimately failed to make his posting a success. Despite his sometimes extreme efforts (such as a plan to divide Tibet), he could not avoid the eclipse of "Forward" policies, and became almost completely isolated during his second term at Gyantse. Crucially he lost the support of White, his Political Officer in Sikkim, whose competence he impugned in turn, and despite considerable support from his backers, such as Dane, the government was forced to withdraw him. It may be argued that, from the British point of view, there were disadvantages in retaining an official in Tibet for more than two or three years, after which staleness or lack of detachment could affect judgement, and that O'Connor was an early example of this problem.

His protégé, Lieutenant F. M. "Eric" Bailey⁴⁹ was more successful. One of the most colourful figures of his age, he served as soldier, explorer, diplomat and spy. Postings at

⁴⁵ Report on a journey to Chumbi and Gyantse by C. Bell, 10 July 1908, IOLR: L/PS/7/219–1571.

⁴⁶ Later Lt-Colonel W. F. O'Connor, C.S.I., C.I.E., C.V.O. Born in County Meath (Ireland) on 30 July 1870; died in London on 14 Dec. 1943. Educated at Charterhouse and Woolwich Military Academy. Joined the Royal Artillery on 14 Feb. 1890 and arrived in India on 27 Feb. 1895.

⁴⁷ O'Connor, *On the Frontier*, pp. 15–50; IOLR: O'Connor's History of Service file, V/12/12.

⁴⁸ O'Connor, *ibid.*, pp. 47–51; Dane to O'Connor 9 Nov. 1904, IOLR: R/1/4/1091.

⁴⁹ Later Lt-Colonel F. M. Bailey, C.I.E. Born in Lahore on 3 Feb. 1882; died in Norfolk on 17 Apr. 1967. Educated at Edinburgh Academy, Wellington and Sandhurst. Joined the Indian Army on 28 July 1900 and arrived in India on 19 Oct. 1900. His long career included service with Younghusband to Lhasa and at Gallipoli in WWI, shipwreck and story-book adventures as a British Agent in Tashkent after WWI. He carried out valuable exploration of the path of the Brahmaputra river, in both its western extremes and its eastern descent to India. For the story of Bailey's life, though brief and unreliable on his Trade Agency career in this period, see Swinson, *Beyond*.

Gyantse and Chumbi were his political apprenticeship. He had been personally selected by Younghusband for the Mission to Lhasa, as his basic knowledge of Tibetan, gained while serving at Siliguri with the 32nd Sikh Pioneers, was “likely to prove useful”;⁵⁰ and by the end of the Mission Younghusband regarded him as “an excellent fellow” who “ought to go far”.⁵¹ Bell made concessions to the Tibetan’s beliefs by avoiding smoking and shooting while with them, whereas Bailey “believed it inconsistent with the maintenance of dignity to pander too much to native ideas”,⁵² but Bailey, modest and personable, tall and powerfully built, showed “pluck and commonsense and tact... and... a very happy knack of getting on with Tibetans”.⁵³ He also seems to have been popular with fellow officers, particularly O’Connor, with whom he had served in Tibet, and his school friend Auchinleck.⁵⁴ His fortnightly letters to his parents however reveal that he held a low opinion of White, and that his opinion of Bell steadily deteriorated.⁵⁵

The last of these important officials, Lieutenant William Lachlan Campbell,⁵⁶ brought a rather different perspective. He had made his name when, after secondment in Peking in 1903, he travelled from China to India by way of Kashgar, a notable achievement at that time (though performed previously by Younghusband). He was placed on special duty with the Foreign Department from January to May 1904, and then with the Intelligence Branch at Army Headquarters for two periods.⁵⁷ He was then specially selected, although not yet a member of the “Politicals” for the position in Chumbi, because of his experience and Chinese language skills. Campbell had the backing of Sir Ernest Satow (British Minister at Peking) and Lord Curzon,⁵⁸ and was unique among British Trade Agents in this period in having better relations with Chinese rather than Tibetan personnel. His Garrison Artillery C.O. described him as having “a good temper and quiet manners” and as being “open and straight-forward”, and Younghusband too noted his “Energy and sharpness, quickness of mind” and thought him “ambitious and hard-working”.⁵⁹ Bell, in a balanced summary believed that this ambition extended to a desire for Bell’s own position, and, though concluding that he was a fit candidate for promotion, he referred to Campbell’s “contentious” nature, which had “made him disobliging to Lt Bailey on occasion”.⁶⁰

Given their differences in background and interests and their rivalries and disagreements, officials were clearly neither a network of scholars nor a consistent influence on policy. But, equally clearly, they represented repositories of knowledge, which, because of the establishment of the Agencies, they were strategically placed to extend. The Agents’ attempts to bolster the British position involved a number of factors. Their character,

⁵⁰ Swinson, *Beyond*, p. 46.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁵² W. M. MacGovern, *To Lhasa in Disguise* (London, 1924), p. 39.

⁵³ Swinson, *Beyond*, p. 42.

⁵⁴ Bailey to Bailey snr, 26 Sept. 1906 IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166.

⁵⁵ See Bailey to Bailey snr, 19 Apr. 1906 re White and *ibid.*, 20 Aug. 1908 and 3 Jan. 1909 re Bell; (Bailey dated this last letter 3 Jan. 1908 in error) IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166.

⁵⁶ Later Major W. L. Campbell, C.I.E. Born in Scotland on 10 May 1880, died in London on 13 Dec. 1937. Educated at Edinburgh Academy and R.M.A. Woolwich. Joined Royal Garrison Artillery on 23 Dec. 1898 and the Indian Army on 19 Nov. 1905.

⁵⁷ See Personal file of W. L. Campbell, IOLR: R/1/4/1104.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*; Viceroy to Foreign Department, Government of India, 2 Oct. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/192-1638.

⁵⁹ See Application for Appointment, and Younghusband report, 5 Feb. 1908, in IOLR: R/1/4/1104.

⁶⁰ See Bell reports, 26 Dec. 1906, 9 July 1908, 19 Apr. 1917 and 14 Dec. 1918; IOLR: *ibid.*

lifestyle, and the make-up of the Agency establishments, were all factors in their favour, while their isolation and lack of government support were factors in adversity. Such efforts as they were able to make to improve their status were largely symbolic.

The conditions under which the British in Tibet lived were, as might be expected, primitive, but of the type which, in the short term at least, were not unattractive to an officer accustomed to frontier life. The Political Officer in Gangtok lived in comparative splendour at the Residency, built in 1888–90 after the style of an English country house. White added an attractive garden and the Residency soon acquired the grandeur which was then considered a requirement to maintain British prestige.⁶¹ Conditions in Gyantse reflected the isolation of the post. The Trade Agents were based in the large country house, which had been commandeered during the Younghusband Mission and was now rented from the owner. It consisted of two, two-storied blocks, around a courtyard. One block was used for offices and barracks, the other as a home, and a mess was added shortly after O'Connor moved in.⁶² The house was furnished in European style by carpenters supplied by the Panchen Lama, but lack of finance meant that the buildings soon became very run-down. Conditions among the escort buildings became so bad that three sepoy died "due to over-crowding and insanitary state of the lines". They were forced to resort to using tents, despite the cold.⁶³ Attempts to gain Chinese and Tibetan assistance in building new premises continued throughout the 1906–9 period, both in Gyantse, Gartok and in Chumbi. Neither the Chinese nor the Tibetans had any incentive to encourage more permanent buildings and they prevaricated endlessly over building permission and supplies.⁶⁴

The poor state of the Agency buildings was just one of the factors that made Gyantse a posting of a physical and mental hardship that appears to have been progressively more debilitating. O'Connor pointed out the hardships of isolation, expense, climate, elevation, responsibility, lack of feminine company and the strain of life "alone ... among a wild and treacherous people" and while the difficulties may be over-emphasised (as they are contained in a petition for a pay rise), they are a rare admission of the trials of life there.⁶⁵ Winters were harsh, dust-storms frequent and visitors rare.⁶⁶ Gyantse then, as today, was little more than a village, with a population of about 4,000, and it offered few diversions except the sports the Agency organised. Food was monotonous; attempts were made to grow English vegetables but with the earth frozen for much of the year there was little success. The Gyantse Trade Agent had an entertainment allowance, but as Bailey noted

⁶¹ See White, *Sikkim*, p. 34; M. D. Williamson, *Memoirs of a Political Officer's Wife in Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan* (London, 1987), pp. 52, 137–8. For a study of architecture as an aspect of the Raj's prestige, see R. L. Jones, *A Fatal Friendship* (Delhi, 1985).

⁶² O'Connor, *Frontier*, p. 79; Bailey to Bailey snr, 26 Sept. 1907, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157–166.

⁶³ Bailey to Bailey snr, 1 Mar. 1908, IOLR: MSS 157/304b.

⁶⁴ See IOLR: L/PS/10/139–826 regarding this prevarication.

⁶⁵ O'Connor to Foreign Department, IOLR: L/PS/7/186–886.

⁶⁶ A brief examination of the records for this period indicates that there were eleven visitors to Gyantse in 1904–5, four of whom were private travellers, (one of whom died in Gyantse), five in 1906, one of whom was a private traveller, and ten in 1907, including two private travellers. In 1908 and 1909 respectively, there were two and three official visitors; see IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166 and MSS Eur F 157/304b.

laconically when the Agency was isolated by Chinese pressure, there was only the *Jongpen* (the local Tibetan administrator) to entertain.⁶⁷

For Bailey spare time was easily filled. Describing "A quiet day in Tibet" for *Blackwoods Magazine* he writes his first thought on being awoken in the morning by his servant. "What is to be done today?... The obvious answer to the question has just presented itself – Let us kill something".⁶⁸ Bailey filled his days with hunting expeditions interspersed with polo, hockey, football and even wrestling. His letters and diaries record a very mixed bag of game, including a coolie shot by a telegraph sergeant in March 1906.⁶⁹ A by-product of his hunting was his zoo where at various times he kept monkeys, snow leopards, gazelles, wolves and a variety of other animals, which he seems not to have succeeded in taming and which invariably died. Luckily he also collected skins and specimens of Tibetan flora and fauna, some previously unknown, for museums in Britain.⁷⁰

O'Connor started what was to become an Agency tradition of Christmas parties. The Tibetan and even the Chinese community were invited. Sports days were also held with games, athletics, novelty events, and music by the escort band. The British contingent acted as judges and starters and generally sought to recreate the atmosphere of a public school sports day. When relations with the Tibetans were unrestricted by the Chinese, the Tibetans in turn invited the British to monastic ceremonies while the Chinese offered their traditional banquets.

Only a handful of Europeans were stationed in Gyantse at any one time. Originally the European establishment consisted of the Trade Agent, and Captain Steen, the Medical Officer. They were soon provided with a Head Clerk, Mr Taylor, and two Telegraph Sergeants.⁷¹ O'Connor was also provided with a military escort of 50 men of the 40th Pathan Regiment, which had served at Lhasa. The men were under the command of an Indian *Subadar* although British officers were stationed in occupied Chumbi. From November 1905 onwards the forces stationed at Gyantse were, at the request of the Foreign Department, under the command of a British officer, usually a lieutenant.⁷² The escort was replaced periodically by men from a fresh regiment, and the garrison was inspected annually by a senior officer based at Gangtok. Inevitably with the Agencies' large population there were disputes between local traders and Agency and escort personnel. After November 1906 an escort NCO was stationed in the bazaar every morning to police any disputes.⁷³ The value of the escort was largely symbolic, there does not appear to have been any military threat from the Tibetans, or the Chinese, but the escort bolstered the Agent's prestige; and doubtless his own sense of personal security.

⁶⁷ Bailey to Bailey snr, 23 Apr. 1906, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166.

⁶⁸ F. M. Bailey, "From the outposts. A quiet day in Tibet", *Blackwoods Magazine*, CLXXXIX (1911), p. 271.

⁶⁹ On 9 Mar. 1906 Telegraph Sergeant Wilson accidentally shot a coolie in the buttock and the victim died eleven days later. *Gyantse Agency Diary*, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/304b.

⁷⁰ Several of these are named after Bailey; e.g. *Aporia baileyi*, *Halpe baileyi*.

⁷¹ Taylor was succeeded by a Mr Pierpoint in August 1906. The original Telegraph Sergeants appear to have been Luff (presumably the same man who took the Dalai Lama into British protection in 1910) and Wilson, who left in July 1906. A Sergeant Hill arrived in June 1907, and a Sergeant Hogg was serving with Luff in November 1907, but the exact details of these positions are probably now impossible to establish.

⁷² The most notable figure amongst those who served in Tibet was Lieutenant, later Field Marshal Sir, Claude Auchinleck.

⁷³ Bailey to Gow, 22 Nov. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/196-2234.

Questions arose as to the command of this force as early as October 1904. In May 1905, O'Connor discovered the theft of Rs. 125,000 from the guard room, apparently by men of the escort, although the culprit was never found. O'Connor was eventually censured for failing to ensure the safety of this money, although he had been refused command over the escort at that time.⁷⁴ The Trade Agents' desire to command the escort, reflected a perception of "considerable trouble as it was never quite clear who was the senior", the Agent or the Escort Commander, allegedly often complicated by the latter having a higher military rank.⁷⁵ Application was again made in July 1906 for the Trade Agent to control the escort, perhaps attributable to tension between O'Connor or Bailey, and the then Escort Commander Hogg, who, somewhat unusually in such a remote area, did not join the Agencies' shooting expeditions and chose to dine alone. The military eventually conceded that command of all local contacts and political questions were the responsibility of the Trade Agent, while the Escort Commander was responsible only for the safety and discipline of the escort, and was ordered to work in harmony with the Trade Agent.⁷⁶

Although both Gyantse and Yatung came under the Political Officer in Gangtok, the more challenging Gyantse position was always considered the senior. The Yatung Trade Agency was located at Shasima (sometimes referred to as New Chumbi) at the junction of the Phari and Kamba valleys. Conditions at Chumbi were generally better than at Gyantse as it was closer to India, but the Agency was made of rough shingle and located in a sunless, windswept position. Yatung itself was never considered suitable after White's experiences there.⁷⁷ During the occupation of the Chumbi, a maximum of three officers and around 70 men of the regiment based in Gyantse were posted there. In 1908, when Britain handed back the Chumbi to Tibet, the British representative there became simply the Trade Agent Yatung. In 1909 the position was further downgraded, when David MacDonald, a half-Sikkimese Deputy Collector in Bengal, was appointed to the post. MacDonald received Rs. 550 a month against the higher ranking Campbell's wage of Rs. 800 a month (the Political Officer in Sikkim then received Rs. 1,800 a month). Given that in 1906-7 the estimated cost for the maintenance of the Trade Agents and their escorts in Tibet was Rs. 358,590,⁷⁸ the difference was a symbol of the reduction in the British position in Tibet rather than an attempt to save money.

At the completion of the Younghusband Mission, Captains Ryder and Rawlings, with Lieutenants Bailey and Wood, had been ordered to return to India via Western Tibet to survey the route to Gartok, ascertain its suitability as a Trade Agency post, and test the Western Tibetan's good intentions with regard to the Gartok trade mart. However, as the expedition members were keen to cross into India before the passes from Western Tibet were closed by the winter snows, they spent only one day in Gartok, which was largely deserted at that time of year, and they were unable to obtain reliable information on trade

⁷⁴ See Personal file..., IOLR R/1/4/1091.

⁷⁵ See F. S. Chapman, *Lhasa the Holy City* (London, 1937), p. 53. In fact that only occurred during the latter part of 1907 when Major Walker commanded the escort and Lieutenant Bailey was Trade Agent, by which time command problems had been resolved.

⁷⁶ See various correspondence, IOLR L/PS/7/198-698; Bailey to Bailey snr, various letters, 1906, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166.

⁷⁷ See Bailey to Bailey snr, 4 Aug. 1907, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 Jan. 1908; Viceroy to Sect. of State, London, March 1906, IOLR; L/PS/7/186-594.

prospects.⁷⁹ Near Toling the Rawlings party met Thakur Jai Chand, who had been appointed Trade Agent Gartok. Bailey had been considered for this position,⁸⁰ but the government had decided to appoint a native Indian Trade Agent. Chand's orders were to "furnish a weekly diary giving particulars of the routes traversed, of the trade prospects and of such political information as he may be able to gather".⁸¹ Conditions were harsh at the Gartok Trade Agency, situated in a desolate valley, 14,240 feet above sea level. It was "seasonal, peripheral and occasional",⁸² and Chand existed in extreme isolation and discomfort in a three-roomed, seven foot high, mud hut, with a medical assistant and a clerk for company. In the harsh winters they lived, as one observer put it, "the existence of prehistoric cave men".⁸³ Chand had little chance of improving his position, as he lacked authority and access to the region's leaders. He considered the medical dispensary "very popular" when the daily average attendance was two patients!⁸⁴

British officials were periodically sent to Western Tibet to inspect the Trade Agency and further relations with Tibetan officials. The first of them, Charles Sherring, District Commissioner at Almora, reported with great optimism on his journey in 1905. He considered it was "impossible to imagine a more successful visit". The Tibetan officials assured him that they accepted the principles of free trade at all trade marts in Western Tibet. Sherring realised Purang was the ideal site for the Trade Agency and recommended the placing of a second Trade Agency there,⁸⁵ but British policy was against raising such questions with the Tibetan government. Sherring's mission appears to have accomplished little or nothing. The Tibetans agreed with everything Sherring proposed and then ignored the arrangements. H. Calvert and W. S. Cassels, Assistant Commissioners at Kulu, also visited Chand in August 1906 and 1907 respectively. By the time Cassels reported he was pessimistic. It was apparent Gartok was a dead end. Although the Agency was retained it was obviously of little benefit for either trade or information gathering, and was of value only in the sense that the British had obtained the right to maintain a Trade Agency at Gartok, and were determined to exercise that right in order to maintain British prestige in the Himalayas.⁸⁶

Although the Agents failed to improve the British position in Tibet they were successful in some instances in maintaining their position. The British managed to build eleven rest-houses on the route from Gangtok to Gyantse for the use of British and Chinese travellers and officials. Tibetan *chaukidars* were employed and permitted to run tea shops to supplement their income.⁸⁷ The telegraph line to Gyantse, established during the

⁷⁹ See F. M. Bailey Mission Diary, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/199.

⁸⁰ Younghusband to Bailey snr, 31 Dec. 1904, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/144.

⁸¹ Government of India to Government of Punjab, 9 Dec. 1904, IOLR: L/PS/7/173-360.

⁸² Personal correspondence, H. Richardson, 19 Oct. 1990.

⁸³ C. M. Collett report, IOLR: L/PS/11/56-2339.

⁸⁴ Weekly report of T. J. Chand, 1 Oct. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/195-2014.

⁸⁵ Report of C. Sherring, IOLR: L/PS/7/182-1677.

⁸⁶ Personal correspondence, H. Richardson, 19 Oct. 1990; The report of Cassels is in IOLR; L/PS/7/207-1873.

⁸⁷ See Report of C. Bell, IOLR: L/PS/7/195-211. White reported to the Government of India on 15 Jun. 1907, that "Natives are not allowed to occupy bungalows, otherwise they would be in a short time unfit for Europeans", IOLR: L/PS/7/203-1164.

Younghusband Mission, was retained. Although it remained largely untouched during the Mission, a favourite tale of writers on the period,⁸⁸ the line was later repeatedly robbed of wire. This became a source of great frustration to the isolated Gyantse Trade Agents. Bailey records that on one occasion when he sought Chinese assistance in preventing damage, they suggested nailing a man's hand to any damaged pole. Apparently this original solution was not adopted and the problem continually recurred.⁸⁹

The Trade Agents undoubtedly had plenty of spare time. Office work could be done in the evenings and the post came at five-day intervals. Their duties were not onerous and during the Gow period social contact was very limited. For the Agent with an interest in his surroundings the posting was a choice one, O'Connor, Bailey and Bell all had a keen interest in Tibet which they had plenty of opportunity to indulge; the result was a great increase in the British knowledge of Tibet, its people and customs. For staff without this interest in Tibet service there must have been hard to bear. Yet although there would later be suicides and desertions from Gyantse, in the first five years here only one scandal arose among the European staff. That occurred when Bailey dismissed Pierpoint, his Head Clerk, in the summer of 1908, for leaving his post early prior to leave and falsifying accounts. Pierpoint subsequently attempted to blackmail Bailey with various accusations, one of which, a minor breach of official procedure, was true.⁹⁰ Pierpoint demanded Rs. 1,000, which he later reduced to 500. When Bailey refused to pay, Pierpoint complained to Bell in Sikkim and to the Viceroy. It was obviously an embarrassment, but Bailey's explanations were accepted by Bell, and with his mentor O'Connor, then in Calcutta, acting for him, the matter seems to have been dropped.⁹¹

The Yatung Trade Agency was the most accessible British position in Tibet, with Gyantse's telegraph and postal services being based in the Chumbi and serviced by British personnel based either in Chumbi, or in Gangtok. It was easier for Europeans to obtain permission to visit Yatung than for journeys into the Tibetan plateau and the Trade Agency there was thus much less isolated. By contrast the Gartok Agency was a hardship posting. Western Tibet is still a forbiddingly remote area today. At the turn of the century it was thinly populated by 10–15,000 mainly nomadic peoples. While the administrative centre was Purang and major questions were settled there, the local *Jongpens* had their headquarters at Gargunsa, 34 miles from Gartok. The two towns are often confused on maps even today, and it may well have been that they were confused when the Agency site was chosen.

Policy formation, trade and the problem of location

We will now consider the Agents' role in policy formation, their influence on trading and other relations with Tibet, and their significance in increasing European knowledge of the

⁸⁸ Most histories of the period repeat the story that the Tibetans did not cut the line as the British had told them it had been erected as a guide to enable them to find their way back to India.

⁸⁹ F. M. Bailey, *China-Tibet-Assam* (London, 1945), p. 72.

⁹⁰ Bailey used money from one account, i.e. road-building, for other purposes, e.g. dak bungalow repairs, if that account were low. Bailey is probably correct in claiming this was common practice, not least to avoid paperwork. See Bailey to Bailey snr, 24 Sept. 1908, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166.

⁹¹ This incident is mentioned in Bailey's letters to his parents (*ibid.*), but I have not located any mention of this in official records.

region. One of the main problems of the Trade Agents is in defining their exact role. Just as White in Sikkim had been given great freedom to define his position within general limits of British policy,⁹² so too were the Agents. The “Forward school” on the frontier (as personified by Younghusband and others), were in no doubt as to the Trade Agencies’ primary function, – a “listening post” in Tibet. Younghusband wrote to Bailey’s father that the post was “ostensibly that of a *trade agent*”, and warned that he must “stick to trade – keep clear of politics”; which was “all very different to what I should have liked. Our only chance of getting more in the future is by going very slow now”. To Bailey himself he wrote “when can you make yourself useful by getting information?” (on the consequences of the Dalai Lama’s return to Lhasa).⁹³

One thing the Trade Agents were not qualified to be was *Trade Agents*. Although the prime motivating force behind the Younghusband Mission was the desire to counter a perceived Russian threat to Tibet, the nominal cause was the desire to open Tibet to trade, a policy supported by virtually all schools of opinion. The British Government was not prepared to countenance a political agent remaining in Lhasa,⁹⁴ but accepted the posting of Agents to represent British interests at the designated trade marts. However to the “Forward school” the title was unimportant, they saw the Agent’s function as primarily political, with trade a separate factor which could be used to spread British influence. Preserving their position meant that the Agents did act as “Trade” Agents, but in fact the trade aspect of their position was of only minor significance as the Agents themselves must have realised. None of the personnel involved had any background in trade or commerce, either theoretical or practical. Had trade been the priority, some officers with customs experience would presumably have been sought.

While the duty of representing the interests of British traders was taken seriously, the preparation of trade reports does not seem to have been a priority. In April 1906 Bailey at Gyantse wrote that “I don’t send in any reports on trade as I can get no information here”.⁹⁵ However, in the following month the Government of India requested that quarterly trade reports be submitted by the Trade Agents “noting especially the measures which have been taken to foster it”.⁹⁶ The reports submitted notably lacked precise information and the order was rescinded in September 1908 without explanation,⁹⁷ doubtless to relief all round.

The quarterly trade reports were submitted via the Political Officer in Sikkim, to the Government of India. Compared to the long and detailed reports from other Agencies, for example Kashmir, the reports from Tibet are brief and perfunctory. Even the Political Officer Sikkim seemed to regard them as of little importance. The quarterly Trade Reports for the third quarter of 1907 were not passed on to the Government until 31st January the following year. White had “overlooked” them while preparing for a trip to Bhutan.⁹⁸

⁹² Singh, *Himalayan*, p. 266.

⁹³ Younghusband to Bailey snr, 6 Feb. 1906, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/144; Swinson, *Beyond*, pp. 47–50.

⁹⁴ The murder in 1879 of Cavignari, the British representative in Kabul, is often cited as a factor which discouraged Britain from posting agents in isolated capitals.

⁹⁵ Bailey to Bailey snr, 23 Apr. 1906, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166.

⁹⁶ Foreign Department to White, 26 May 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/196–2152.

⁹⁷ Foreign Department to Bell, 18 Sept. 1908, IOLR: L/PS/7/222/1910.

⁹⁸ Gyantse Quarterly Trade Report, 31 Jan. 1908, IOLR: L/PS/7/214–652.

Bailey's first Quarterly Trade Report from Gyantse for the last quarter of 1906 did not include any figures; he claimed they were "so unreliable" that he "thought better to omit them altogether".⁹⁹ Later reports usually gave figures, but they remained unreliable. The main reason for this was smuggling. Apart from the main passes, the Nathu La and the Jelep La, there were at least 12 others into Sikkim alone and trade was measured only through the Jelep La.¹⁰⁰ As Bell noted, "nothing is easier than to pass by night, or to go around through the fields" to avoid a trade registration post.¹⁰¹ Figures given were supplied by Trade Registration posts manned by the Chinese; no check was kept by the Tibetans, who did not appoint a Trade Agent to Gyantse until January 1907. Bell in one report allows 30 per cent "for the customary under-valuation" of figures given by the Chinese Customs Officer. Campbell recorded that in 1906 the Chinese trade registration post was "principally active as an intelligence bureau" and suggested it be removed.¹⁰²

Despite those difficulties Bell in 1909 submitted trade figures for the previous ten years, based on returns supplied by the Chinese Customs office at Phema in the case of treasure, and the Bengal trade reports in regard to goods. They were, of course, affected by the Younghusband Mission and the subsequent abnormal expansion to cover the deficiency of that period.¹⁰³ These figures do suggest a slight increase in trade but, even if we accept them as accurate, and there seems little doubt there was an increase, the localised character of trade meant that vast annual fluctuations could be caused by factors such as the weather, or a shortage of pack animals. It seems most of the expansion in trade was the result of an increase in established trade rather than new trade.

The Agents did make genuine efforts to increase trade, but they were largely unsuccessful for reasons beyond their control. Tibet's external trade was localised and finely balanced, regularised by tradition, there was no mechanism for altering it. Trade was largely in the hands of intermediaries, such as the Tromowas in the Chumbi Valley, and all parties had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. For example the Tromowas sent large bribes to Lhasa to retain their profitable monopoly. They controlled the limited supplies of pack animals in their territory and saw no benefit in allowing competing Indian merchants to use their animals.¹⁰⁴ In Gartok, Chand established a mail courier service but his weekly reports to the Political Department, in Urdu, could take weeks to arrive, and were, of necessity, brief. They seldom mentioned trade. Most of the Tibetan administrators in Western Tibet came from Lhasa. It was an unpopular posting which they attempted to avoid by feigning illness, or appointing representatives in their place; its only possible compensation was financial. They profited from trade taxes, official and unofficial, and hence had no incentive to encourage the free trade sought by the British.¹⁰⁵ Tibet wanted a stable pattern of trade as changes affected local political and

⁹⁹ Gyantse Quarterly Trade Report, 31 Dec. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/198-543.

¹⁰⁰ Military Report on Tibet, IOLR: L/MIL/17/14-92.

¹⁰¹ Gyantse Agency Diary, 29 Apr. 1909, IOLR: MSS F 157-304.

¹⁰² Report of W. L. Campbell, 18 May 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/197-336.

¹⁰³ The figures given by Bell differ from those given by Lamb, *Britain*, pp. 342-3, figures which Lamb notes are unreliable, but they show the 1909-1910 figure to be similar to that of 1900-1901. Curiously Bell notes in this report that trade figures were not kept for the 1906-7 period, so it is difficult to tell the basis on which figures for that year are given. See Gyantse Annual Report 1908-9, IOLR: L/PS/7/229-923.

¹⁰⁴ See Report of C. Bell, 17 Nov. 1905, IOLR: L/PS/7/183-1940.

¹⁰⁵ See Report of K. K. Singh Pal, 23 Sept. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/201-927.

economic stability. That was of greatest importance in Western Tibet where the Tibetan and Bhotia communities were economically inter-linked.¹⁰⁶ With the *Jongpens* having a personal interest in the trade they had no desire for change. Two years after the 1904 treaty was signed between Britain and Tibet the *Jongpens* had still not received an official copy, and used this as an excuse for refusing to comply with its terms.¹⁰⁷

Tibet and China actively resisted the British desire for increased trade between India and Tibet. Opposition took many forms. A caste Hindu trader in Western Tibet might be discouraged by the slaughter of a yak outside his tent;¹⁰⁸ traders from India, especially if tea were involved, were harassed and had their goods impounded on various pretexts; merchants attempting to set up shops in Tibet were charged exorbitant rents and the Tibetans made little effort to comply with their 1904 Treaty responsibility for repairing and maintaining the trade routes. But the most important barrier to encouraging trade was that the Tibetan currency was of no value in India. Indian merchants were usually forced to rely on barter. The Agents were able to overcome the problem to some extent, by exchanging Tibetan currency for rupees, but that was limited to the amount of local currency the Agency required, which was only around Rs. 5,000 per month at that time. Attempts to set up a bank were unsuccessful due to the lack of security. Consequently few Indian traders broke into the Tibetan market, and even they were soon discouraged. For example, a firm became established at Shigatse, but was subject to a boycott order from the Chinese in 1908 and had to leave.¹⁰⁹

European traders fared no better. The obvious difficulty of transportation discouraged most, and the occasional adventurous merchant found little encouragement to remain. Apart from Annie Taylor, an eccentric missionary who opened a shop at Yatung as a means of entering Tibet, and who was not concerned with material profit, only two European traders ventured into Tibet. A Mr Maller, a carpet dealer, having read an optimistic account of the Gyantse carpet trade in Percival Landon's book on the Younghusband Mission, visited Gyantse in August 1906. Unfortunately Landon's report was "quite inaccurate" and Maller returned after a few days.¹¹⁰ Mr de Righi, a Darjeeling hotel owner, travelled to Gyantse early in August 1907 with the idea of setting up in Tibet as a tea trader. Unable to find accommodation and charged heavily for transport, he soon returned. In a report to the Indian Government on his problems, written at Gyantse, he suggested the Trade Mart be transferred to Shigatse, a far more important trading town. He also noted the Trade Agent "did his best" to assist.¹¹¹ Taken in conjunction with a petition by an Indian trader to O'Connor dated 13 July 1907,¹¹² which also points out the advantages of relocating the Gyantse Agency at Shigatse, it seems that O'Connor (who was then on the point of leaving Tibet), had a hand in the traders' complaints. For,

¹⁰⁶ Calvert states that "The Tibetans must trade with the Bhotias or starve", but the reverse would also be true, given the Bhotias' traditional trade patterns, see Report of H. Calvert, IOLR: L/PS/7/207-1873; Also see Lamb, *Britain*, pp. 5, 56.

¹⁰⁷ T. J. Chand to Foreign Department, 28 Sept. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/202-1061.

¹⁰⁸ T. J. Chand to Government of Punjab, 16 Aug. 1906, IOLR: L/PS/7/193-1744.

¹⁰⁹ Gyantse Annual Report 1908-9, IOLR: L/PS/7/229-923.

¹¹⁰ Bailey to Bailey snr, 11 Aug. 1906, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/166; also see C. E. D. Black, "The trade and resources of Tibet", *Asian Review*, XXVI (1908), p. 98.

¹¹¹ A. C. de Righi to Foreign Department, 12 Aug. 1907 and 26 Sept. 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/205-1574 and L/PS/7/207-1872.

¹¹² M. S. Bhatt petition to O'Connor, IOLR: L/PS/7/205-1534.

although the Agents realised that the existing trade was of little importance, they lobbied hard for policies which would increase trade. A number of well-considered schemes were advanced to the Indian government. Tea shops were opened in Phari, Chumbi and Chema to promote Indian tea, and an Indian company was given the contract to supply the Gyantse Trade Agent.¹¹³ The Agents' suggestions were largely ignored, due both to the government's desire to avoid further entanglement in Tibet and to financial considerations.

There were two important factors preventing increased trade. First came communications, the difficulty of travel, transport and geography. On grounds of both cost and diplomatic considerations the Government of India was not prepared to allow the necessary roadbuilding in a delicate frontier area. Secondly, all three trade marts were located in the wrong place if trade was to be developed. As previously noted, the siting of a Trade Agency in Yatung was the result of a British concession to the Tibetan's desire to exclude Europeans from Tibet. In Western Tibet, Purang was the main trading and administrative centre. Gartok was the site of an annual trade fair which lasted about two weeks; and for the rest of the year it was virtually deserted. The choice of Gartok as the site for the Agency can only be seen as an error based on insufficient information. The siting of an Agency at Gyantse was a compromise whose point was lost when Britain declined to accept a right of access to Lhasa.¹¹⁴ Gyantse was also chosen under the impression that it was commercially important, as the map showed it to be the junction of trade routes from India, Lhasa and Shigatse. Only after the Agency was opened was it understood that Gyantse was of no real importance to Central Tibetan trade, which was centred in Shigatse, where the merchants resided.¹¹⁵ It was an odd but crucial error, and suggests that little thought was given to the siting of the Agencies. Even on diplomatic grounds Shigatse would have been preferable, as it was the home of the Panchen Lama, who displayed clear pro-British (or at least anti-Chinese) sympathies during this period. With the British Agent confined in Gyantse, the Chinese were able to prevent all but clandestine communication between the Panchen Lama and the Agent, and thus reduced British prestige and bolstered their own.

The original Tibetan attitude to the Trade Agents was expressed by the 13th Dalai Lama, who stated "Why do the British insist on establishing trade marts? Their goods are coming in from India right up to Lhasa. Whether they have their marts or not their things come in all the same. The British under the guise of establishing communications, are merely seeking to over-reach us".¹¹⁶ Politically the greatest British gain from the Trade Agencies was that by the end of our period the Tibetans were realising that the British presence in Tibet was to their advantage, and that the great threat to their independence lay to the east, not the south. By 1910 the Dalai Lama was asking for British representatives in Lhasa itself.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Quarterly Trade Report, 30 Sept. 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/214-652.

¹¹⁴ Even the need for a Trade Agency in Western Tibet is difficult to account for. Lamb describes it as a gesture to Louis Dane, a former Resident in Kashmir (1901-3) who saw it as a means of ensuring that Ladakh and the Punjab stayed loyal. See Lamb, *Britain*, p. 307; Younghusband states that the original suggestion for the Ryder-Rawling's mission to Gartok came from Dane, see comment by F. Younghusband on C. H. Ryder, "Exploration and survey with the Tibet Frontier Commission...", *Geographical Journal*, XXVI (1905), p. 391.

¹¹⁵ Gyantse Quarterly Trade Report, 31 Mar. 1907, IOLR: L/PS/7/203-1249.

¹¹⁶ C. Bell, *Portrait of a Dalai Lama* (London, 1987, first published London, 1946), pp. 71-2.

¹¹⁷ Dalai Lama to Bell, forwarded to Foreign Department 28 Sept. 1910, IOLR: L/PS/7/244-1608.

Information gathering

The isolation of the Gyantse Trade Agency, both geographically and as a result of British and Chinese Government policies, meant that perhaps the greatest benefit from the Trade Agencies in this period was in the scientific, cultural and linguistic fields. Bell, O'Connor and Bailey all used their plentiful spare time to become experts on a variety of aspects of Tibet. In retrospect the temporary decline in the British political position at that time, is balanced by gains in the field of knowledge of Tibet, but these gains were a result of individual Agents' initiative, rather than government policy. The British Government, with its policy of disengagement from Tibet, neither encouraged, nor profited from, the knowledge acquired by the Agents.

Following Tibet's declaration of independence in 1913, the gathering of information by the Agents became much easier. During the period under consideration, however, the isolation of the Trade Agencies by location and Chinese policy meant that it was necessary for the Agents to resort to clandestine methods of gathering information. Although there is no evidence that the Agents were part of any formal "spy ring", O'Connor and Campbell had both served with Military Intelligence prior to taking up their posts, and Bailey subsequently spied in Central Asia.¹¹⁸ The Trade Agents of this period were well qualified to obtain information, most importantly regarding Chinese or Russian moves. This supports the view of Morgan that the Agents' role was, by his definition, a diplomatic one. Richardson points out that the Tibetans doubtless knew what the informants were doing,¹¹⁹ and powerful figures amongst them, such as the Panchen Lama, assisted the British in information gathering – for a variety of motives.

The records show that during the period 1904–9, information on Tibet was gathered by the Government of India from many different sources, not all of which involved the Trade Agents. Firstly there were reports from neighbouring states and their representatives. Nepalese officials in Tibet forwarded long reports to their government, which the Nepalese Prime Minister passed on to the British Resident in Kathmandu. These reports were of mixed value, containing many rumours.¹²⁰ The missionaries on the Eastern Tibetan border reported events to the British Consulate in Sichuan,¹²¹ and European Chinese Customs Officers, employed by the Chinese Government, provided information to their fellow countrymen in Tibet during personal meetings, (as early as December 1904, O'Connor was reporting warnings given him by Henderson about Chinese policy). Relations between the two sets of foreigners resident in Tibet were uneven however, and as the Trade Agents actively canvassed the removal of European Customs Officers, it seems unlikely that this was an important source.¹²² The Sikkimese and Bhutanese, however,

¹¹⁸ This is not to suggest Bailey was then attached to British Intelligence, however. While exploring unknown territory in Assam during leave in 1911, he was forced to return when his leave was up. Had he been on intelligence duty he would surely have been permitted to continue.

¹¹⁹ Personal correspondence, H. Richardson, 19 Oct. 1990.

¹²⁰ Addy, *Tibet*, p. 86; Lamb, *Britain*, p. 235. A number of these reports are to be found in the IOLR L/PS/7 files.

¹²¹ Lamb, *ibid.*, pp. 150, 235. Again these reports can be found in the IOLR L/PS/7 files.

¹²² Addy, *Tibet*, p. 86; Singh, *Himalayan*, p. 35; O'Connor to Foreign Department, 23 Dec. 1904 and 24 Mar. 1905, IOLR: L/PS/7/173–361 and L/PS/7/177–860 respectively. There were six British officials in Tibet in the employ of the Chinese Customs Service, between 1890 and 1907; J. H. Hart, W. R. M'd Parr, V. C. Henderson,

were an important source of information. In Tibet the half-brother of the Maharajah of Sikkim and the Maharajah's son, both of whom Bailey saw regularly, provided information, as the 1909–10 Gyantse annual report acknowledges about the half-brother, who “often reports valuable information about Lhasa and Tibetan affairs”.¹²³ There were also exiled Tibetans, or Chinese like Kang Yu Wei, living in the border areas, and the community of what Addy calls “self proclaimed Tibetan experts”, mainly resident in Darjeeling. This includes Waddell, Sandberg and others. Their status and influence on policy naturally declined once Britain had representatives resident in Tibet.¹²⁴

Secondly there were the reports of travellers; for example Teramoto the Japanese traveller stayed with O'Connor in July 1905 and told him that there were two Russians in Lhasa.¹²⁵ More commonly such reports were obtained from travellers returning to India. Few travellers can be separated from their country of origin in terms of being possible sources of information. Indian traders, who were able to travel to parts of Tibet closed to the Agents, and could be expected to deal with British representatives in the course of their business, were a regular source of information, though not always a reliable one.

Inside Tibet, Agency personnel naturally gathered news. The Agency Medical Officer treated private patients and could thus obtain some valuable information. Ideals of medical confidentiality, however, made this a delicate subject and the Government of India declined to rule on the matter, although Political Officers were forbidden to ask doctors about private cases. It was noted, somewhat ambiguously however, that “There are other ways of finding out about these things”. Given the close relations between the two posts in Tibet (on occasion they combined briefly) that source must be considered.¹²⁶ Mission servants provided mainly gossip from the bazaars, or what passed for popular opinion. They could also be working for the Chinese, in 1908 a clerk was discovered to have instructions to obtain news of “Confidential, Political and Frontier matters” for the Chinese in Lhasa. I have seen no evidence to suggest British Agents had similarly infiltrated the Chinese staff, or that any such attempt was made, but the possibility exists.¹²⁷ Certainly persons were employed to gather information by more or less clandestine means. Both the Political Officer Sikkim and the Gyantse Trade Agent employed natives to visit Lhasa. There are frequent references to these on file,¹²⁸ but they were not regarded favourably, presumably due to their limited results.¹²⁹ Tibetan contacts were usually more valuable, notably the Panchen Lama, who, at this time, engaged in secret correspondence with the

F. E. Taylor and briefly Messrs Holison and Montgomery. They do not appear to have been allowed to visit Lhasa.

¹²³ For example, Gyantse Agency Diary, 23 May 1909, records that the half-brother gave Bailey news of the Dalai Lama's whereabouts. IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/304. ¹²⁴ Addy, *Tibet*, p. 86.

¹²⁵ Gyantse Agency Diary, 3 July 1905, IOLR; L/PS/7/180–1344.

¹²⁶ See Government of India Foreign Department proceedings August 1904, nos. 1–2, IOLR; R/1/1/303.

¹²⁷ Gyantse Agency Diary, 24 Nov. 1908, IOLR: MSS Eur F 157/304. Also see Jones, *A Fatal*, p. 99 on the subject of servants as spies.

¹²⁸ E.g. Bell to Foreign Department, 13 Dec. 1906, refers to “an agent whom I sent to Lhasa”; IOLR: L/PS/7/197.

¹²⁹ White to Foreign Department, 28 Nov. 1905, refers to “the very unsatisfactory medium of secret agents”, IOLR: L/PS/7/183.

Gyantse Trade Agent.¹³⁰ O'Connor also arranged that the Panchen Lama's Prime Minister copy the weekly report of his Lhasa agent to O'Connor. It was agreed "to pay the agent well for his trouble".¹³¹

An example of how information gathering functioned can be seen in July 1905. On being told by Teramoto of the presence of two Russians in Lhasa, O'Connor despatched what he called "a special secret agent" to Lhasa to obtain information, and any written evidence that they may have left. Soon after, O'Connor received a secret slate letter from the Panchen Lama confirming the substance of Teramoto's information.¹³² Funds for paying agents could have been found from any of a number of Agency accounts, such as the entertainment allowance, although it is naturally difficult to prove the actual source.

That the Trade Agents were forced to emphasise their role as gatherers of information was in part a consequence of the weakness of their position. They were isolated, both geographically and as a result of Chinese policy, from the main centres of trade and power in Tibet. The failure of the British government to support the Agents, by improving border roads, Agency buildings, and encouraging trade, reduced their prestige and added to their isolation. Wider policy considerations, meant that Britain allowed its position in Tibet to decline. After 1910, revolution in China altered the picture, and Tibet gained independence, but in late 1909 the Agents' position had declined; their very presence was at odds with the policy of their government. The result was an emphasis on gathering information, both political, and scientific, linguistic and cultural. Here perhaps the Agents' greatest successes are to be found. While government policy meant that this information enjoyed a limited circulation at the time there was a great increase in knowledge of Tibet within the system, and this later emerged into the public domain. Bell became the greatest Tibetan scholar of his generation, and, with Bailey and O'Connor, formed a pool of official experts on the region, sympathetic and knowledgeable towards all things Tibetan. For them, Tibet was a second home, not a land of mystery.

Appendix

Dates of service

Political Officer in Sikkim

White first appointed to the position	05.06.1889
White with T.F.C.*, Bell temporary appointee	15.05.1904
White resumes normal duties	12.11.1904
White on leave, Bell relieves	06.09.1906
White resumes normal duties	18.01.1907
White on leave prior to retirement, Bell relieves	01.04.1908
White retires, Bell given official appointment	04.10.1908
* = Tibetan Frontier Commission	

¹³⁰ E.g. Gyantse Agency Diary, 10 Mar. 1908, "Got secret letter from Tashilumpo"; IOLR: MSS Eur F. 157/197.

¹³¹ Gyantse Agency Diary, 15 Oct. 1905 and 24 Oct. 1905, IOLR: L/PS/7/183-1868 and L/PS/183-1834 respectively.

¹³² Gyantse Agency Diary, 25 July 1905, IOLR: L/PS/7/180-1439; also see Viceroy to Sect. of State for India 29 July 1905, IOLR: L/PS/7/17-1214. "Slate letters" were used to convey confidential messages in Tibet. They were designed to be easily erasable in the event of any threat of their falling into the wrong hands.

British Trade Agent at Gyantse

O'Connor takes up newly created post	01.10.1904
O'Connor on leave, Bailey relieves	23.12.1905
O'Connor resumes normal duties (Hand-over at Gangtok)	15.12.1906
O'Connor ordered to Simla trade talks, Bailey relieves	18.07.1907
O'Connor resumes	27.07.1907
O'Connor departs, Bailey given permanent appointment	01.08.1907
Bailey on leave, Kennedy relieves (Hand-over in Yatung)	05.06.1909
Weir appointed, takes over	13.12.1909

Assistant Political Officer Chumbi

E. C. H. Walsh posted to Chumbi as Assistant Political Officer attached to the Tibetan Frontier Commission	Nov. 1903
Bell appointed in addition to above position	15.05.1904
Bell remains at Chumbi after White resumes Political Officer duties; additionally becomes B.T.A. Yatung	12.11.1904
Campbell replaces Bell	18.11.1905
Bailey relieves while Campbell on leave prior to new posting (02.01.1907 is official date of changeover)	15.12.1906
Position now becomes <i>British Trade Agent Yatung</i> only after Chumbi Valley returned to the Tibetans at end of occupation. Campbell replaces Bailey	04.01.1908
Campbell departs, Bailey resumes in addition to above position. (15.07.1908 is official date of changeover)	03.07.1908
Bailey departs, Kennedy (Medical Officer) relieves in addition to position below (Hand-over in Yatung)	05.06.1909
MacDonald appointed, takes over	08.07.1909

British Trade Agent at Gartok

Thakur Jai Chand took up post and remained throughout this period	Nov. 1904
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Officer Commanding Escort at Gyantse

The Escort originally consisted of fifty men of the 40th Pathans, under an Indian officer.

Lt W. L. Hogg, 3rd Brahmans relieved	Nov. 1905
Lt C. J. Auchinleck, 62nd Punjabis relieved	Sept. 1906
Major W. R. Walker took command of the 62nd	July 1907
Lt M. H. L. Norgan took command of the 62nd	Dec. 1907
Lt R. B. Langrishe took command of the 62nd	Feb. 1908
Ltd W. Macready 120th Rajputs relieved	Sept. 1908
Lt A. O. Creagh took command of the 120th	Sept. 1909

Medical Officer at Gyantse

Lt R. Steen took up appointment	01. 10. 1904
Steen departs	09. 10. 1906
Lt F. H. Stewart arrives	22. 10. 1906
Stewart departs	15. 10. 1907
Lt R. S. Kennedy arrives (at Chumbi)	20. 10. 1907

Sources

There is no one reliable source for the above data. The dates have been established by a comparative review of all sources. Even the records of the India Office Library contain discrepancies between the official dates of changeover and the dates as they actually occurred, due to personal arrangements and the uncertainties of travel. The dates given are those of the actual changeover, the Agency diary being considered most reliable in that it was recorded by the Agent concerned at the time. Records of service generally refer to the official date and where this varies widely from the actual date, the discrepancy is noted. Bailey's personal diary was apparently hastily compiled at intervals, and is not fully reliable (e.g. he dates his original arrival in Gyantse a month late), whereas his letters home, while mainly concerned with his shooting exploits, generally provide a useful source of confirmation.