

# **TIBET AND THE BRITISH RAJ, 1904-47**

## **The Influence of the Indian Political Department Officers**

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by  
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## **THESIS ABSTRACT**

Following Colonel Younghusband's Mission to Lhasa in 1903-04, officers selected by the Indian Political Department were stationed in Tibet under the command of the Political Officer Sikkim. This study examines aspects of the character, role and influence of these officers, whom I collectively term the 'Tibet cadre', and demonstrates that the cadre maintained a distinct collective identity and ethos, which was reflected in their approach to Anglo-Tibetan policies, and in the image of Tibet which resulted from the Anglo-Tibetan encounter.

British India's northern frontier was the location for powerful imperial mythologies, such as the "Great Game", which were a part of cadre identity. Conditions on the frontier were believed to suit a particular type of individual, and officers of that type, capable of upholding British prestige while gaining an empathy with Tibet and Tibetans, were favoured for cadre service. A similar type of character was sought among the local intermediaries, the most successful of whom were given cadre postings.

As frontiersmen following the traditions of Younghusband, their 'founding father', the cadre promoted 'forward' policies, designed to counter the perceived Russian threat to British India by extending British influence over the Himalayas. But Whitehall refused to support these policies to avoid damaging relations with China and other powers who regarded Tibet as part of China. The increased control exerted by central government over the imperial periphery in this period meant that, although the Tibet cadre did succeed in their primary aim of establishing British representation in Lhasa, they were unable to exert a dominant influence on policy-making either in Whitehall or in Lhasa.

The cadre largely controlled the flow of information from Tibet, and they contributed a great deal to the construction of an image of Tibet, particularly through the books they wrote. But although individual officers such as Sir Charles Bell developed a deep understanding of Tibet, this did not fully emerge in the final image, which had passed through layers of censorship designed to ensure that the image served British interests.

## Acknowledgements

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In acknowledging the great debt I owe to all those mentioned here, I naturally accept full responsibility for all opinions, and any errors.

## GLOSSARY OF STYLE AND FOREIGN TERMS

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### INDIAN LANGUAGES

The following words are of Sanskrit or Persian origin, but were all used by the Tibet cadre in the form given below.

<i>Babu</i>	Clerk; particularly used to describe Bengalis, often a derogatory term.
<i>Chaukidar</i>	Watchman.
<i>Dak bungalow</i>	Government rest-house (lit: post house).
<i>Izzat</i>	Honour; charismatic authority.
<i>Kazi (Qazi)</i>	Properly, a judge trained in Islamic law; used as a title by the Sikkimese ruling family.
<i>Lakh</i>	100,000.
<i>Maharajah</i>	Important ruler (lit: 'great king').
<i>Munshi</i>	Clerk; term used particularly in south and eastern India.
<i>Pandit</i>	Usually 'Scholar' or learned person, applied to British-trained explorers of Tibet in the 19th century.
<i>Puranas</i>	Hindu texts; narratives of kings, gods, etc. Composed between 300-1200AD., but containing material reflecting an earlier period.
<i>Purdah</i>	Veil; as worn by Muslim women. The practice of seclusion of women.
<i>Rai Bahadur</i>	British Indian title; higher rank.
<i>Rai Sahib</i>	British Indian title; lower rank.
<i>Saddhu</i>	Hindu ascetic, or renunciate.
<i>Sati</i>	The practice of widow-burning.
<i>Shikar</i>	Hunting, shooting.
<i>Toshakhana</i>	Government store of gifts received and to be given, treasury. (lit: 'treasure-house').

## TIBETAN

The following Tibetan words are given in the spelling form commonly used in British official documents. In the absence of an accepted standardised form of Tibetan transcription I have avoided the use of academic forms of Tibetan in the text, but they are given here in brackets, following Goldstein (1989), except where indicated otherwise. There are numerous variant spellings, including in names; Norbhu (Dhondup) for example, was also spelt Norbu.

<i>Amban</i>	(am ban)	Diplomatic representative in Lhasa of the Manchu Emperor
<i>Bon</i>	(bon)	Tibetan religious sect.
<i>De pon</i>	(mda' dpon)	Senior military rank.
<i>Dzasa</i>	(dza sag)	High rank or title; 'duke'.
<i>Gelugpa</i>	(dge lugs pa)	Leading Tibetan Buddhist sect (to which the Dalai and Panchen Lamas both belong).
<i>Jongpon</i>	(rdzong dpon)	District administrator.
<i>Kargyu</i>	(bKa'brgyud*)	Sect of Tibetan Buddhism.
<i>Kashag</i>	(bka' shag)	Council. The senior government body of four officials to whom all government business was referred.
<i>Khenchung</i>	(mkhan chung)	Monastic official, inc. Gyantse Tibetan Trade Agent.
<i>Lonchen</i>	(blon chen)	Chief government minister.
<i>Monlam</i>	(monlam)	New Year (Tibetan calendar)
<i>Nang pa</i>	(nang pa*)	Buddhist; 'insider'.
<i>Nyingma</i>	(rnying ma)	Sect of Tibetan Buddhism.
<i>Ragyaba</i>	(rag rgyab pa)	Disposers of the dead.
<i>Phyid pa</i>	(phyid pa*)	Non-Buddhist; 'outsider'.
<i>Shape</i>	(zhabs pad)	Title of the members of the <i>Kashag</i> .
<i>Tashi lama</i>	(bkra shis bla ma)	The Panchen Lama, title used by early British officials.
<i>Trangka</i>	(tram ka)	Unit of coinage.
<i>Ula</i>	('u lag)	Free transport provided by villages

to those travelling on government  
business; part of village tax  
requirement.

\* Tucci (1980)

## TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

Tibetan and Chinese place and personal names are given in the form most common in British documents; i.e. Peking, not Beijing. Terms or titles in common usage in the west, such as Dalai Lama, are not italicised.

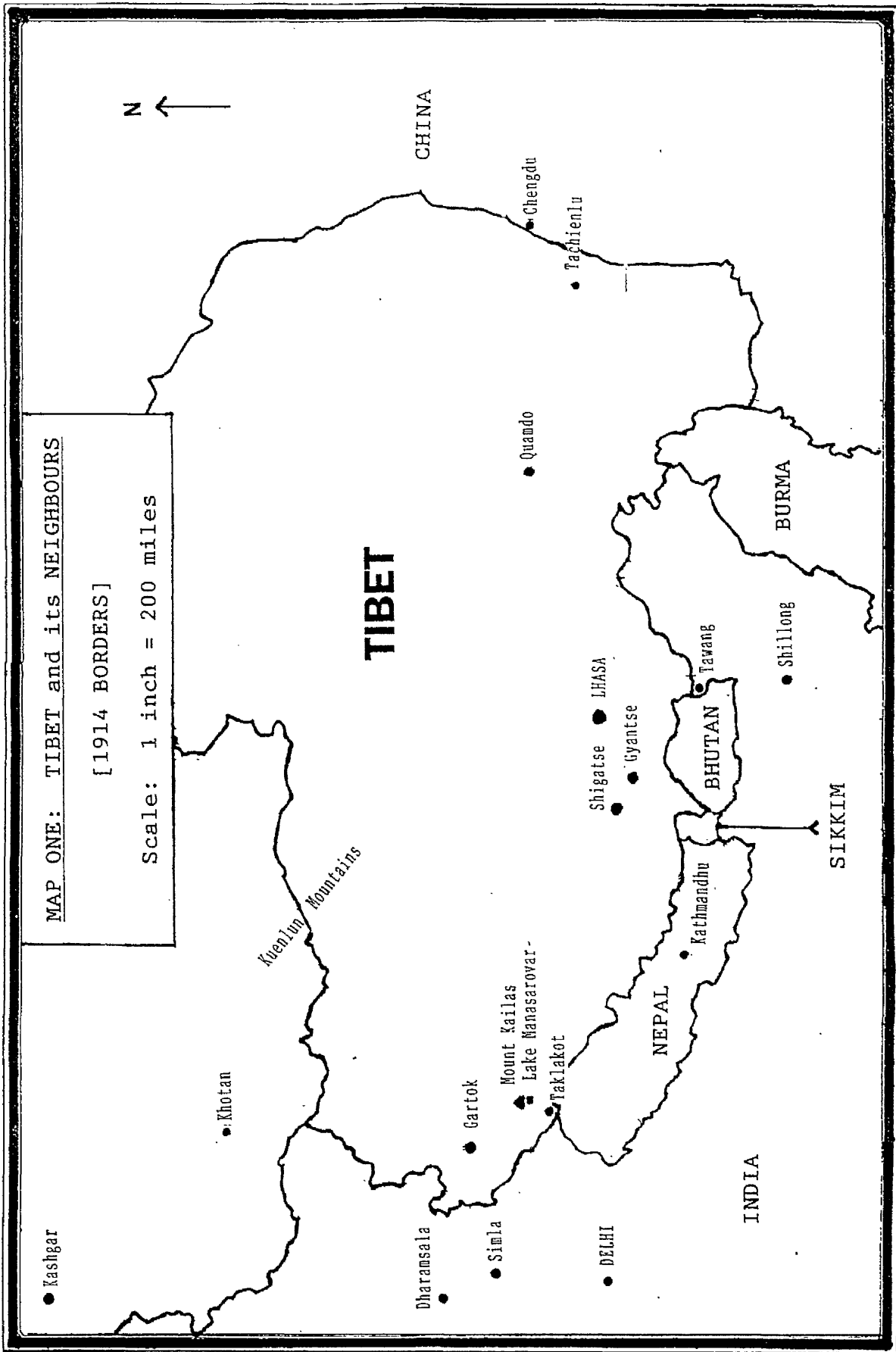
The term 'Political Officer' is used specifically in regard to the Political Officer Sikkim. When referring to officers of the Political Department in general, the term 'Political officer' is used. An individual's military rank, or civilian title, is given on first mention; subsequently this is only given where necessary for clarity.

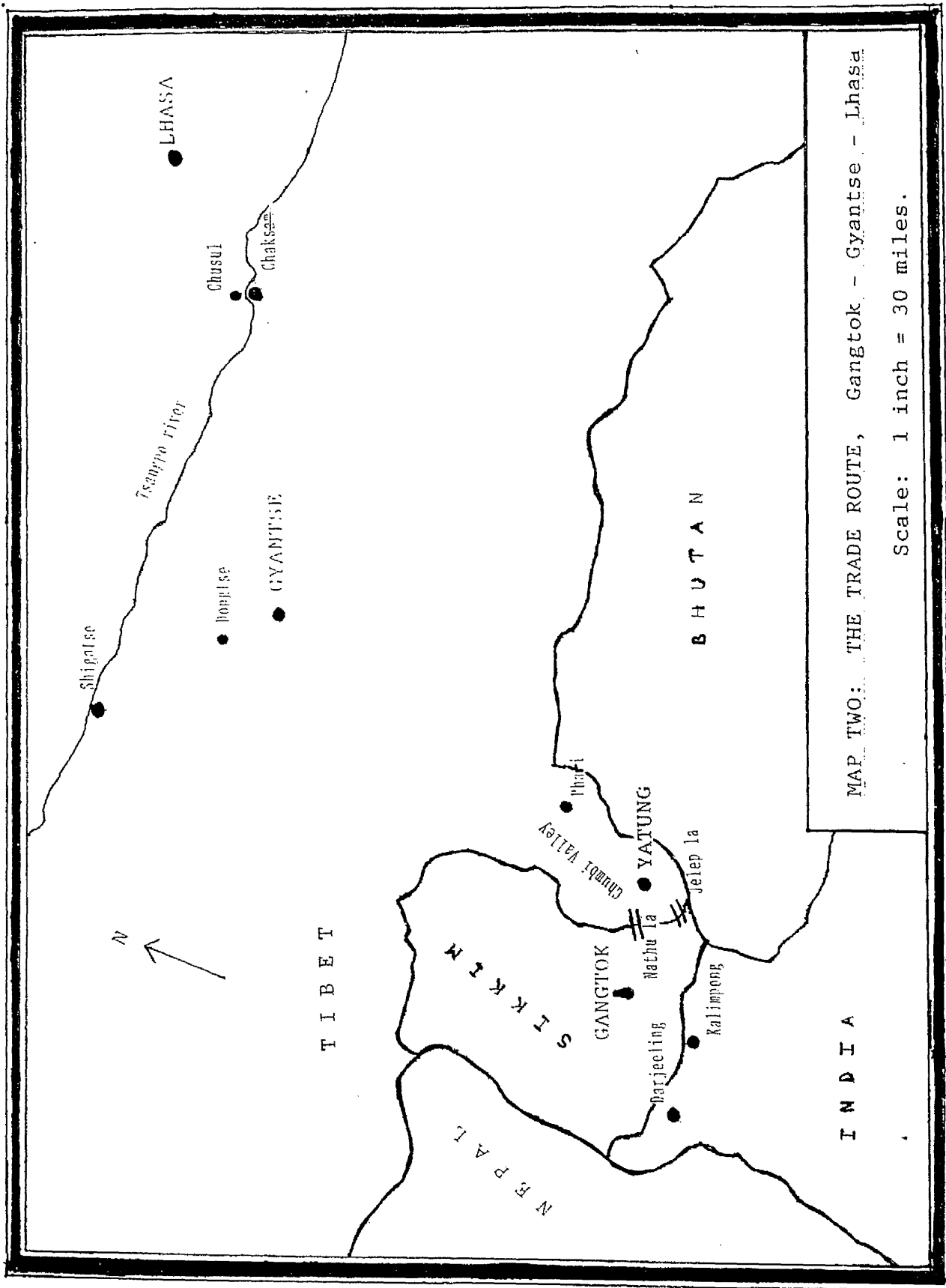
Where not otherwise specified, the term 'state' is used in the general sense. The term 'Tibet' refers to the polity ruled by the Dalai Lamas, not that now designated as the Tibetan Autonomous Region of China. Eastern Tibet refers to the Kham, Derge and Amdo regions bordering China.

The following abbreviations are used:

ECO	Escort Commanding Officer
fn	Footnote.
ICS	Indian Civil Service.
IMS	Indian Medical Service.
IOLR	India Office Library and Records.
MO	Medical Officer
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi.
RGS	Royal Geographical Society.







MAP TWO: THE TRADE ROUTE, Gangtok - Gyantse - Lhasa

Scale: 1 inch = 30 miles.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The popular image of Tibet in the Western imagination is of a remote land, seldom visited by Europeans. This ignores the fact that more than one hundred British Indian officials served in Tibet during the first half of this century. Although their historical role has been almost forgotten, these officials had a significant influence on the British encounter with Tibet, and on contemporary Western perceptions of Tibetan history and culture.

An official British presence in Tibet began in 1903-04, with a mission to Lhasa under the command of the Indian Political Officer, Colonel Francis Younghusband.[1] The mission forced the Tibetans to accept the establishment of three British 'Trade Agencies' on their territory. The official British presence ended on 15 August 1947, when control of the Agencies passed to the newly independent Indian Government. The last British official left Tibet in October 1950.

The Trade Agencies were situated at Yatung, in the Chumbi Valley close to the Indian border, at Gyantse, in central Tibet on the main road from the Chumbi Valley to Lhasa, and at Gartok, a remote town in Western Tibet (see Maps). Being closest to the Tibetan capital, the Gyantse Agency was the most important of these posts until a British Mission was established at Lhasa in 1936-37.

With the exception of the isolated and insignificant Gartok Agency, controlled by the neighbouring Indian provincial government until 1942, these positions all came under the control of the Political Officer Sikkim, who was directly responsible for British relations with Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet. His status was equivalent to that of a second class Resident in an Indian Princely State. The 'Trade Agents' were theoretically charged with overseeing Indo-Tibetan trade. In practice they were diplomatic representatives of the Government of India, appointed by the Indian Political Department, which was responsible for India's relations with neighbouring states.[2]

The Gyantse Trade Agent had a military escort commanded by a British officer, and a British, or occasionally Anglo-Indian, Medical Officer from the Indian Medical Service. In addition, various British clerical, communications, and supply and transport personnel also served at Gyantse.[3] After 1936, a British Medical Officer and a Radio Officer also served at the Lhasa Mission. Although British officials (and one Anglo-Sikkimese) monopolised the senior positions in Tibet until 1936, they naturally placed a great deal of reliance on local employees, who acted as intermediaries between the British and the Tibetans.

These intermediaries played a vital part in translating the cultures and aspirations of two very different societies; one a modern European imperial power, the other a traditional Asian theocracy.[4] In 1904 neither society understood the other; this lack of understanding had been an implicit cause of the Younghusband Mission. By 1947, regular contact had given the two cultures a great deal more understanding of each other, and several individuals had come to be accepted as fully understanding, and even 'belonging to', both cultures.

This encounter had a significant and enduring effect on the history and culture of the Indo-Tibetan frontier, including a legacy of problems which remain important issues today in Sino-Indian relations, and in China's relations with the world community. Previous research into these issues has principally concerned government policies in regard to the major problems and events of the period, the Younghusband Mission, the Chinese Revolution, the Simla Convention and so on. In this concern with events and policies, the role of the individual frontiersman has been largely overlooked. Yet the historical records of the British presence in Tibet allow us access to the modes of thought and means of action among the officers who served on the imperial frontier. There is a virtually complete record of every individual who served in Tibet, and the key individuals, who formed a distinct group, are clearly apparent.

Using these records we may discover how and why these officers thought as they did, determine how their thoughts were expressed as action, and ascertain the extent to which these thoughts and actions affected policies, events and images on the Tibetan frontier. We can, therefore, construct a historical study within defined boundaries of space and time, against which other historical models and findings may be compared. In the wider focus, analysis of this encounter sheds light on current concerns with the creation of national identities, and on the construction of European images of 'Other' cultures, and will contribute to the debate over whether understanding is possible in colonial encounter.

We may also reveal much of the nature of British imperial administration and policy on India's north-east frontier, and, in the context of centre-periphery relations, help decide whether imperial policies were generated at the centre of government, or by the men and events on the periphery; whether, as Malcolm Yapp concludes for the period 1798-1850, 'the true motor of imperial expansion was provided by the Political Agents'.[5]

This study will show that the officers who served in Tibet were a small, homogeneous group of individuals with a distinct institutional identity, recognised by other government officials. As a result of their background, character, education, training, and imperial service, these officers shared certain values and attitudes to Tibet and their duty there. This can be demonstrated by examining how these factors gave rise to an individual and

collective identity, and mode of thought which shaped their actions. For example, we may demonstrate how, and by whom, officers were taught a particular perspective on a frontier problem, show how and why they absorbed and adopted that mode of thought, and how, and with what result, these officers promoted and applied the ideas they had been taught.

By examining how their collective character was formed and expressed, and to what effect, and by understanding the contemporary ethos in which it functioned, we may comprehend the perspective of the 'man on the spot' and bring out the extent to which they influenced both British Tibetan policy and the image of Tibet.[6] Thus I examine their role from an 'insider's' perspective to produce a picture of the thought process which gave unity, and consequently political force, to this group of elite imperial officials.[7]

In order to gain insight into the 'insider's' perspective, my approach to this study is a cross-disciplinary one. I draw on aspects of historical methodology including collective biography, Tibetology, and administrative, imperial, and frontier history, in addition to borrowing, where necessary, from the social sciences. This is designed to provide a history which is what Collingwood called 'a picture which is partly a narrative of events, partly a description of situations, exhibitions of motives, [and an] analysis of characters'.[8]

My concern, therefore, is to examine the character, role, and influence on policy and the image of Tibet, of the most influential officers who served on the Tibetan frontier. In the absence of an established inclusive title, I refer to this group collectively as the 'Tibet cadre'. [9] I have classified as Tibet cadre those officers who served in one or more of the three positions which significantly influenced the encounter between Tibet and the imperial power: the British Trade Agent Gyantse, the Head of British Mission Lhasa, and the senior post of Political Officer Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. Those who served for less than nine months in these posts are excluded, as they had little impact. We are left with a group of 22 officers - 19 British, one Anglo-Sikkimese, and two Indian-born Tibetans - whose influence will be examined. Appendix One gives details of these officers.

This classification has the weakness of excluding several local employees who had a great deal of influence on Anglo-Tibetan affairs, but we may more usefully examine their role separately, for their influence was filtered through the officers included as members of the Tibet cadre. While the records relating to the military, medical and technical support personnel, many of whom served for long periods in Tibet, are a valuable source for this study, their role was a supporting one, and my treatment of their history reflects this.

This is, ultimately, a study of men, ideas and events on the periphery of empire, 'betwixt and between' cultures European and Asian. Tibet, British India, Sikkim, and indeed the Tibet cadre, may all have been 'imagined communities', constructed according to the

demands of competing power structures, but the subjects of my study existed in a specific time and place. They thought and acted in a cultural context, which is important because of its effects today on real people, places, and events. My work does not concern a single underlying process; rather it analyses complex human actions, and the causes of these actions amidst changing ideas and circumstances. Form, structure, perspective and methodology in this work are therefore aimed at understanding how and why the Tibet cadre officers thought and acted as they did, and the effects of their thoughts and actions.

## **SECTION 1: - SOURCES**

This study is based upon the English-language primary source material of the India Office Library and Records (London) and the National Archives of India (New Delhi), supplemented by material from other public and private archives.[10] This source material consists principally of private and official correspondence to and from the Tibet cadre. In addition, I carried out a series of interviews with British, Tibetan, and Indian officials who served in Tibet, or with the families of those who did so. These interviews were intended to provide more insight into the personalities of the individuals involved and the ethos of their time. In the interviews I relied primarily on the methodology suggested by Seldon and Pappworth,[11] although, due to the widely-differing perspectives of those interviewed, I did not use a standard questionnaire, but varied my questioning according to the subject's role in Tibet. A list of both the persons interviewed, and the archives consulted, is contained in the attached bibliography.[12]

Other than my own previous works, there are no secondary sources specifically examining the history of the Tibet cadre. There are, however, a number of accounts concerning, or by, individual officers of the cadre, and there are numerous books and articles by other individuals who visited Tibet. There are also a number of secondary sources which concern Anglo-Tibetan relations and the history of Tibet during the period of the British presence. The most reliable of these accounts are the works by Alastair Lamb, whose focus has been on events relating to the making of India's borders. I have come to rely a great deal on the outstanding scholarship of Lamb in this area.[13]

The critical scholarship of Lamb excepted, it is characteristic of most of these secondary sources, particularly the accounts of travellers, that their approach reflects the 'imperial school' of British history, whose view of the British presence in South Asia is largely uncritical. The memoirs of cadre officers, and even primary sources, have therefore been taken at face-value by most writers on Tibet. They have not been analysed as texts of

imperial history representing the views of a particular power structure, and promoting its 'voice' at the expense of other 'voices', which they marginalise in their prevailing discourse. Modern historical methodology has only recently influenced Tibetology, most notably in Peter Bishop's analysis of the role of travel literature in the formation of the 'mystical' image of Tibet.[14]

While taking into account these modern historical trends, my concern here is not to deconstruct the constitution of a particular cultural order, but rather to reconstruct the mentality of the Tibet cadre and to demonstrate the results of this mentality. As the works of Alastair Lamb illustrate, familiarity with the primary sources enables the reader to perceive the intentions behind stated meanings and to 'hear' marginalised 'voices' in official discourse. British Tibetan policy and administration was never monolithic. Policy was determined through compromise. Discussion often ranged throughout the chain of command from Whitehall to the frontier, and along this chain can be found many dissenting views, British and Asian, and many representations of marginalised power structures. There were alternative perspectives on the frontier, and they are represented in the official archives. While most of the published work by imperial officials was subjected to censorship, there are records of what was censored, and which 'voices' were suppressed. We may, therefore, analyse the construction of an image of Tibet by this narrow, class-based cadre of officials, and contrast it with the available alternative images to ascertain where it is lacking.

As contemporary politics and language difficulties have restricted this study to English-language sources, my perspective naturally reflects this. The questions which I raise could be considered from Chinese, Tibetan, and Russian points of view through the use of their sources. But my intention is to examine the British encounter with Tibet through the perspective of the British officials who served there, and this is best represented through the British sources which I have used.

## **SECTION 2: - EVENTS LEADING TO THE BRITISH POSTS IN TIBET**

The Younghusband Mission was the culmination of a long process of British Indian expansion towards Tibet which began in the time of the East India Company. Following victory at the battle of Plassey in 1757, the East India Company had become the leading power in Bengal. In 1772, when Bhutanese forces invaded Bengal's northern neighbour Cooch Bihar, and captured its ruler, the Regent of Cooch Bihar appealed to the East India Company for assistance. The following year, the Governor-General of Bengal, Warren



Hastings, dispatched a force which drove the Bhutanese back into their own territory. Seeking mediation to end the conflict, the Bhutanese then turned to their northern neighbour, Tibet, for assistance.[15]

In the seventh century AD., Tibet had emerged as a united tribal federation under a series of sacral kings who ruled at Lhasa. After a brief period as an expansionist power, when Tibetan troops ranged from Samarkand in the west to the Chinese capital of Chang'an (now Xian) in the east, the Tibetan kingdom collapsed after the assassination of the last of the sacral kings in c842. In the 13th century Tibet emerged again as a united, now predominantly Buddhist, state, which submitted to Mongol overlordship. In return it was allowed to retain a large measure of internal autonomy, and was able to convert the Mongols to Tibetan Buddhism.[16]

In 1578, the Mongol ruler, Altan Khan, gave the title of Dalai Lama ('Ocean of Wisdom') to the hierarch of the Tibetan Buddhist *Gelugpa* sect, who was recognised as the second incarnation of the sect's founder.[17] The title was later applied retrospectively to his predecessors, and was inherited by his successive incarnations. In 1642, Mongol forces intervened in Tibetan internal struggles on behalf of the *Gelugpa* sect, and made the 5th Dalai Lama the effective ruler of Tibet. It was the 5th Dalai Lama who appointed his senior teacher as Abbot of Tashilumpo, Shigatse's leading *Gelugpa* monastery, with the title Panchen ('Great Scholar'), an action which was to have far-reaching consequences.[18]

In 1720, the Mongols' overlordship of Tibet was replaced by that of China's Ch'ing dynasty, whose emperors sought to use the Panchen Lama's power to counter that of the Dalai Lama. In 1773, when Bhutanese and British-commanded forces clashed over Cooch Bihar, the 8th Dalai Lama was still in his minority, and, although Tibet was ruled by a Regent, the long-serving 3rd Panchen Lama had acquired a considerable degree of power and autonomy. Thus it was the Panchen Lama who came to the aid of his Bhutanese co-religionists.

On 29 March 1774, the Panchen Lama wrote to Warren Hastings blaming the Bhutanese for the fighting, but asking Hastings to put an end to hostilities before they 'irritate both the [Dalai] Lama and his subjects against you'.[19] Hastings ignored the implied threat, and accepted mediation. A treaty was concluded with Bhutan, and Hastings took advantage of the establishment of communications with Tashilumpo by dispatching an envoy, George Bogle of the Bengal Civil Service, who reached Shigatse in 1775, where he established good relations with the Panchen Lama. After the Panchen Lama died in 1780 (and Bogle a year later), Hastings continued to seek ties with Tibet, sending Captain Samuel Turner to Shigatse in 1782 after the Panchen Lama's incarnation had been discovered.

Despite the goodwill they established at Tashilumpo, Bogle and Turner achieved little of

lasting value. The Lhasa authorities refused to permit them to visit the Tibetan capital, and, with Hasting's departure from India, British contacts with Tibet ceased. While the British increased their power over India, culminating in 1858 when India was brought under the ultimate control of the British Government, Tibet became increasingly isolated from changes in the outside world. An eccentric English private scholar, Thomas Manning (1772-1840), visited Lhasa in 1811, and two Lazarist priests, Huc and Gabet, followed in 1846, but the Tibetans, encouraged by the Chinese to regard foreigners as a threat to their religion, and fearing the expansion of British power in India and Nepal, increasingly resisted any attempt to open Tibet to foreigners.[20] The result was that Tibetan society became more conservative and insular.

During the 19th century, China's control over Tibet diminished to the point of mere ceremonial overlordship, represented by an official, resident in Lhasa, known as the *Amban*. Tibet's remoteness made it a hardship posting for the Chinese, whose representatives were of poor quality, and China's own internal weaknesses prevented her from imposing stronger rule. Real political power in Lhasa was held by a succession of Regents, as the 9th-12th Dalai Lamas all died before, or shortly after, taking power.

Throughout the 19th century the advance of British rule in India continued, until they became Tibet's principal southern neighbour. By 1846, the British had gained control of most of the area bordering south-western Tibet, and in the second half of the 19th century they gradually drew most of the area to the east under their influence. Nepal, a traditional enemy of Tibet, had become a British ally, and in 1855 they invaded and defeated Tibet, a move the Tibetans assumed must have had British support.

Tibetan mistrust of British intentions was also fueled by incursions into Tibetan territory by parties of British officers on 'hunting expeditions'. While the Government of India officially sought to discourage such cross-border expeditions, unofficially they were used to gather intelligence concerning Tibet. The British also trained local surveyors, known as *pandits*, to travel in disguise through Tibet, and they produced the first accurate maps of the country.[21]

Tibet's desire for isolation presented problems to British India. Although there was a long history of Indo-Tibetan trade,[22] it was principally in the hands of frontier intermediaries, and there were no formal ties between India and Tibet, no diplomatic representatives or established mode of inter-governmental communication. When the British sought to raise issues with Lhasa, they had no means of communicating with the Tibetan Government.

In the late 19th century, Whitehall and the Government of India came under pressure from powerful trading lobbies seeking to open Tibet to trade. The Darjeeling tea industry

was particularly concerned to force the Tibetans to end a ban on the import of Indian tea.[23] More importantly, there was an increasing concern with the security of India's northern frontier, as the British came to fear that Russia's rapid expansion into Central Asia would lead to their gaining influence in Tibet.

There was also a less quantifiable concern: a contemporary spirit of enquiry demanded that the 'unknown' should be 'known', and Tibet's policy of isolation was increasingly producing, in the European construct, an alluring image of a mystical 'sacred realm'. Tibet's determination to preserve its isolation only succeeded in making it more attractive to many European minds.[24]

As China was theoretically the supreme power in Tibet, the British sought to deal with the Tibetans through discussion with the Chinese. In 1885, China agreed to a mission from the Government of Bengal to Lhasa, but this was abandoned at the last minute when it became clear that Tibet would not accept it. The Tibetans apparently regarded the mission as an invasion force, and stationed troops to oppose it in what the British regarded as Sikkimese territory.[25] After unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a solution with China, the British dispatched an expeditionary force in 1888-89, which expelled the Tibetans. John Claude White, a Public Works Department engineer 'on loan to the Political Department' for the duration of the expedition, was then appointed to the newly-created post of Political Officer Sikkim.

China feared that she would lose any vestige of her influence in Tibet if the Tibetans negotiated directly with the British, and therefore agreed to talks with Britain, with no Tibetan representatives involved. These talks produced the 1890 Anglo-Chinese Convention and its attached 1893 Trade Regulations, which allowed for the opening of a British Trade Agency in Tibet. However the British were manouevered into accepting Yatung, located in an isolated valley off the main trade route, as the site for the Trade Agency, instead of Phari, where Tibet's trade taxation office was located.

The Tibetans ignored the Anglo-Chinese agreement, and when White visited Yatung in May 1894 to open the mart, he found the Tibetans had built a wall around Yatung to isolate it. The Government of India were, by the 1893 Regulations, entitled to 'send officers to reside at Yatung to watch the conditions of British trade at that mart', but none were appointed. Thus in 1895, when the 13th Dalai Lama took power in Tibet, the Tibetans remained relatively secure in their isolation.[26]

In 1899 a new Viceroy arrived in India, George Nathaniel Curzon (in office 1899-1905). Curzon had travelled widely in Central Asia, and had seen at first-hand the expansion of the Tsarist Russian State into the tribal confederacies and khanates of Central Asia. Curzon did not deny that Russia had the right to imperial expansion, but he considered that British

interests demanded that India, 'the Jewel in the Crown' of the British empire, be secured from Russian influence.[27]

Curzon received reports from a number of sources which indicated that Russia was gaining influence in Tibet.[28] He twice sent letters to the Dalai Lama through intermediaries in an attempt to open communications with the Tibetan leader; neither was accepted. While Warren Hastings had ignored the implicit challenge to British strength in his letter from the Panchen Lama, Curzon saw the Tibetan's refusal to accept a letter from the Viceroy of India as a deliberate blow to British prestige.[29]

The British were particularly suspicious of Agvan Dorzhiev, a Russian Buryat monk who had become an attendant of the Dalai Lama. When it became known that Dorzhiev had travelled to St Petersburg to contact the Russian Government at the Dalai Lama's behest, Curzon began planning a mission to Lhasa which would remove Russian influence from Tibet and establish British influence there.[30]

By late 1902, Curzon had chosen Francis Younghusband, a dynamic and widely travelled Political officer, to lead the mission. Younghusband was a loyal supporter of Curzon, and considered he had a personal responsibility to him to succeed in implementing the policies Curzon promoted.[31] Younghusband was given a military escort, and, as the mission advanced into Tibet, it met increasing resistance from Tibetan forces. The far more technically advanced British Indian troops inflicted a series of heavy defeats on the local forces and, on 30 July 1904, the 13th Dalai Lama fled into exile in Mongolia, four days before Younghusband's forces entered Lhasa.

Younghusband negotiated an agreement with the Tibetan Government resulting in the Convention between Great Britain and Tibet, signed in the Potala Palace on 7 September 1904. This Convention gave the British the right to establish Trade Agencies at the Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok 'trade marts', and to station British officers there to 'watch over British trade at the marts'. It also allowed the British to occupy the Chumbi Valley until the Tibetans had paid an indemnity, in seventy-five annual installments.

Whitehall refused to allow the Government of India to establish a representative in the Tibetan capital, which had been one of Curzon's main policy aims. Younghusband, hoping to salvage Curzon's policy, negotiated a separate agreement with the Tibetans, not included in the Convention.[32] This gave the Gyantse Trade Agent the right to visit Lhasa. Whitehall, however, anxious to avoid continuing involvement in Tibet, rejected the separate agreement, and also reduced the period of the indemnity payments to three years.[33]

The Trade Agencies were established in late 1904, as the Younghusband Mission withdrew. Yatung, in the Chumbi Valley, was already under British administration. Younghusband's 'right-hand man', the Tibetan-speaking Captain O'Connor, was left in

Gyantse as Trade Agent, and a small party of officers (including Lieutenant F.M.Bailey) returned to India via western Tibet, to prepare for the establishment of the Gartok Agency. The British now had a permanent foothold in Tibet.

The Tibet which Younghusband's forces encountered was not a modern nation state as Europeans understood it; as will be seen in Chapter Six. Tibet had no formal mechanism for the conduct of relations with its neighbours, nor did it have a bureaucratic class. It was not tied into any economic systems, and the economy functioned largely by barter. There was no industrial or mechanical development; even the wheel was used only in a religious context, and was unknown as a means of transport.

While Tibet was not a modern nation-state, Tibetans had a definite identity, which, as will be seen, was based on racial, cultural and linguistic separateness from their neighbours, and on the collective understanding of a shared history, mythology and traditions. Although there were non-Buddhist elements in Tibetan society, the outstanding feature of Tibetan culture was its Buddhist religion, and the Tibetans defined their identity primarily in religious terms. Tibet was thus a Buddhist traditional state, defining itself by its centre and sacred spaces rather than following European definitions according to borders and political and economic systems. As they entered the twentieth century, the Tibetans were forced to confront the differing perceptions of national and state identity held by traditional and modern societies.

### **SECTION 3: 1904-47: EVENTS IN TIBET**

The withdrawal of Younghusband's forces left a power vacuum in Lhasa. The Dalai Lama was exiled to Mongolia, and the Regent appointed in his absence was an elderly religious figure with no experience of secular power. China, whose prestige in Tibet had suffered greatly from their inability either to control the Tibetans or to prevent the Younghusband Mission, began to assert their power.

China's position was greatly strengthened by Whitehall's willingness to concede their right to rule Tibet. Britain negotiated agreements with China in 1906 and 1908, and with Russia in 1907, which effectively recognised Chinese 'suzerainty' over Tibet, and committed the British not to negotiate with the Tibetans without Chinese participation. In addition, Britain and Russia agreed not to send any representatives to Lhasa, and it was agreed that the Trade Agent's escort would be withdrawn once China had established 'effective police measures at the marts and along the routes to the marts'.<sup>[34]</sup>

By late 1906, when they blockaded the Gyantse Trade Agency in a show of strength, the

Chinese had become the dominant power in central Tibet. A Chinese army in Eastern Tibet, commanded by General Chao Erh-feng, brought the eastern borderlands under Chinese control and China paid the indemnity imposed on the Tibetans for which the Chumbi Valley had been held as security. While the cadre believed that 'we have many excuses for keeping it [Chumbi]', Whitehall insisted on withdrawal.[35]

The exiled Dalai Lama, having unsuccessfully sought Russian assistance, was forced to turn to China. He travelled slowly to Peking, where he was received by the Chinese Emperor in September 1908. The Emperor died soon after, and the Dalai Lama was allowed to return to Lhasa. Although the Chinese had attempted to depose him, they recognised, as the British had yet to do, that the Dalai Lama was the only leader able to command the support of the majority of Tibetans.

The Dalai Lama reached Lhasa in December 1909, but fled south to India in February 1910, as two thousand troops from Chao Erh-feng's army entered Lhasa. The Chinese troops were, according to the Chinese, sent to police the trade marts under the terms of the 1908 Anglo-Chinese Agreement. As such the British could not object to them, but both the Tibet cadre and the Tibetans regarded the troops as an invading army, sent to enforce Chinese control in Tibet.[36]

The Government of India gave the Dalai Lama refuge, and supported the cost of his establishment. In his absence, the Chinese attempted to make the Panchen Lama the ruler of Tibet. Although the Panchen eventually refused, the perception that he had hesitated sowed the seeds for a dispute between the supporters of the two leading Tibetan incarnations, which eventually led to the Panchen Lama fleeing into exile in China.[37]

In October 1911, the Chinese revolution overthrew the ruling dynasty. Supporters of the revolution among the Chinese troops in Tibet mutinied. The Tibetans revolted against the Chinese, whose position in Tibet collapsed. The Dalai Lama returned from exile in June 1912, and on reaching Lhasa in January 1913, issued what the Tibetans regard as a declaration of independence.[38] In the same month, a Mongol-Tibetan treaty was signed. While its legal status was uncertain, the treaty was indicative of Tibet's desire to fully separate from China.[39]

Tibet then entered tri-partite negotiations with China and Britain, resulting in the Simla Convention of 1914. China refused to sign this Convention, which was eventually agreed between Britain and Tibet. Tibet gained recognition of her autonomy from Britain, but the Chinese refusal to sign the Convention made its legal implications difficult to assess. While using it as the basis for their relations, Britain and Tibet continued to seek Chinese recognition of the Convention. By 1920, it had become apparent that this would not be forthcoming. Sir Charles Bell, the Political Officer in Sikkim, who had become a close

associate of the Dalai Lama during his exile in India, was then permitted by his government to visit Lhasa.[40]

Bell was the principal advisor to the Dalai Lama in the period 1910-21, when Tibet gained its practical independence and began a policy of modernising its institutions. This policy was opposed by the conservative monastic and aristocratic leadership of Tibet, and taxes imposed in an attempt to finance the modernisation programme were a factor in the Panchen Lama's decision to flee into exile in 1923.[41] Conservative opposition was too powerful for the Dalai Lama to ignore, and with the Tibet cadre unable to provide the financial, or military, support necessary for Tibet to modernise, the policy was abandoned. After Bell's departure, the Dalai Lama was less committed to policies promoted by the British, at least until clashes with China on the eastern frontier in the early 1930s led him to turn again to British India for support.[42]

The death of the Dalai Lama in 1933 saw the installation of a young and inexperienced Regent, from Reting Monastery. Tibet became preoccupied with the search for the Dalai Lama's new incarnation, while China made two significant moves to reestablish influence in Tibet. Although their officials had been expelled from Tibet in 1913, the Chinese sent a 'condolence mission' to Lhasa following the Dalai Lama's death. Once established in the Tibetan capital, the mission became a *de facto* Chinese embassy. In addition, the Panchen Lama, who had been supported by the Chinese during his exile, threatened to return to Tibet with a significant force of Chinese troops as a 'bodyguard'.

In response to China's moves, the British established a Lhasa Mission, although the Panchen Lama's death in 1937 ended the threat of his return. China was increasingly preoccupied by her war with Japan, and Tibet remained neutral throughout World War Two. Its preparations for the post-Indian independence period were distracted by an attempted *coup d'etat* in 1947, when the Reting Regent, who had resigned in 1941, attempted to regain his power. The affair drew one of the three main Lhasa monasteries into fighting with the government before the convenient death of the Reting Lama brought the affair to an end.[43]

The Tibetan perspective on the 1904-47 period was very different from the British perspective. Tibet was an isolated and insular society, largely oblivious to the outside world. The country was absorbed with religious matters, the central feature of its social system. Tibet's determination to preserve that system meant that its foreign policy was largely aimed at ensuring its isolation. Historically, Tibet was prepared to surrender aspects of sovereignty which in the European understanding were the proper province of government, in particular foreign relations, to a stronger power if that power would leave it with internal autonomy, particularly in regard to religion. Historically it had made that

compromise with the Mongols, and with the Manchu Dynasty, but, once the Chinese came to be seen as a threat to Tibet's autonomous position, Tibet distanced itself from China, and looked for another patron who would guarantee its internal autonomy.

With the Russians unwilling to provide any practical assistance, the Tibetans were forced to turn to the British. They received indications of support, for example the protection extended to the Dalai Lama in Indian exile, which briefly led them to rely on the British. When it became apparent the British could not provide sufficient support, and that the imposition of British policies of modernisation threatened their socio-religious system, they sought to balance their powerful neighbours, playing one off against the other, a common strategy for states located between two empires.[44] A delicate balance was established during the period 1936-1947, but the advent of a Communist government in China after the withdrawal of the British meant the end of any self-government by the Tibetans.

#### **SECTION 4: APPLYING FORWARD POLICY IN TIBET**

The security of India's northern frontier was the primary concern of the Government of India in their dealings with Tibet. In the 19th century the Himalayan mountain chain appeared to provide a 'natural frontier' between India and China.[45] China was not then seen as a threat to India, and the predominant British Indian opinion was that there was no need for a 'Tibetan policy'.[46] The implicit assumption was that if Tibet was part of China, the Government of India could solve the Tibetan question by agreement with China.

When it became apparent that Chinese rule over Tibet was purely nominal, and that for practical purposes the Tibetans were independent, this still did not demand a 'Tibetan policy'. Tibet did not pose a threat to India, and there was no apparent reason why the Government of India could not establish what they considered normal relations between neighbouring states.

When it became apparent that the Tibetans were not prepared to establish 'normal relations', the need for a Tibetan policy grew, but there remained a strong body of opinion within policy-making circles which held that India could still safely leave the Tibetans in their desired isolation. Only when it became known that Russia had developed links with Tibet was it agreed that a Tibetan policy was needed, for Russian involvement in Tibet was seen as liable to threaten the security of India by paving the way for the infiltration of Russian influence into Nepal and the British Indian Himalayas.

The Government of India therefore created a Tibetan policy which was aimed at preventing Russia from gaining influence in Tibet, while incidentally satisfying the trade



lobby and those forces arising out of the contemporary spirit of enquiry. Curzon resolved to force the Tibetans to negotiate with the British by dispatching Younghusband to Tibet with full authority to negotiate with the Tibetan Government. Curzon hoped that this would lead to a British representative at Lhasa, who, in the manner of a Political Officer in an Indian Princely State, would be able to influence the local government to act in accordance with British aims. This policy was largely Curzon's creation, although the influence of other Indian officials (such as the then Foreign Secretary, Sir Louis Dane), was also apparent.

The policy which Curzon initiated was recognised in British India as one of two possible frontier policies. Either the frontier could be defended by garrisons of troops, or it could be defended by 'buffer states' beyond the frontier. 'Buffer states' were those separating two empires. They were also potential zones of expansion for the imperial power, influence tending to lead to their being absorbed. Therefore while frontier garrisons were an essentially defensive policy, 'buffer states' implied a 'forward' policy.[47]

'Forward' policies were those which involved an expansion of imperial responsibilities beyond existing limits. The classic exposition of the consequences of this policy was by General John Jacob, on the Sind frontier in the 1850s, who stated, 'to enable this red line to retain its present position...it is absolutely necessary to occupy posts in advance of it.'[48] 'Forward' policies were generally favoured by the imperial frontiersmen because an extension of British administration offered an obvious solution to problems raised by peoples outside British control. There were also benefits to the career of individual frontiersman who were responsible for bringing territory under British control.[49]

If 'forward' policies were the most popular on the periphery of empire, they were much less so at the centre. While the security of India was their primary concern, the Government of India operated on a tightly controlled budget which greatly restricted its frontier policies. An expansion of British control over the Himalayas would have been an extremely expensive undertaking, and Tibet, with a primitive economy and no infrastructure, was unlikely to provide any economic benefits if it was drawn into the Indian economy. The government was therefore extremely reluctant on financial grounds to extend its responsibilities to the north, and sought the most economical solutions.

'Forward' policies were even less attractive to Whitehall, whose global perspective gave it an aversion to expanding the frontiers of its empire. Both Russia and China always opposed any extension of British influence in Tibet, while after World War One this opposition widened to include Japan, America and later Nazi Germany, all of whom employed varying degrees of anti-colonialist rhetoric in regard to the British presence in Tibet. Whitehall was particularly concerned to avoid alienating the Chinese, with whom

British trade ties were of great economic importance, and therefore sought to solve the Tibetan question through negotiations with China and Russia, leading to wider regional agreements.

There was an obvious tendency for the interests of Whitehall and the Government of India to clash in areas of foreign policy. Measures which India considered essential to safeguard its security interests could be strongly opposed by Whitehall because of their effect on British foreign relations. Whitehall therefore sought to increase its control over India's foreign policy and to limit India's expansionist tendencies. They were deeply distrustful of the frontiersmen and their plans for expanding British authority, and by the turn of this century, improved communications had enabled Whitehall to bring India more firmly under their control. The age of expansion of the British South Asian empire was practically over.

Curzon's period as Viceroy was of seminal importance to Anglo-Tibetan relations, but it marked the high tide of empire on India's north-east frontier. When Curzon ordered Younghusband to Tibet, this seemed likely to end in a British Tibetan protectorate. Whitehall's refusal to allow a British presence to be established at Lhasa was a fatal blow to Curzon's plans, but Younghusband appeared to salvage part of Curzon's aims by obtaining the right to occupy the Chumbi Valley (which was of great strategic importance in that it offered a possible invasion route to and from India) for 75 years; that should have brought the Chumbi Valley into the British Indian empire. But while Younghusband considered that 'I do not see the slightest prospect of our ever being able to give Chumbi up whatever His Majesty's Government may say about not occupying any part of Tibet', Whitehall again refused to approve such a 'forward' move.[50]

When Curzon left India the imperial tide had turned. There was a new Liberal Government in Britain and the Boer War had swung public opinion against overseas adventures. In a reversal of the situation in the Curzon period, there was a weak Viceroy and a strong Secretary of State, and the Government of India were now given clear instructions that they were to follow Whitehall's orders. Younghusband was given a copy of Secretary of State St. John Broderick's despatch to the Viceroy, dated 2 December 1904. by Broderick himself.

Questions [wrote Broderick] of Indian Frontier policy could no longer be regarded from an exclusively Indian point of view, and the course to be pursued in such cases must be laid down by His Majesty's Government alone.[51]

## **SECTION 5: POLICY: THE TIBET CADRE'S PERSPECTIVE**

While the Tibet cadre were of the 'forward school', implementation of 'forward' policies was blocked by Whitehall. India had to accept that

The large commercial interests of His Majesty's Government in China make it necessary to subordinate policy in Tibet to the general policy of the British Government in China and to avoid incurring the hostility...of the [Chinese] Government.[52]

This was not the view of the Tibet cadre. They were naturally frustrated by the restrictions imposed on them by the Government of India, usually, though by no means exclusively, at Whitehall's behest. But while they often railed at the 'Old maids who weave our destiny in Simla',[53] it was the British Foreign Office which represented the antithesis of their position. The Tibet cadre considered that their view of the China-Tibet problem was pro-Chinese. When one Tibet cadre officer visited the Foreign Office in 1949 he found 'an icy Chinese expert, Paul Grey, in charge of the Far East...and he simply smiled bleakly when I tried to tell him of Tibet's position.' Another complained that 'I don't think the young pup who was dealing with Tibet...knew where it is on the map.'[54]

While British policy in Tibet was not monolithic, there were prevailing trends which we may summarise, and the policies favoured by the Tibet cadre represent a consistent line of policy. The ultimate aim of the British in Tibet was the protection of India from what was seen as the subversive influence of its neighbouring northern empires. There were three possible solutions to that threat. China could be allowed to control Tibet, Tibet could be made a British protectorate, or Tibet could be strengthened to the point where it was capable of acting as an effective 'buffer state'.

Although China's inability to control Tibet and exclude Russian influence there had led to the Younghusband Mission, Whitehall, and elements of the Government of India, saw the establishment of Chinese power in Tibet as the solution to the Tibetan problem. But, following the Chinese efforts to weaken the British position in Tibet, the Tibet cadre opposed any return to Chinese control. This was particularly the case during the isolation of the Gyantse Trade Agency between 21 November 1906 and 16 July 1907, when the Chinese prevented the Trade Agent from having any direct dealings with the Tibetans. The cadre argued that reassertion of Chinese control would lead to a revival of Chinese claims to areas of British India, including Sikkim, and also to Bhutan, and, most importantly, Nepal. They also thought that China might be too weak to prevent Russian, and later

Japanese, influence from penetrating through Tibet, and argued that allowing China to rule Tibet would not provide a stable and secure northern border for India as China's control would be contested by the Tibetans.[55]

The cadre initially favoured establishing a British protectorate in Tibet, although this was never openly articulated. Younghusband's attempt to annex the Chumbi Valley, and the later annexation of Tawang under the 1914 Simla Convention, were both aimed towards that end.[56] But after Curzon's viceroyalty it became increasingly obvious that Tibet would not be taken into the British empire, even at its own request.[57] The Government of India's economic restrictions, and Whitehall's concern for the international complications, meant that they would veto any such move. The Tibet cadre continued to promote policies which might have led to the establishment of a British Tibetan protectorate, but this became an increasingly unrealistic aim, and was largely forgotten by the 1930s.[58]

Creating a Tibetan 'buffer state' was a compromise between abandonment and annexation. It required the creation of a strong, unified Tibet, capable of resisting external influence, which, if it was to be an effective 'buffer state' for British India, had to be brought under British influence; thus the cadre promoted policies aimed at establishing influence over Tibet. Most importantly, they sought to station a British representative in Lhasa. Only there could they create the close ties with the ruling class which were needed if the British were to influence Tibet.

Once it became apparent that the Dalai Lama was the only leader capable of uniting the Tibetans, a Tibetan 'buffer state' policy implied support for his leadership, which became the basis of the cadre's policies after 1910. This was consistent with Political Department methods in India, where the friendship of local rulers was deliberately cultivated in order to establish influence. By 1923, it was clear that the conservative elements in Tibet who opposed modernisation were succeeding in convincing the Dalai Lama to side with them against the weaker modernising faction. But, as we shall see in Chapter Four, after what was apparently a failed, and largely concealed attempt to create an alternative leadership which would institute modernisation policies, the British had no alternative but to continue to deal with Tibet's traditional leadership.

The extension of British influence in Tibet was naturally opposed by China, who consistently sought to bring Tibet into her empire. There was no dispute between the two powers over the model of modernisation which Tibet should follow, for China was herself modernising on the Western model. What they disputed was who would control the process.[59]

The history of Tibet during the 1904-47 period can be seen as a struggle between the

British and the Chinese over this question of control. Both countries sent representatives who sought to influence the Tibetans and control the process of modernisation in their country's favour. They used similar methods, copied the other's initiatives, and constantly measured their opponent's successes and failures against their own.[60] The slightest indication of Tibetan preference for one country's ideas, actions and even sports and pastimes, was seen as evidence that the Tibetans favoured that country and hence its policies.[61] With both sides claiming their involvement was in the Tibetans' best interests, the Tibetans' desire for isolation and autonomy was ignored.

## **SECTION 6: BRITISH INDIAN ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE**

In order to place the Tibet cadre in its administrative context, it is necessary to outline the structure of the Government of India and the administrative chain of command in which the Tibet cadre were located.

The Government of India inherited its basic structure from the East India Company. In 1833, government in India had been placed under the control of a Governor-General (also known, after 1858, as the Viceroy, the term I have used in this study). In 1843, government was reorganised into four departments, Home, Financial, Military and Foreign. All matters relating to India's foreign relations came under the Foreign Department.

The East India Company used the term 'Civil Service' to describe its non-military employees responsible for civil administration. They became the Indian Civil Service when the Government of India Act of 1858 brought British Indian administration under direct Crown authority. Under this Act, the ultimate control of British India was vested in the Crown, and, in practice, in the British Parliament, while the Viceroy, on behalf of the British monarch, was responsible for relations with the Indian 'Princely States'. A new British Government department, the India Office, was created to administer India. It was headed by the Secretary of State for India, who was a member of the British Cabinet. This separated responsibility for relations between Britain and India from relations with foreign states such as Russia and China, the responsibility of the Foreign Office, and relations with the British colonies, which came under the Colonial Office. This division obviously created the potential for conflicts of interest between the different departments, which was to be reflected in the Tibet cadre's struggle with the views of the Foreign Office.

The Secretary of State for India (hereafter, the Secretary of State), was responsible for the principal appointments in the Indian administration, and controlled recruitment to the

Indian Civil Service (hereafter, the ICS). As a member of Cabinet, he was subject to political appointment, but there was a Permanent Under-Secretary of State, a civil servant who had the right to correspond directly with members of the Government of India.

The Government of India was largely self-financing, and, although theoretically subject to the India Office, it maintained a great deal of autonomy, the extent of which depended largely on the personality and ability of the Viceroy. His relationship with the Secretary of State was thus a delicate one, the nature of which has attracted some academic controversy.[62] For our purposes it is sufficient to note that the relationship varied with time and circumstance, but again it was a situation which may be seen as potentially creating conflicts of interest, or alternatively as part of a series of 'checks and balances' on the power of the Viceroy.

The branch of government with which we are concerned, the Indian Political Department, was originally part of the Foreign Department under the East India Company. It had been concerned with politics in the Indian sense of the word at that time, meaning relations with other territories.[63] After 1858 these fell into two categories. Firstly there were the self-governing Indian states within the borders of British India, and secondly, those external states whose affairs were of direct consequence to India, such as Nepal, Afghanistan, and Tibet.

The Political Department came under the personal control of the Viceroy, who was ultimately responsible for appointments to the Department. The cost of its positions was borne by India. The service underwent several name changes which reflected its twin fields of operation. At the beginning of our period (1904), it was known as the Political and Secret Department; the Political branch dealt with relations with Indian states, and the Secret Department with external territories. In 1914 it was renamed the Foreign and Political Department, and in 1937 it was divided into the External Affairs Department and the Political Department. (Control of the Political Department was then passed to the 'Crown Representative'; this position was always occupied by the Viceroy.).

Throughout this period, however, the Political Department's agents were chosen from a single body of men. The agents were commonly known as 'Politicals', the term they used to describe themselves, and, in the interests of continuity, I have used the terms 'Political' and 'Political Department' throughout this work, irrespective of date.

The Political cadre was made up of officers who had served either in the Indian Army, or in the ICS. They were theoretically 'on deputation' to the Political Department from their original service, but in practice they normally remained members of the Political Department until retirement. An approximate balance of two-thirds Indian Army and one-third ICS members was maintained by a complicated intake formula. After the 1920s.

officers from the Indian Police, and occasionally the Provincial Civil Services, were also admitted.[64]

ICS recruits arriving in India were given a gazetted posting to a province. After provincial service they could apply for entry to the Political Department if they were unmarried, had less than five years' service, and had passed the necessary departmental examinations. If successful, they were allocated a posting by the Political Department Secretariat. A similar path was followed by Indian Army officers who, after service with an Indian regiment, could apply for a Political Department posting if they were unmarried, under 26, and had passed their promotion examination. Persons particularly suited could be advised to apply for a post, or appointed to one on a temporary basis (which could last many years), prior to permanent appointment. This was a common occurrence in the Tibet cadre.

The established strength of the Political Department consisted of a fixed number of positions, which remained largely in European hands. The exact number varied in response to government interests. By 1947 there were 170 cadre posts, although as recruitment had ceased after the outbreak of war only 124 of these were filled. Whereas in the ICS there was then a slight majority of Indian personnel, there were only 17 Indians in the Political Department.[65]

Officers were posted to both 'foreign' and 'political' posts, no distinction was drawn between areas of service, and, while some officers specialised in a particular area, others remained 'generalists' throughout their careers. Officers also served in the administrative headquarters of the Department, at (after 1911) Delhi, or, in summer, at Simla. This Secretariat, which was under the direct control of the Viceroy, maintained a small staff who controlled the activities and postings within the service.[66]

The decision-making process within the Political Department depended on a hierarchal passage of paper. Trade Agents' reports were forwarded to the Department by the Political Officer in Sikkim, who added his own comments. These reports were considered and commented upon by the Secretariat, and might be shown, officially or unofficially, to other relevant departments. If important, they were passed to the Viceroy, and thence to the India Office in London, who in turn reported to the British Government. The process might also work in reverse. A request for information about a Tibetan matter directed to a British M.P. could be passed down the chain to an Agent in Tibet, whose report would pass up the chain again. Each officer in the chain could add comments and each Department would consider these comments in their report or recommendation.

Policy-making thus involved each link in the chain from Trade Agent to British Parliament and sovereign. The result of this hierarchal process was that, although the opinion of the 'man on the spot' was theoretically highly valued, in practice it was liable to

be overruled at any or every higher level. Again, we might see this as a recipe for conflicts of opinion, or as a series of checks and balances on the power of individuals.

## **SECTION 7: IMAGES OF TIBET**

Two prevailing images of Tibet co-exist in the West. The first is the empirically-based historical image. The second is what I have called the 'mystical' image; Tibet as a spiritual realm beyond precise empirical understanding. This mystical image predates the Tibetan encounter with modern European culture and is not, therefore, an entirely Western construct, but it has been significantly affected by this encounter. While the creation of the mystical image of Tibet is beyond the scope of this study, the existence of this 'other worldly' image both affected, and was affected by, the historical image. The Tibet cadre did not place themselves in opposition to the mystical image, with significant results, as will be seen.

References in early Indian religious texts, such as the *Mahabharata*, suggest that the Indian view of the Himalayas (rather than Tibet specifically), as sacred space, dates to the pre-Christian era.[67] The earliest European references to Tibet repeat what was clearly an already established image of Tibet as a land of 'necromancers'. [68]

In the 19th century this image was brought into the European spiritual imagination by the reports of early travellers; Tibet became a sacred place for the West. European esoterics, in particular the Theosophist movement, began to adopt their own versions of Tibetan beliefs. Writers such as Madame Blavatsky, who claimed to be receiving telepathic messages from spiritual 'masters' residing in the Himalayas, had a great deal of influence in the creation of this image. Others with a more scholarly approach, such as Alexandra David-Neel, made serious efforts to investigate reports of psychic phenomena in Tibet, which again enhanced the mystical image. Tibet, in the Western imagination, became firmly located as a spiritual place, outside of time and space, possessing a knowledge unavailable in the West. Probably the supreme expression of that image emerged in 1933, with the publication of James Hilton's novel, Lost Horizon, which gathered many strands of images into a single imagining: 'Shangri-La'. [69]

Peter Bishop, in a recent seminal study, has examined the process by which European travellers to Tibet constructed an image of it as a sacred place within the European imagination. He demonstrates how Europeans projected their own imaginings onto Tibet, until it became drawn into European spiritual identity. This imagery, ordered by succeeding layers of images produced by generations of travellers, led not towards an ultimate



empirical truth, but to a core image which enabled the continuing projection of western fantasies onto Tibet.[70]

Tibet became a paradoxical place in the European mind. While drawn within European imagining, it 'always sustained an independent Otherness',[71] and this image of the unknown was a significant part of its attraction. Yet, as a result of the British encounter with Tibet, a body of knowledge was built up which was used to create the historical image of Tibet. While the projection of this knowledge was affected by the requirements of both British and Tibetan power structures, it did produce empirical evidence of a historically real, geographically located, Tibet. Two images of Tibet thus came to co-exist in the European imagination.

Tibet retained its image as an isolated place, beyond the reach of Europeans, despite more than 500 Britons visiting Lhasa with the Younghusband Mission, and the subsequent posting of British officials to Tibet during the period 1904-47. The mystical image survived despite the production of an empirically-based historical image. Previous mystical images of unknown lands, such as Australia, or the source of the Nile, had faded as they became known to European science, and other constructions replaced the mystical. We need therefore to ask why Tibet's mystical image persisted and co-existed with the historical image rather than being superseded by it.

Tsering Shakya may provide part of the answer when he states that Europeans lost interest in a place when it had been colonised. Thus 'Tibet was mythologised precisely because it was never colonised.'[72] But there was also a deliberate use of this mystical image by both the British and the Tibetans. As we shall see in Chapter Six, Tibet's mystical image survived because it served the interests of the British and their allies in the ruling class of Tibetan society. It reinforced a Tibetan identity separate from that of China, and it provided a positive image which helped to justify support for Tibet's continued existence. The Tibet cadre did not, therefore, apply themselves to refuting Tibet's mystical image: indeed much of their writing implicitly supports it.[73]

The continual popularity of the mystical image is not, however, solely attributable to the projections of the imperial power. It is, to a large extent, 'consumer generated', the strength was, and is, in the demand, not the supply. This meant that writers who had never visited Tibet, such as James Hilton, made contributions to the image through works of fiction.

The process by which the cadre created the historical image of Tibet can be clearly demonstrated through an examination of the gathering of information and its subsequent use, and by showing how the Government of India shaped this image by censorship. Whereas the construction of images by the imperial power-structure in India is usually seen

as producing negative images, the political need for an independent Tibetan identity as a friendly neighbouring state to India meant that Tibetan society and aspirations were portrayed sympathetically and positively. We need to ask why the particular image of Tibet was created. What were the British perceptions of Tibet and the Tibetans, and to what extent did these coalesce with the Tibetans' own identity and self-image? The creation of an image of Tibet involved making definitions, of what was Tibet and Tibetan. Defining Tibet required judging what was their territory, language, custom, and so on, raising the questions of whom the message was aimed at, on whom do codes of meaning act to establish the idea of a nation and a state?

Tibet was not a modern nation-state in the European understanding. The 'creation' of Tibet, and the attempt to transform it into a modern nation-state both required a model. We are, therefore, addressing the relationship between power and knowledge in the Tibetan context, and seeking to respond to wider questions of identity, in demonstrating how the mentality and perceptions of the Tibet cadre shaped the historical image of Tibet today.

## **SECTION 8: THESIS OUTLINE**

This study begins with a collective biographical examination of the Tibet cadre, in order to demonstrate the type of individual favoured by the Government of India for service on the imperial frontier. I am concerned to examine the cadre officers' background and training in order to isolate their common characteristics, and show how their character was shaped for imperial service generally, and for Tibet specifically.

It will be seen that, while an initial period of service in Tibet was often the result of a chance posting, extended and recurrent service there was a matter of choice, by both the individual, and his superiors in the Tibet cadre, which to a large extent controlled its own intake. This meant that they were able to select officers whose character and mentality conformed to that of their predecessors. In identifying the means by which the cadre identity and traditions were passed on to newcomers, use is made of David Potter's work on the administrative traditions of British India, and findings related to such earlier studies. The analysis of the transmission of in-service traditions is located within the framework established by Potter's study.[74]

The image of the ideal 'type' of officer favoured for frontier service was part of British prestige, the maintenance of which was considered of crucial importance to the continuance of British rule in India. The British sought to present themselves to the Tibetans in a particular way, and Europeans who would not uphold accepted ideals of behaviour and

presentation were excluded from Tibet whenever possible. Considerations of British prestige were apparent in all spheres of imperial activity and there was an ongoing debate between two tendencies, those who thought prestige was best maintained by distancing themselves from the local people, and those who held that British prestige was enhanced by their mastery of local social forms. There was a similar debate in Tibet over whether Indian officers could be expected to maintain British prestige. In Chapter Two, we examine these considerations, and ask whether the Tibetans understood the projection of British forms of prestige.

The British encounter with Tibet required the services of intermediaries between the two cultures. In addition to clerical and domestic staff, there was a body of men, mostly Sikkimese or British Indians of Tibetan origin, whose selection and training were modeled on that of their British superiors. The intermediaries acted as translators in the widest sense, of language, customs and aspirations. They became a powerful class, although their 'voice' is often hidden behind that of the British officers they served. In Chapter Three we examine how these intermediaries were selected and trained, and how the most successful of them came to embody an understanding of both British and Tibetan cultures.

We then examine, in Chapter Four, how the character and identity of the Tibet cadre and the intermediaries affected their role in Tibet. Although it became obvious, the Tibet cadre's diplomatic function was not normally openly articulated, to avoid complications with China, Russia and other powers. Nor did the cadre officers receive specific or detailed instructions as to their duties. They were, therefore, left, to a large extent, to define their own role.

We examine how the character, training and institutional traditions of the Tibet cadre ensured that their role reflected the 'forward' policies of their founders, and demonstrate that the issues with which they were most concerned were those related to their primary purpose - ensuring the security of India's northern border. The gathering of intelligence concerning Tibetan affairs, and the cultivation of good relations with leading Tibetans, were two of the primary functions which they took on to achieve this.

Exactly where political power was located in the Tibetan system was not immediately apparent to the British, and the early officers investigated the possibility of building on the ties established by Bogle and Turner, to ally themselves with the Panchen Lama. But, as noted, after 1910, the predominant policy of the Tibet cadre was to support the Dalai Lama. After his death they resorted to making payments to key Tibetan individuals and institutions in the hope of obtaining their support, with a consequent affect on the moral climate of Tibet during the minority of the 14th Dalai Lama.

In Chapter Five we examine in more detail how the Tibet cadre developed and promoted a

particular policy over a period of time. The cadre considered that they could achieve little without access to Lhasa, and kept this issue at the forefront of internal government debate. After 1920, they were able to obtain approval for occasional visits to Lhasa by the Political Officer in Sikkim, and no objection was raised to their use of regular visits to Lhasa by local employees. This paved the way for the eventual establishment of a British Lhasa Mission. However, the cadre were only able to achieve this after China had reestablished a representative in Lhasa. This was an example of how British policy in Tibet after Younghusband was essentially reactive, 'forward' moves only being allowed in response to Chinese or Russian moves.

Having considered the Tibet cadre's influence on British policy, we turn to an examination of their role in the creation of an image of Tibet. Their principal concern in this context was to project Tibet as a separate entity from China, in order to establish it as a 'buffer state' between British India and the Chinese, or Russian, empires. This required Tibet to be defined in the European understanding, in terms of aspects of identity such as language, race, culture, history and so on. In an attempt to construct a modern Tibetan identity, building on the pre-existing proto-nationalism of historical identity, the Tibet cadre translated traditional Tibetan concepts into modern forms of expression. Political requirements, and personal understanding, made the images they constructed positive or 'pastoral' ones. These definitions may therefore be located in the wider context of questions of European understanding, and we may compare the actuality of the cadre's projection of images of 'Tibet' and 'Tibetan' with what we know of the Tibetan's own perspective on their identity.

While the Tibet cadre sought to promote an image of Tibet as a separate state, this was restricted by Whitehall's refusal to recognise Tibet as fully-independent. In Chapter Seven, we examine the mechanisms by which the Tibet cadre's projected image was censored by their governments, and to what effect. We then ask whether the Tibet cadre understood the Tibetans, whether the encounter was a dialogue or a lecture to the uncomprehending.

In Chapter Eight, I argue that several members of the Tibet cadre did come to understand the 'Other' culture, but demonstrate that a deep understanding was not required by their government for the satisfactory performance of their duties; it came only from an officer's personal search for understanding. Those officers who obtained such understanding of the 'Other' society that they became accepted as 'belonging' to it, naturally became members of a class within the 'Other' society, and identified with that class. The result was that the policies they favoured, and the image of Tibet which they promoted, represented the interests of their class within the 'Other' society, as it did the interests of their own native class.

It becomes apparent that a predominant feature of the British involvement in Tibet was a lack of definition. The Tibet cadre's role, the status of Tibet, the authenticity of the Tibet-Mongolia Treaty of 1913; these, and many other important questions remained deliberately undefined as the British discovered 'the advantage of falling in with the Central Asian tendency to avoid precise definition'.<sup>[75]</sup> This is both an example of how location influenced British policy, and characteristic of the frontier; the zone of interaction and transformation, encounter, and myth. I adopt the term 'liminal' from the field of religious studies to describe a zone beyond precise definition, and use this as a means of treating the legendary and mythological aspects of the British presence in Tibet. Previous studies of the frontier show these aspects to be characteristic of such zones, and enable us to locate the Tibet cadre within frontier history.

After a summary of the conclusions reached in this study, and an examination of the consequences of the Anglo-Tibetan encounter, Appendix One gives biographical details of the 22 officers I have classified as belonging to the Tibet cadre. Appendix Two lists the individuals who occupied the major British posts on the Tibetan frontier. This provides a clear exposition of the system whereby officers were promoted from the Gyantse and Yatung Trade Agencies to the Lhasa Mission, and to the senior post of Political Officer in Sikkim, as well providing a reference tool for future studies of this subject.

My two major fields of enquiry are therefore, the realms of empire and expansion, and the question of knowledge. I am concerned with the questions of how and why the Tibet cadre thought and acted as they did, and what effect this had on (a) British policy in Tibet, and, (b) the historical image of Tibet.

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## FOOTNOTES

[1] Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Francis Edward Younghusband (1863-1942) KCSI. KCIE., was born in Muree on the north-west frontier of India, the son of an Inspector-General of Police in the Punjab. He was educated at Clifton College and Sandhurst. For a recent biography, superseding previous attempts, see French (1994). There are a number of works on the 1903-04 Mission, including Younghusband's own account; see Younghusband (1985, with an introduction by Alastair Lamb). The primary imperial account is Fleming (1986). A more balanced account of the Mission is contained in French (1994).

[2] For details of the establishment of the Trade Agencies, see McKay (1992a).

[3] Eleven dak bungalows were built between Gangtok and Gyantse to accommodate British officials on this route.

[4] The use of the term 'theocratic' in regard to Tibet's ruling structure is problematical; it may be qualified by describing it as the Tibetan form of theocracy.

[5] Yapp (1980, p.588).

[6] As Georges Duby notes, it is the 'prevailing mood' within an organisation 'which influences behaviour'; Duby (1985, p.230).

[7] Here I follow Lawrence Stone, who defines the purpose of collective biography as 'to demonstrate the cohesive strength of the group in question, bound together by common blood, background, education, and economic interests...prejudices, ideals and ideology...it is this web of purely social and economic ties which gave the group its unity and therefore its political force'; Stone (1981, p.46).

[8] Collingwood (1989, p.245).

[9] The terms 'Trade Agent' or 'Agent' apply specifically to the officers in the three Trade Agencies, while the term 'Political Officer' applies specifically to the Sikkim post. The latter is an unsuitable collective term as nearly half of the Tibet cadre officers were not actually members of the Political Department. Despite its communist implications, and lack of aesthetic appeal, the term 'Tibet cadre' does serve to emphasise the group's collective identity.

[10] Since the completion of my research the India Office Library has been renamed the Oriental and India Collection. I have retained the form current during my research.

[11] Seldon & Pappworth (1983).

[12] I have retained either tape-recordings, or signed transcripts, of the interviews conducted.

[13] See Addy (1984); Goldstein (1989); Mehra (1974); Singh (1988a); Richardson (1984); and, in particular, Lamb (1960, 1966, and 1989).

[14] See Bishop (1989); also see Cocker (1992).

[15] Collister (1987, pp.7-11); Richardson (1984, pp.63-64); I have also relied primarily in this section on Richardson's account of Tibetan history in the pre-1900 period, in addition to the accounts of Lamb (1960), Shakabpa (1984) and Tucci (1980).

[16] Regarding the early history of Tibet, see Beckwith (1987); Tucci (1980); Yeshe De project (1986).

[17] The Dalai Lamas (along with a considerable number of other important lamas, including the

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Panchen Lama), are considered successive rebirths of an individual. The system of incarnate ('*sprul sku*') lamas, which began in the twelfth century, involves a search for a new incarnation a few years after the death of the previous incarnation. In the intervals between the death of one incarnation and the majority of the next, a Regent serves in their stead. See Tucci (1980, pp.41, 134-35).

[18] Tucci *ibid* (pp.41-42). Regarding Tibet-Mongol relations see; Petech, L., China and Tibet in the Early Eighteenth Century, Leiden 1950.

[19] Collister (1987, p.12).

[20] *Ibid* (pp.11-21); Richardson (1984, pp.64-67).

[21] Re the Pandits, see Waller (1987).

[22] For details of traditional Indo-Tibetan trade see, Chandola (1987); also see Lamb (1960, pp.342-355).

[23] China monopolised the Tibetan tea trade and Indian tea was excluded from Tibet. Both China, and Tibetan monasteries, which traded in tea, profited from this arrangement. To Indian tea merchant's frustration, the Tibetans also appear to have genuinely preferred Chinese tea, not least because it came in compressed bricks which suited Tibet's large semi-nomadic population. For the contemporary British perspective, see Cooper (1869); Louis (1894). As late as 1935 the Indian tea growers had still been unable to make brick tea, and the Tibetans continued to prefer Chinese tea; IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-1175, Report on a Mission to Lhasa, by Captain R.K.M.Battye, 29 December 1935.

[24] See French (1994, pp.202-03).

[25] Sikkim, which stood on the easiest route from Calcutta to Lhasa, had come under British influence following the Treaty of Tumlong in 1861. It became a British Protectorate under the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890.

[26] Lamb (1960, pp.174-229); McKay (1992a, pp.400-01).

[27] Lamb *ibid* (pp.239-241); Richardson (1984, pp.78-82).

[28] The Japanese monk, Kawaguchi Ekai, who visited Lhasa in 1901, was one apparently neutral source who reported that Russian arms supplies were reaching Lhasa; Berry (1991, pp.304-05); Kawaguchi (1979, pp.505-06).

[29] Lamb (1960, pp.240-252); Fleming (1986, pp.32-36).

[30] Dorzhiev's role in Tibet has attracted a great deal of comment, much of it inaccurate. A recent work, which uses a number of hitherto unavailable Russian sources, provides the first reliable account of his life; see Snelling (1993).

[31] See French (1994, pp.154-55, 192, 254).

[32] The full text of this separate agreement is found in Younghusband (1910, p.300). The text of the Anglo-Tibetan Convention of 1904 (which Younghusband signed in the Potala), is given in Richardson (1984, pp.268-271).

[33] The issue of British representation in Lhasa is discussed in Fleming (1986, pp.211-15); also see, McKay (1992a, p.416), & (1992b).

[34] The text of these treaties is given in Richardson (1984, pp.271-74). The term 'suzerainty' has no precise, agreed definition in the Tibetan context, although its meaning has been subject to much discussion.

[35] IOLR MSS Eur F157-166, Bailey to his parents, 20 October 1907.

[36] The Dalai Lama described as a 'pretext' the Chinese explanation for these troops; Shakabpa (1984, p.246). The Tibet cadre's view was that it was an 'invasion'; Richardson (1984, pp.97-100). Lamb, relying on Eric Teichman's account, describes the Tibetans as being prepared to accept a small Chinese force entering Lhasa, only to be tricked by the arrival of a much larger than expected force; Lamb (1966, pp.192-94), following Teichman (1921, p.28).

[37] Tibetan sources emphasise that the dispute involving the Dalai and Panchen Lamas was due to differences between their supporters, not between the two incarnate lamas themselves; see Shakabpa (1984, p.263); Taring (1983, pp.66-67); Dhondup (1986, pp.123-26); also see, Lamb (1989, esp., chapters V1 & V111).

[38] For the text of this declaration, see Shakabpa (1984, pp.246-248).

[39] Mehra discusses aspects of the Tibet-Mongol treaty in Mehra (1969).

[40] There is an extensive literature concerning the Simla Convention; in particular see the works of Lamb (1966), & (1989); Mehra (1974); and Richardson (1984).

[41] Tibet's modernisation programme required finance, which the Tibetan Government attempted to raise by means of new taxes. As these were based on the size of estates, the Panchen Lama's taxes were greatly increased. There were a number of factors behind the Panchen Lama's flight, the precise causes of which remain unclear. For contrasting views on the matter see Dhondup (1985, pp.123-140); Richardson (1984, pp.125-28).

[42] For an examination of the role of conservative elements in Tibet, see Goldstein (1989). Goldstein's controversial thesis, that the failure of the conservative Tibetan monastic and aristocratic rulers to accept modernisation was ultimately responsible for Tibet losing its independence, has not been successfully disputed.

[43] Richardson (1979); personal correspondence with H.Richardson, May 1989.

[44] Ford (1990, p.170); Williamson (1987, p.98).

[45] 'Natural frontiers' are those imposed by geography; rivers, lakes, coastline and so on. In British India, mountains were considered, as Royal Geographical Society President, and Superintendent of Frontier Surveys, Sir Thomas Holditch, stated, 'the most lasting, the most unmistakable and the most efficient as a barrier'; Holditch (1916, p.147).

[46] As late as March 1905 Curzon was still proclaiming that there was no need for a north-east frontier policy; Mehra (1974, p.11).

[47] Curzon (1907), Lyall (1973, pp.334-49); Prasad (1979, pp.577-78); Verrier (1992, p.36).

[48] General John Jacob, quoted in Edwardes (1975, p.93).

[49] Yapp (1980, p.588).

[50] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E February 1398-1445, Younghusband to L.Dane (Indian Foreign Secretary), 30 May 1904.

[51] Fleming (1984, p.285); also see Younghusband (1985, p.340); Lamb (1966, pp.13-14), quoting FO 535/5, No.83, encs. 2 and 3, Broderick to India, 2 February 1904.

[52] IOLR L/P&S/12/187-4682, Foreign Secretary, India, to the Under Secretary of State, India Office, 28 June 1935.

[53] RGS. Bailey correspondence, 1921-30; Mrs Irma Bailey to Arthur Hinks (RGS Secretary), 9 October 1924.

[54] IOLR MSS Eur F157-259, Richardson to Bailey, 25 February 1949; MSS Eur F157-258,



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Hopkinson to Bailey, 26 November 1949.

[55] IOLR L/P&S/12/4177, file note by J.C. Walton, 12 February 1934.

[56] Lamb (1989, fn.10, p.22, fn.21, p.24).

[57] The Tibetans asked the Government of India to take-over their foreign relations on at least two occasions, in 1910 and again in 1932; see IOLR L/P&S/10/147-995, Bell to India, 17 July 1910; L/P&S/12/4174, Viceroy to the Secretary of State, 10 August 1932, enclosing Weir to India, 9 September 1932. But as Lamb (1966, p.587), notes, in 1910 'the British Empire in India had passed its zenith. The British were no longer an expanding power; they were attempting to hold and consolidate what they had'.

[58] Interviews with Mrs E.Hopkinson, 20 April 1993; Mrs J.M.Jehu, 26 March 1993; A.H.Robins, 23 April 1993; Mrs A.Saker, 27 April 1993.

[59] The only major difference between British and Chinese modernisation plans concerned the Tibetan army. The Tibet cadre sought to strengthen Tibet's military capacity to enable Tibet to defend themselves against the Chinese. The Chinese naturally sought to weaken Tibet's military forces. Chinese plans are noted in; NAI FD, 1908 Secret E September 113-134, various correspondence; FD, 1908 Secret E February 467-482, W. Cassels to Government of United Provinces, 23 September 1907 (re western Tibet); IOLR L/P&S/7/220-1625, Gyantse Annual Report 1907-08, enclosed in Bell to India, 28 May 1908.

[60] IOLR L/P&S/7/251-1466, Gyantse Diary of June 1911, notes that the Chinese had enquired if a British officer was to be posted to Gartok, in which case the Chinese would station an officer there.

[61] For example, see McKay (1994, p.381).

[62] See Kaminsky (1986, pp.151, 201); Yapp (1990).

[63] O'Malley (1965, p.160).

[64] Coen (1971, pp.35, 54).

[65] *ibid* (p.4).

[66] *ibid* (pp.5-6).

[67] Allen (1982, p.19).

[68] Marco Polo, whose report of 'Thibbet' may be a second-hand account, states 'These people are necromancers and by their infernal arts perform the most extraordinary and delusive enchantments'; Marco Polo (1970, pp.236-40).

[69] See Johnson (1994); David-Neel (1931); Hilton (1933).

[70] A core image is that 'which gathers and organizes imagery'; Bishop (1989, fn.120, p.269).

[71] Bishop *ibid* (p.145).

[72] Shakya (1992, p.15).

[73] For examples; see MacDonald (1991, pp.196-202). It is however, what is not said which is significant.

[74] Potter (1986).

[75] Richardson (1984, p.148).

## CHAPTER ONE

**'THEY'VE ALL GOT SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT THEM':**

**THE MAKING OF A TIBET CADRE OFFICER.**

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### INTRODUCTION

Selection for the Political Department was governed by the belief that there was an ideal type of officer best qualified to represent British India. It was commonly held that the necessary qualities were, as Curzon pronounced, 'an instinct rather than an acquisition'.<sup>[1]</sup> But Political officers in the 20th century were almost invariably products of British public schools, and universities or military colleges, who had served in the ICS or Indian Army, and these institutions therefore, acted as a training process, which was believed to bring out the innate qualities of the ideal character for service in the Politicals.

Although Tibet was a regular Departmental posting, to which officers could, through choice or chance, be sent, extended service there was a matter of choice, not chance. Although it was never stated as policy, individuals found unsuitable for service in Tibet, or who found it uncongenial, were not posted there again. Thus just as a particular type of individual was thought suitable for the Politicals in general, particular types of Political officer were considered suited to particular regional posts. One type might be best suited to the Persian Gulf, another might respond most positively to the Tibetan environment. Therefore, while the Tibet cadre had many characteristics which were common to other Political officers, there were distinguishing aspects of their character, which made them a distinct group.

As noted, only 22 officers were permanently appointed to, or remained long enough to exert any real influence in, the three most significant posts in Tibet during the 1904-47 period; those at Gangtok, Gyantse, and Lhasa. There are sufficient sources concerning these 22 officers, whom I term the Tibet cadre, to conduct a collective biographical examination of them, enabling the isolation of common factors which indicate the type of character favoured for service in the Politicals generally, and, more specifically, in the Tibet cadre.

The prevailing character and mentality of the cadre is important because it proves to be the basis of their perception and definition of both Tibet, and their own role there. Through understanding the type of characters they were, and the way they thought, we can gain a greater understanding of their consequent actions. In this conclusion, I follow scholars such as Clive Dewey and David Fieldhouse in arguing that 'vested ideas, rather than vested interests, are the great determinants of human behaviour'.[2]

In this chapter I will, in the course of reconstructing the prevailing character and mentality of these officers; [a] examine the background of the Tibet cadre; [b] describe how their training and selection took place, and; [c] demonstrate how the cadre traditions were established and passed on to newcomers. This will show that a particular ethos and characteristic attitudes prevailed among those who served there, and that their distinct collective identity was produced by a planned process. As will be seen in later chapters, this had a significant effect on British policy in Tibet and upon the historical image of Tibet.

### **SECTION 1.1: - THE OFFICERS' BACKGROUND**

Of the 35 officers who served at Gangtok, Lhasa, and Gyantse, nine were Escort Commanders or Medical Officers appointed to act temporarily as Gyantse Trade Agent during the absence of a permanent appointee, and are therefore excluded from this study. Four Gyantse Agents may also be excluded on the grounds that they served there for less than nine months, and therefore had little impact. Their careers, can, however, be useful in illustrating certain aspects of Tibetan service, as will be seen. The careers of the 22 most significant officers - the Tibet cadre - will be the subject of this examination of their background and training.[3]

The first obvious common characteristic of these 22 men is their close family connection with India; nine were born there. A tenth was born in Persia, while his father was on a Government of India posting to the British Consulate at Mashad. Three of those born outside India had a father or grandfather who had served in the ICS or Indian Army, and at least one other had close relatives who had served in India.

Of those not born in India, six were born in England, four in Scotland and two in Ireland. All of these British-born officers came from a professional or land-owning background, with the exception of Frederick Williamson, whose father's employment was 'technical'. Four had fathers in the military, while the church, law and academia were among other professions represented.

With the exception of John Claude White, who was educated privately in Germany, all of

the British officers (including those born in India), attended public schools in England or Scotland. Their education then continued either at university, or at military college for those who went on to join the Indian Army. Of the civilians, four studied at Oxford and two at Cambridge, while White attended Cooper's Hill College of Engineering. Among the military, six attended the Royal Military Academy Woolwich, four attended Sandhurst and two attended Quetta Cadet College.

Of the 22 cadre officers, 17 followed the usual routes into Political Department postings, either via the Indian Army (12 officers), or the ICS (five officers). These figures are consistent with the Political Department's usual intake ratio of two-thirds from the Indian Army and one-third from the ICS. Five officers came from other Indian services; White from the Public Works Department, Frank Ludlow from the Indian Education Department, and David Macdonald, Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup and Rai Bahadur Pemba Tsering from local government services.

An additional military influence on the Tibet cadre was that two of those selected from the ICS, Williamson and Arthur Hopkinson, had seen active service in World War One.[4] This military influence meant that proven physical courage was a common characteristic. At least seven of the officers saw active service - in Tibet, Persia or the World Wars. Hopkinson, Lieutenant-Colonel F.M.'Eric' Bailey, and Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Frank O'Connor were all wounded in action during military service. Williamson, Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Fletcher and Major George Sherriff were mentioned in despatches, while Major Alex Russell won a Military Cross in anti-Bolshevik operations in Northern Persia in 1924.[5]

The Tibet cadre were thus characterised firstly by a similar middle, or upper-middle, class background, and close family connections with India, and secondly by a public school education, followed by entry into Indian military or civil service. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies of the Indian services; the ICS, Indian Medical Service (hereafter, the IMS) and the Politicals, and are not therefore, indicative of the particular character of the Tibet cadre, which must be sought elsewhere.[6]

Three officers were from a very different background; David Macdonald was the son of a Scottish tea planter and a Sikkimese mother. Norbhu Dhondup was born into a Sherpa family at Darjeeling, and Pemba Tsering was from an Eastern Tibetan family who had settled at Ghoom, near Darjeeling. Although these officers encountered some prejudice, the Tibet cadre were essentially a meritocracy, and one which relied heavily on the knowledge of local employees. But these officers were promoted to Political Department posts only after a long period of service, and most importantly for our case, after they had thoroughly absorbed the ethos of the British officers and their way of life. This aspect will be

examined in Chapter Three.

## **SECTION 1.2: - THE EFFECT OF THEIR EDUCATION**

What then was the effect of this common background, and what type of person did it produce? Studies of the relationship between imperialism and the British public school and university systems have demonstrated how the system produced individuals whose particular qualities were considered desirable for service in the empire.[7] The result was a system of which it could be said, 'Every school building is a citadel of Empire and every teacher its sentinel.'[8]

This was a deliberate process. Physical, intellectual, and moral codes were designed to prepare pupils for imperial service. As one of the founders of the Colonial Service stated, 'the Public Schools...are vital. We could not run the show without them. In England universities train the mind; the Public Schools train character and teach leadership'.[9] That the schools were successful in inculcating imperial values is indicated by Lord Curzon, who credited a lecture at Eton with being the source of his views on imperialism.[10]

The cadre were, in common with officers from other Indian services, from a variety of public schools, with 'no significant networks' from any particular institution, although two Wykemists, Bell and Gould, occupied the senior Gangtok post for almost half the period under consideration.[11] But they shared a common standard of taught behaviour, for the various schools they attended all sought to shape the character of their pupils to produce 'gentlemen' with a sense of duty and service who would take on responsibility in the empire. The desired character included qualities of self-confidence, leadership, and respect for tradition, along with a certain 'amateur spirit', an ideal of generalised, rather than specialised or lucrative knowledge.[12] These were precisely the qualities of character sought by the Political Department. Thus a probationary report on Basil Gould states approvingly that, 'His manners are perfect, as might be expected from a Winchester and Oxford education.'[13]

An important part of this character training by the public schools centred on sporting endeavour, in the tradition of 'muscular Christianity'. Team sports were believed to foster both the physical virtues of strength and endurance, and the moral virtues of self-discipline and duty, thus producing 'the confidence to lead and the compulsion to follow'.[14] The public schools' emphasis on sports produced a particular code of ethics, which used symbols and metaphors derived from the Victorian amateur sporting ethos. This 'games ethic' became the ethical basis of the 'frontierman's code', which was 'an important part of

the collective identity of frontier officers'. Thus, in the imperial setting, an officer was expected to have 'a sense of fair play', and expected his fellow-officers to 'play the game'. [15]

The Tibet cadre held to this 'games ethic', and valued the institutions which had instilled it in them. One of the foremost exponents of imperial literature was the poet, Henry Newbolt, a friend and contemporary of Younghusband's at Clifton College. Newbolt's best known poem, *Vitai Lampada*, equates school sport and empire battle, culminating in the repeated refrain 'Play up! and play the game.' When Younghusband reached Lhasa, Newbolt sent him an 'Epistle' containing the following lines:

The victories of our youth we count for gain  
Only because they steeled our hearts to pain,  
And hold no longer even Clifton great  
Save as she schooled our wills to serve the State. [16]

The extent to which the public schools emphasised sports and games can be exaggerated. Clive Dewey has recently shown the importance of the opposing trend towards Socratic virtues, which existed at public schools in parallel to the cult of 'Muscular Christianity'. [17] This preference for intellectual virtues was not, however, specifically oppositional to the ideals of empire. While the cadre contained a number of men of obvious intellect (as will be seen in Section 1:8), they were 'outdoor types', shaped by, and adhering to, the 'games ethic'. Although intellect was valuable, a high standard of fitness was essential; several Politicals failed to satisfy the fitness requirement for service in the harsh Tibetan environment. Intellect, as demonstrated by cadre officers such as Bell and Richardson, was in addition to 'outdoor' qualities, and the cadre valued both elements.

The public schools' system of training for imperial administrators continued at the universities, particularly at Oxford and Cambridge. [18] Curzon remarked that 'he could not understand how anyone educated at Oxford in his time could fail to be an imperialist'. [19]

The pro-imperial ethos was also promoted at the military colleges, which reproduced many of the processes used by the public schools to develop the desired qualities of character in its trainees. For example, at Sandhurst, Bailey's English Composition examination paper asked such questions as, 'Are Polar Exhibitions[sic] worth the hardship and sacrifice involved?' - the desired answer is obvious. [20]

The military colleges deliberately developed loyalty to a military fellowship. Loyalty to a public school house was replaced by loyalty to a military company, loyalty to a school was replaced by loyalty to a regiment. Individuals were (ideally) bound together with a shared

sense of purpose into a single unit, centred on the mess, where the nuances of appropriate behaviour were learned.[21]

The military colleges also emphasised equestrian skills, and "manly sports" as an aid to building both character and team spirit, and skill in these areas was considered to enhance work performance. That these ideals were implanted in the Tibet cadre is indicated by Bailey's comment in his later career that, 'I would not keep Rai Bahadur [Norbhu Dhondup]...if he was not good at polo, football etc, as I knew[sic] his work would not be so good.'[22]

The Tibet cadre officers were thus educated in an imperial milieu. This ensured that, as one Political wrote, 'I grew up with a profound belief in the British...Empire... We were completely satisfied about the superiority of everything British, and never doubted that the British Empire would endure for ever.'[23] The Tibet cadre applied the moral standards inculcated by their education to their own imperial role. Trained to believe in their right to rule, they were self-confident administrators, who viewed themselves as loyal servants of a righteous empire.

The educational system did not, of course, produce only imperial administrators. Products of the military colleges were not always 'gentlemen' who upheld the honour of their regiment, and the universities did not, despite Curzon's statement, only produce unquestioning imperialists. But the system did produce, at least in the pre-World War One period, sufficient men who believed in the imperial ideal; and those who did not subscribe were not favoured for government service in India.

Although not directly affecting the Tibet cadre, there was a decline in interest in Indian service after World War One. This was due to both the declining financial rewards of Indian service, and to changing perceptions of empire, as the prevailing attitudes of the Curzon era gradually became the minority view.[24] The Indian services did adapt to the changing conditions; for example, later officers did not expect the British empire to last forever. But the educational and selection process of the Political Department did not change in tune with the times. In the 1930s and '40s the ideal of the desired type of Political officer was largely unchanged from that of the Younghusband era. Thus Charles Bell and Hugh Richardson represented very similar 'types', despite the changes that had taken place between their periods of service.

### **SECTION 1.3: - EARLY TRAINING IN INDIA**

The training process begun at their public schools and universities or military colleges, continued when recruits arrived in India. The Indian services expected that recruits with this educational background would have the capacity to become good imperial officers once they had been given the necessary training in both their specialised duties, and the values and traditions of their service. These duties and values could, it was believed, only be learned by experience 'on the job'. Thus one ICS officer stated that

If the recruitment is properly done, he [the recruit] should have the capacity to become a good bureaucrat. But what constitutes being a good bureaucrat is something he still has to learn, and it can only be learned by experience.[25]

In the Indian Army, the newcomer was attached to a regiment, which became the focus of his loyalties. There he learned the practice of his profession in the Indian context. In the ICS, a trainee was placed in a district under the supervision of an experienced ICS officer. There he was expected to learn the appropriate local language(s), and the practical methods by which British rule was administered. In addition to mastering legal, cultural and economic aspects of his duties, the ICS newcomer learned 'to locate and work with his political support'[26]; those local powers who could be persuaded that their best interests lay in co-operating with the British, and those elements within British government who favoured the policies the officers promoted. This skill would be particularly valuable to those who joined the Political Department.

Arguably the most important aspect of this initial training was that newcomers, both civil and military, had to learn their social place, and social behaviour appropriate to that status. While their family background (particularly if it was British-Indian), and public school education had taught them much of the required behaviour pattern, the singular culture of British-Indian society, with its codes and nuances of behaviour which were by no means always clearly articulated, imposed its own demands. For example, an ambitious Indian Army officer learned that 'you had to push to get there, but it would not be good form to push too hard'; the 'swot' was frowned upon. He had to drink, but not too much, he had to have pride in himself and his regiment, but not boast about either. The ideal officer mastered these subtle distinctions between good, and bad, 'form'. [27]

Just as the regiment became the focus for the loyalties of an Indian Army officer, so the institution of the ICS became the focus of the civilians' loyalty. While newcomers to the



service may have found what Potter calls an 'instant freemasonry' among fellow-officers, the ICS trainee often had little in common with the officer under whom he served his apprenticeship. Potter has recorded the contrasting relationships newcomers to the ICS had with their initial supervisors, and friendship was by no means typical. This meant that the newcomers' primary identification was with the service itself rather than with individuals, although a respected superior could be a great influence on his trainee.[28]

There is contrasting evidence as to the importance of particular factors as formative influences on the imperial officers in India. Dewey has emphasised the paramountcy of 'the values they absorbed in their youth'. Potter, balancing social and service training influences, argues that an emphasis on social factors has disguised the importance of ICS training. But as Potter himself states, while social background was generally constant, the extent to which recruits were shaped by their initial training varied.[29]

In the case of the Tibet cadre, there is little evidence that their initial ICS or Army service was as important a formative influence on their character and mentality as was their public school. It appears that once an officer entered the Politicals, he ceased to identify with his former service, although to a large extent the Politicals' traditions and even duties, built on, or replicated, those of the ICS and Indian Army.

These services naturally had no wish to lose their best officers. Individuals who entered the Politicals could be resented, for implicitly they were rejecting the ties of loyalty to their former service. Younghusband himself noted that 'the regiment always looks side ways at men going into the Politicals and make it difficult to get leave.[sic]'[30]

New ties of loyalty were developed, and these were to an institution which was considered by those belonging to it as having superior status to that of their former service. None of the Tibet cadre ever returned to their former service after they had served in the Politicals. It appears therefore, that the officers themselves gave less credit to their initial in-country training as they had ceased to identify with their former institutions.

While successful cadre officers, ex-ICS or ex-Indian Army, may or may not have been strongly influenced by their initial Indian training, all were strongly influenced by their public school and it remained their commonest reference point. Arthur Hopkinson for example, had been very happy at Marlborough, for him 'there was no school but Marlborough', and although he was also at Oxford, he did not talk of it as he did his school.[31]

School inculcated the character and set of values desired for the empire.[32] These were given specific application by training in India, and, while as Potter has shown, new institutional loyalties were developed, and ideas were modified by local circumstances, the training process in India was considered to develop and shape character and mentality

which had been, as noted, established by the formative influence of British public schools.[33] While initial training might influence later performance, an officer's school was part of his identity. For example, Bell's obituaries refer to his school, but not to the obscure district in eastern India where he began his ICS career.[34]

This process of training officers for service in Tibet was, in the wider perspective, an established means of uniting individuals for a common purpose. As organisational studies have established, individuals, whose allocated role in an establishment in some way enhances their personal goals, may be trained to internalise the values of that organisation. When this training process has been successful, the individual may then be relied upon to react in a manner consistent with, or advantageous to, the aims of the organisation. The individual acquires a loyalty to that body, and individual and organisational goals coincide. As a result of this process, individuals expect their fellow group-members to behave in the same manner as themselves, and individuals acquire an 'organisation personality' in some ways distinct from their own.[35]

Such a process occurred with the Tibet cadre. The point of their training was to ensure that the government could rely on them to act independently and on their own initiative, within the limits of overall British aims and policies. Their training was therefore designed to produce officers with 'the maximum degree of uniformity of intellect, education and general outlook'.[36] Having shown they could internalise the values of the ICS or the Indian Army, the cadre officers could be relied upon to act in accord with the interests of that section of the Government of India of which they were now members: the Politicals.

#### **SECTION 1.4: - READING AND OTHER INFLUENCES**

While the public school system could produce the type of individual wanted for imperial service, the desire to serve in India and on its frontiers usually had roots elsewhere, as we have seen from the number of officers with family connections to service in India. The family tradition of an Indian career certainly influenced Bailey at an early age. Preserved among his papers are a school 'Essay on Choice of a Career in Life [sic]', and another on 'Outdoor Games', written when he was aged 11. Bailey then favoured a naval career 'Because I like travelling'. His chosen games topic was polo, a sport we may surmise that his father, also a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Indian Army, must have played.[37]

Another primary formative factor on the desire to serve in India was a literary influence, particularly from the works of Kipling. While he was by no means an unequivocal supporter of imperialism, Kipling (who was a close friend of O'Connor), certainly inspired

many Politicals. As one wrote, 'With the literary backdrop of the Jungle Books and Kim...I longed to see India.'[38]

An early taste for Kipling was common, and lasting, among the cadre. Bell would relax by reciting Kipling's poetry, while Hopkinson gave his new bride a collection of Kipling's works, along with riding lessons; both were of equal importance if a Political officer's wife was to fit into her new role.[39] Travellers' tales were another inspiration to officers such as Richardson, who was inspired by reading of George Bogle's 18th century travels in Tibet.[40]

Naturally the image of India that would-be colonial officials received from these texts was incomplete. Imperial literature was primarily concerned with the British in India, or with those aspects of India and its society which were, in the European perspective, unusual, spectacular, and 'Other'. Thus it commonly dealt with events involving the British, such as the 'Indian Mutiny', or imperial life in Simla and other hill-stations, or with the diverse extremes of Indian culture: *Maharajahs*, *saddhus*, *sati* and so on.

An implicit, and occasionally explicit, political agenda existed behind much of this literature in that it reinforced imperial concepts of a racially diverse and ahistorical India, united only by British rule. The administrative classification of various religio-social groups as 'martial' and 'non-martial' races, or as 'criminal tribes', arising from the view of Indians as members of communities, was reflected in literary stereotypes of 'the wily Brahmin', 'the warlike Sikh', and so on. Those peoples whose opposition to a transformation of their traditional societies led them into conflict with the imperial power were naturally portrayed in particularly negative terms. While writers such as Kipling were certainly not uncritical of the Raj, the general tendency of colonial literature was to portray British rule as a 'civilising mission', bringing the many benefits of 'progress' to 'uncivilised' India.

It is simplistic to view this British construction of an image of India purely in terms of the imperial process, and to ignore the fact that the reading public 'is not interested in the mechanics of government, only in melodrama'[41]. But the effect of this process was that the British understanding of India was distorted by Eurocentric perspectives, and policies were evolved and imposed, which were based on knowledge constructed by and for British, rather than local, interests.

The importance of imperial texts as an influence on new officers was recognised in the Political Department. What were considered suitable texts for trainee officers were selected and used as training manuals. After six months in the Politicals, new entrants were examined (at least into the 1920s) on four books; Lyall's *The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India*, Thornton's biography, *Sir Robert Sandeman*, Edwardes's *A*

*Year on the Punjab Frontier*, and another text pertaining to the Middle East. Given that most of the Tibet cadre read these works, it is instructive to analyse the policies and role models they present, because they clearly demonstrate aims and activities approved by the Political Department in terms which were not otherwise officially articulated.

Sir Alfred Lyall was a former Indian Foreign Secretary, whose 1891 work was a history of British Indian government. It reflects the confidence of the imperial age, taking a positive view of progress, with British rule in India portrayed as paternal. Lyall emphasised the importance of frontier protectorates as a convenient method of extending British power without responsibility for government. The importance of this view will become apparent later.[42]

Edwardes's work stressed the need for non-interference in local custom. It proclaimed that 'benevolent despotism is the best of all governments', and reinforced the public school ideal of Political officers as sent 'forth beyond our boundaries to be a pioneer of Christian civilisation'. Both were views the Tibet cadre were to have little argument with at least until the 1940s.[43]

While Lyall and Edwardes provide a theoretical framework to British rule, the ideal of a Political officer emerges most strongly in Thornton's book. This is a hagiography of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Robert Sandeman, Chief Commissioner of Baluchistan from 1877 to 1892. According to Thornton, Sandeman displayed just the qualities desired by school and empire, 'energy, perseverance...and a strong sense of duty'; free of debt, but hospitable and generous, he was keen on sports and 'no self-seeker'. Other qualities of Sandeman were described which trainee officers could recognise as a practical guide to success on the frontier. Sandeman was 'no favourite with officials....In important matters, he rarely accepted an official negative as final'. He apparently delayed a telegram postponing an assault, an action described in approving tones, and crossed the frontier without permission. but, as the trip was a success, the 'irregularity was condoned'.

Both Lyall and Lord Curzon contributed to Thornton's book. Lyall approvingly observes that Sandeman. 'continually discovered excellent reasons for advancing...and annexing fresh territory'. The ultimate seal of approval was Curzon's support for Sandeman's 'spirit of somewhat greater independence of central Government than a rigid officialism either encourages, or readily condones'. Trainee Political officers reading this book could be left in little doubt that bold action advancing British interests or frontiers was what the Politicals required, whatever their duty might be defined as for public consumption. Such action, even if irregular, would advance an individual officer's career far more than would devotion to rules and routine.[44]

There are numerous examples of the Tibet cadre following Sandeman's examples in the

early years of the British presence in Tibet; O'Connor made his name by an unauthorised border crossing, Younghusband almost certainly delayed a telegram long enough to allow the Swedish explorer, Sven Hedin, to cross into Tibet, and White and Bailey were notoriously tardy in their paperwork. The early Trade Agents, given the unsettled conditions on the frontier which made for potential expansion, all 'continually discovered excellent reasons for advancing' into the Tibetan hinterland.[45] We can, therefore, conclude that the books read in their youth, or during their training, exerted a direct, powerful influence on the cadre, an influence not emphasised in previous studies of the imperial services.

In addition to reading those texts required to pass departmental examinations, officers naturally read other specialist works on the empire in general and on their specific area of service. One particularly influential book was *The Defence of India*, a confidential report by Sir Charles Macgregor, Quartermaster-General of the Indian Army, which emphasised the Russian threat to India. This work was a great influence on the 'forward school'. Younghusband for example, studied it closely and it confirmed his own views on the need to combat Russian expansion.[46]

Ambitious cadre officers read as much as they could on Tibet. Williamson's wife recalled his study 'lined with books in which...travellers described their abortive attempts to enter the forbidden city'. Bell listed 76 books on Tibet and its neighbours among his collection.[47] Libraries were started in the Gangtok and Gyantse posts to encourage this reading. Here specialised works on Tibet were kept, along with *Blackwoods* magazine (in which most articles were by colonial officers), the *Statesman*, and *The Times* (which co-operated closely with the Government of India). Many of the books were written by former cadre officers (in particular Sir Charles Bell), and they were closely studied by serving officers.[48] Hopkinson, for example, had all of Bell's books with him when he visited Lhasa in 1945, and had thoroughly absorbed their contents.[49]

Officers thus studied Tibet both by personal choice and as a part of their duty. Many of the texts they read were by other members of the cadre, or their predecessors, the Government of India officers who had crossed into Tibet in the 1890s. It is significant that the succession of officers read many of the same books as their predecessors, for these books reinforced a particular, imperial, view of Tibet. But these books were all products of the Victorian age of imperial expansion. The ideals promoted by these writings were the products of an earlier age, and their message became an increasingly outdated one. Improved communication, increasing centralisation of government, and a changing climate of opinion all acted against the fulfillment of the ideals promoted by these works, yet through these texts the ideals remained with the frontiersmen into a later age.

## **SECTION 1.5: - ENTRY INTO THE TIBET CADRE**

The commonest reason for an ICS or Indian Army officer's seeking to join the Politicals was the desire for a more varied and interesting career. Finance was another factor, particularly for Indian Army officers, who were paid less than the ICS. It also appealed to the ambitious; Bailey 'realised that in these days nothing important happened in India itself. To get on one must learn about the neighbouring countries.'[50]

Entry into the Political Department was theoretically governed by certain rules. However, as Bailey noted, 'All the rules for entering [the] Political Department are made simply to keep out people they don't want.' In practice, the Politicals controlled their own intake of personnel, with selection governed by factors not covered in the written rules of admission. Thus while the specified age limit (under 26 for military entrants), was regularly used to exclude unwanted candidates, Fletcher was accepted when a year over age, and Macdonald was to have been admitted when he was over 50, (although in the event other factors prevented his admission).[51]

What then were the real criteria for admission into the Politicals? In correspondence with Arthur Hopkinson, an official in the Secretariat admitted that, 'we do attach considerable importance to a favourable report from an officer of the Political Department.'[52] Thus O'Connor and Bailey were chosen with backing from Younghusband, Hopkinson had the backing of O'Connor, and so on. Officers with other influential backing, such as Major P.C.Hailey, with a reference from his uncle, the Governor of the Punjab, Sir William Hailey, also stood a good chance of selection.[53]

Lieutenant-Colonel J.L.R.Weir's father, a Colonel in the IMS, solicited the backing of the Indian Foreign Secretary, Sir Louis Dane, for his son's candidature. Dane had once promised Weir that a pay cut 'would be counted unto me for righteousness'. Dane was asked by Colonel Weir IMS. if 'the counting might take the form of the admission of my boy into Political employ?'[54]

Russell (who was the fifth-generation of his family to serve in India), was perhaps idealistic when he wrote in a follow-up letter to his original unanswered application that 'I could perhaps get some influential backing but I would infinitely prefer to get in on my own merits and I believe the latter course would be appreciated.'[55] Entry into the Politicals was largely by patronage, and great weight was given to the claims of officers related to serving or former members of the Department. Those whose families had served in India, and who were born there, were considered better able to adjust to the local environment. The ideal officer sought was thus Indian born, and British educated.[56]

The selection of those raised in the Indian milieu and schooled in the empire's training-grounds in Britain acted as a means of ensuring that selected officers were of a similar mentality to their predecessors. The effects of this nepotism on the efficiency of the Politicals have been favourably judged by scholars.[57] But although the sample group is a small one, there was in the case of the Tibet cadre, little evidence that birth in India was an advantage. Six of the ten cadre officers who were born in India (or Persia), were appointed to the senior post in Sikkim, while six of the remaining 12 officers who were born outside India reached that position.

A distinctive feature of the senior officers in Tibet was the high proportion of them who were not actually members of the Political Department. Seven officers (White, MacDonald, Bell, Ludlow, Sherriff, Norbhu Dhondup, and Pemba Tsering) were not in the Politicals, (although Sherriff had been, but had resigned) while three others (Bailey, O'Connor and Major W.L.Campbell) were admitted retrospectively. This was because the Politicals recruited Tibetan specialists from outside the Department to serve in Tibet.

As a provincial government employee, Macdonald was not eligible for admission to the Department until a change of rules in 1921. Ironically, as the change was designed to encourage Indians into the Politicals, his application was opposed by one Secretariat official on the technicality that he was Anglo-Indian, not Indian.[58] Bell, despite the immense prestige he acquired, was not taken into the Political Department as his specialisation in Tibet would have made it difficult to promote him to positions elsewhere. However, officers with 'attached' status received all the benefits of Political employ, such as language allowance and pension, and identified fully with the aims and ethos of the Department. No difference is apparent between them and officers actually in the Politicals.[59]

In 1906, Secretary of State John Morley objected to the Politicals 'introducing officers from outside the department to fill particular posts', and the practice did decline thereafter, only to become common again in World War Two due to manpower shortages.[60] But the Viceroy always retained the power to choose *any* officer he wished, and every officer selected for the Politicals was personally approved by him. A vital part of the admission process was lunch at the Viceregal residence, where social abilities were closely monitored. These meetings were not necessarily always formal. Sherriff was posted to Lhasa after a interview with Lord Linlithgow which culminated in a catapult competition out of the Viceregal window.[61]

The 'attached status' officers were also usually interviewed by, or personally known to the Viceroy when they were appointed. This may suggest the Tibetan cadre felt an added sense of involvement and identity from this personal link with the head of the Government

of India.

Although a Political officer's selection was ultimately sanctioned by the Viceroy, selection was not immune from interference by Whitehall. The proposed choice of O'Connor as Political Officer Sikkim in 1908 was vetoed by Morley, who was totally opposed to O'Connor's aggressively 'forward' views and his unrestrained expression of them in reports. O'Connor had to wait another 12 years for a second chance at the post. There was a personal factor in this which may reflect Lord Morley's character as much as it illustrates the extent to which policy differences affected personal relations within the service. Vetoing O'Connor had been, Morley wrote later, 'a moment of pure wicked joy'.<sup>[62]</sup>

The personal involvement of serving officers and the Viceroy in the selection of the Tibet cadre was a deliberate policy aimed at ensuring a continuity of attitude and hence of policy. The Government of India considered that the success of the Political Department 'depended to a great extent on the training and wise disposal of a cadre of officers'.<sup>[63]</sup>

The Tibet cadre themselves emphasised the need to select suitable officers for specialised training in Tibetan affairs. As early as 1905, O'Connor recommended that Bailey relieve him while he was on leave, pointing out the 'extreme importance of training one or more young officers as experts in Tibetan affairs'.<sup>[64]</sup> The point continued to be made by successive officers. As late as 1948 Hopkinson reported that

For the maintenance and cultivation of friendly relations the first necessity is the careful selection of the agents..[and]..Along with this the training of a succession of officer-Cadets[sic] to form a future supply.<sup>[65]</sup>

In 1912, government agreed that

If we keep Gyantse as a training ground, we should generally have an officer who has sufficient experience of the Border and knowledge of the language to be appointed Political Agent[sic] Sikkim and Bhutan.<sup>[66]</sup>

This policy was adopted, and all of the officers who were appointed to the Sikkim post after White had previously served as Trade Agent Gyantse.

Because the selection and training of officers for service in Tibet was influenced by those already serving there, the influence of the Tibet cadre's founders, Curzon and Younghusband, remained strong throughout the period of British presence in Tibet. Curzon personally chose Younghusband to lead the Tibet Mission in 1903-04, knowing



that he would represent the interests of his patron. Younghusband in turn selected O'Connor and Bailey for service in Tibet. Thus even after Curzon's departure from India, officers who had supported, and benefited by, his policies, remained in Tibet. They in turn selected officers who would continue the policies they supported.[67]

Sir Charles Bell represented a slightly different, but none the less 'forward', line of succession. O'Connor was the choice of the 'forward school' to succeed White as Political Officer Sikkim in 1908, and Younghusband seems to have had doubts as to Bell's suitability for the post. However Bell soon gained the support of Curzon and Younghusband, for their initial differences were over means, not aims. (This can be most clearly seen in their combined efforts to attain a British representative at Lhasa, detailed in Chapter Five). Bell became the model officer for the Tibet cadre, inspiring future officers who followed his aims and methods, as will be seen.

#### **SECTION 1.6: - 'LEAN AND KEEN' ADMINISTRATORS**

Once an officer was accepted into the Political Department the Secretariat decided his postings. But the officers had a chance to express their preferences during their selection interview and, after their initial apprenticeship, their preferences were solicited by the Secretariat, who tried to fit them into posts they favoured. Officers tended to concentrate their careers either in the Indian Princely States, or in frontier and consulate work, although there was no formal barrier to movement between the two sections. 'Lean and keen for the frontier, fat and good natured men for the states' was the popular maxim.[68]

But suitability for the frontier was not enough to ensure that an officer would be suitable for the Tibet cadre. Although manpower shortages elsewhere meant that Frederick Mainprice's career in Tibet was a brief one, he was the perfect example of the 'lean and keen' frontier officer, efficient and hard-working, who nonetheless failed to fit the specific requirements of the Tibet cadre. Mainprice was of a new generation. he had driven overland to India in 1939 to join the ICS, but his sense of duty and moral standards reflected the ideal of an earlier age. Taking over at Gyantse after an unsettled period, he reorganised the local staff, several of whom were dismissed for corruption and inefficiency, and had the Agency cleaned and painted. Finding the system whereby presents received in the *Toshakhana* were priced 'at less than half their actual market value and are usually sold to the officers of the Agency', 'very immoral', he raised the valuation to 75 per cent.[69]

But while his performance was certainly up to the Political Department's ideal, Mainprice

was less than impressed by the Tibetans and their government (as will be seen in Chapter Six). An empathy with the Tibetans was a required characteristic of successful officers of the Tibet cadre, and, as he apparently lacked this, Mainprice's services were used elsewhere.

Many Political officers served a term in the Secretariat during their training. There they could arrange their own postings, and two officers, Gould and Major Ken Saker, volunteered to serve in Tibet when a vacancy arose there during their term at headquarters.[70] In the Secretariat, the officers learnt how to write reports in the concise, detached style favoured by government. More importantly they learned 'how to fight official battles'.[71]

Early cadre officers lacked this political skill, a weakness which had significant effects on O'Connor's career, and hence the policies he favoured. O'Connor regularly upset the Secretariat with his intemperate writings. His more important reports were forwarded to Secretary of State Morley, as he was reminded after describing one decision as 'an abject lesson to all observers on the feebleness of our policy'. Although he was allowed to rewrite that particular report, O'Connor's outspokenness was, as noted, a major factor in Morley's vetoing his promotion to Political Officer Sikkim.[72]

Ian Copland has argued, in the Indian context, that Political officers were weak in administrative skills, and this was true, at least of the early cadre officers. White, for example, took four months to pass one report from Gyantse to his government.[73] But the Tibet cadre placed more emphasis on the importance of political skills, after early failures in this area. Younghusband considered that lack of such skills had prevented the 'forward school' plan to annex the Chumbi Valley from coming to fruition. 'Perhaps we might still have been in the Chumbi Valley if I had known better how to handle Government', he wrote, and he urged Bailey to learn to present a case to government 'in such a way as to ruffle as few as possible of their prejudices and enlist as many as possible of their sympathies'.[74]

Bell, as will be shown in Chapters Four and Five, was a master of political infighting, and his successors followed his lead. Time in the Secretariat taught Gould that 'there was usually somebody...whose opinion was liable to be decisive in a particular matter'. Successful officers learnt how to influence these decision makers, knowing that, if their recommendations were 'reasonable, and fought for until they were granted...each point gained made it easier to win the next one'.[75] This understanding of the importance of political skills was to be an important weapon in the Tibet cadre's struggles to influence policy.

## **SECTION 1.7: - THE QUESTION OF LENGTH OF SERVICE**

Copland has also argued that the Government of India, fearing its officers would become too partial to their host states, posted its officers to new positions too frequently. This 'usually had a deleterious effect on the influence exerted by government in the states concerned'. Similarly Margaret Ewing has concluded that, in the ICS, postings were too frequent, and this resulted in too much power resting in the hands of local subordinates.[76]

As will be seen in Chapter Six, some British 'other ranks' spent most of their careers in Tibet, but the longest tenures in Political Department posts in Tibet were terms served by the local-born officers Macdonald and Norbhu Dhondup, and officers attached to the Political Department, such as White and Bell. This was because the career structure of the Political Department required that its officers were regularly relocated to new postings. The longest term served by a member of the Politicals was Gould's term at Sikkim from 1935-45, which was due to wartime shortages of manpower.[77]

There were advantages to long postings in one state. Expertise, particularly in language, naturally increased, and an officer's personal relations with local peoples generally improved with time. The Tibetans disliked frequent changes of British personnel as they attached a great deal of significance to their relations with individual British officers, continuing to seek their advice after they retired. An example of this came in 1910, when the Panchen Lama sought to contact O'Connor, then serving in Mashad. The Lama sent a small group of men to Persia, bearing bags of gold dust and a letter requesting O'Connor's assistance in obtaining British aid. Despite speaking only Tibetan, they managed to reach Southern Persia before being repatriated by the British consul. with assurances that their message would be forwarded to O'Connor.[78]

There were four main arguments against lengthy terms of service in Tibet. A general staleness could reduce an officer's effectiveness, while frequent postings 'removed the temptation of corruption'. [79] There was also a danger that the long-serving officer would form too close an attachment to the state to function with the necessary detachment. Most important, however, was the officer's own concern with career opportunities; they sought transfers to gain promotion.[80]

Ultimately the policy adopted was one of compromise. Politicals were able to specialise, without fear of being pigeonholed into a single posting. There were always local experts to advise an officer and to provide continuity at a post, and the officers made their successors aware of the reliability, or otherwise, of these local experts, with their advice being

perceived accordingly.[81] Copland is correct in perceiving a loss of influence due to frequent postings - this was inevitable - but he ignores the human factor, that individuals sought career advancement through a variety of postings, and only those individuals with a particular attachment to a place sought to remain there for long periods. Thus the lengthy periods served in Tibet by Bell, Macdonald, Gould and Richardson are themselves indicators of these officers' attachment to service there.

### **SECTION 1.8: - 'GENERALISTS', 'SPECIALISTS' AND RECLUSES**

A 'generalist' tradition, developed from the 'amateur ideal' inculcated in the public schools, has been seen as an important part of the imperial ethos, but of the 22 Tibet cadre officers, 14 or 15 might be described as Tibetan specialists. (The exceptions are those post-1927 Gyantse Trade Agents who served single terms in Tibet, with the possible exception of Major Ken Saker). While O'Connor, Campbell, Saker and Weir all acquired expertise in other areas in addition to Tibet, and White is now more associated with Sikkim, this still means that at least half of the Tibetan cadre were specialists.

This supports previous findings that by the late 19th century an expert knowledge of local cultures and conditions was seen as essential for decision-making by government.[82] 'Generalists', such as Weir, were still valued in the 20th century, but the increasing realisation that policies had differing effects in different regions meant that the Government of India needed its 'men on the spot' to become experts in the particular culture in which they operated.

This need for expertise led to another distinguishing characteristic of the Tibet cadre. Those officers who studied the Tibetan language, culture and customs, progressed beyond the usual working knowledge acquired by Politicals in any state, to produce genuine scholarship. Most of those who reached the position of Political Officer Sikkim, or Head of Mission Lhasa, may be seen as distinguished by this quality. While later research has naturally reduced the value of some of their earlier works, their writings remain essential references today. In particular, Richardson and Bell established themselves as Tibetologists. This scholarly character manifested in various other ways - with Bell a taste for classical Greek writings (Gould and Hopkinson also read the New Testament in Greek.) Only Williamson and Hopkinson, who died before they could record their knowledge, and Weir, 'a scholar' but perhaps too modest to publish, failed to leave a record for the future.[83]

This finding provides a contrast with that of Copland, who criticised the Politicals as 'a



byword for intellectual mediocrity'. However, other studies of the ICS, whose officers made up one third of the Political's intake, have concluded that its officers were intellectuals.[84] The Indian Army Politicals may have had a less well-developed intellect, but, while intellectual ability is not recorded as being high on the list of the Political Department's requirements, Copland's judgment cannot be applied to the Tibet cadre.

Along with scholarship, another quality emerges. O'Connor was described as 'having a touch of the recluse',[85] and it appears that this quality can be ascribed to a number of the cadre, particularly in their early, bachelor years. Service in the Politicals naturally appealed to those attracted to the more remote locations. While by education and background well-trained in contemporary social skills, many officers were happiest with the simplicity of life in the wide-open spaces of Central Asia. This is most obvious in the case of Ludlow, who clearly favoured 'the stony bridle path in preference to the tarred road'. After his first posting as a schoolteacher in Gyantse in 1923-26, he dreaded 'the hurry and hustle of the west after the hinterlands of Tibet'. His second posting there was in 1942 as Head of Mission Lhasa, but that involved too much socialising for his taste, and he was not unhappy to leave.[86]

Williamson and Sherriff, who both served in the Kashgar Consulate, the most remote posting of the Government of India, were others who clearly had 'a touch of the recluse', and this quality emerges, clearly or implicitly, in most of the cadre officers. A fondness for separation from western society, and in some cases any society, was a significant element of their mentality, and one which predisposed them to the isolation of Tibet.[87]

### **SECTION 1.9: - POSTINGS PREFERENCES**

We have noted that the Political Department solicited officer's posting preferences. While there can be no doubt that the officers chosen from outside the Politicals wanted to serve in Tibet.[88] a regular Political officer's preferences might lie elsewhere. Macdonald recalled that

I have known men posted to the Agencies who did nothing but bemoan their luck in being stationed in such an out-of-the-way place, and who passed most of their time devising some scheme which would obtain them a transfer. Others did all they could to get an extension of their term of duty.[89]

As MacDonald's Political contemporaries had all sought service in Tibet, his comments must relate to escort and technical personnel, rather than Political. Even then the number of those who did not appreciate the posting was probably small. Several technical staff in MacDonald's time remained in Tibet for long periods, and later Escort Commanders such as Lieutenant-Colonel D.A.Walters and Captain Allen Robins greatly enjoyed Tibetan service. Captain Robert Grist was so keen to stay that he had Gyantse monks perform (unsuccessful) ceremonies aimed at ensuring that his term would be extended. While a sense of adventure may have initially attracted many of the technical staff to Tibet, it appears that the Tibet cadre, or the Tibetan environment, instilled an enthusiasm for Tibet in most of the men who served there.[90]

Several letters indicating Political officers' postings preferences are on file in the National Archives of India. Captain D.R.Smith, whose Tibetan career was to be ruined by his failure to adapt to the altitude, had specifically asked for Gyantse. Williamson, who was 'keenly interested in Central Asia and Tibet', Bailey, and Gould (in 1912), all sought a post in Tibet. Gould asked for 'any frontier' if no Tibet post was available, but by 1931 he showed more concern with career advancement (although at that time Weir and Williamson appeared to have a monopoly on the Gangtok post), wanting a post which would 'tend to qualify me for...a senior post either in Baluchistan or the Indian States'.[91]

Career prospects were an important factor in a Political officer's preferences. For example Weir accepted the post of Political Officer Sikkim, only 'on the understanding that by doing so I would not forfeit my chances of getting a Residency'.[92] Another example is the case of Hopkinson who, in 1928, was getting married, and sought a post such as Mysore or Kashmir, suitable for a couple. But he recalled how happy he had been in his postings in Chitral and Gyantse, and noted how he hoped with seniority to aspire to Gangtok or Kabul.[93]

Two officers whose careers in Tibet were less than successful, Lieutenant-Colonels H.G.Rivett-Carnac and M.C. Sinclair, favoured service in the Indian states, while two who were to find continued service in Tibet not to their liking, Russell and Major Keith Battye, favoured the Persian Gulf and Baluchistan respectively. This suggests that officers in Tibet were more successful if they wanted to serve there, and that officers who favoured service in the Indian States were less likely to succeed on the frontier.

The Tibet cadre themselves certainly believed that officers suited to service in the Indian Princely States would not necessarily succeed in Tibet. Bailey's original opinion of Bell was that 'he would possibly be alright in an Indian district but is not a man for the frontier'. Bell himself wrote that 'A man, efficient in administrative work in India...is not always the best for Tibet', and Hopkinson repeated this 'truism uttered by Bell' in his final report on

Tibet.[94]

The cadre therefore drew a distinction between service in India and service in Tibet, which was consistent with their understanding both of the frontier as a zone requiring particular personal qualities from those who served there, and of Tibet as a unit separate from its surrounding states. Administration in India was associated with bureaucracy, service on the frontier meant freedom of action, and could not, they believed, be bound by 'rules and regulations framed to meet...Indian conditions'. If the cadre were to influence the Tibetans they needed officers capable of 'getting on well' with them; officers with 'sympathy' for the Tibetans.[95]

There was, however, a significant element of expediency in postings to Tibet. While this was particularly the case with Agency supporting staff, the Politicals also faced problems with wartime shortages of men, officers going on leave, getting married, falling ill, or being deputed on special missions, such as Bailey's survey mission in Assam in 1913, which precluded his return to Gyantse.[96] Last-minute changes of posting were commonplace. Richardson was sent to Lhasa instead of Kashgar in 1945, while Mainprice was diverted from Gangtok to Lohit (Assam) ten days after his first appointment as Trade Agent Gyantse in 1943.[97]

Vacancies were often filled in the early years by doubling up control of the Gyantse and Yatung Agencies, and between 1918 and 1936 they were under joint command. Due to the distance between them, this inevitably led to one or other position being neglected, although it was popular with the Agents concerned as, in addition to increased prestige with the Tibetans and Chinese, they received 300 rupees a month extra pay.[98] A more successful alternative seems to have been appointing either the Medical Officer (as was done in 1909 and 1926), or the Escort Commander (in 1929 and on 6 occasions in the 1940s), as Acting Trade Agent Gyantse.

Vacancies were usually filled by officers recommended by the Political Officer Sikkim, whose final approval was sought for every officer posted to Tibet.[99] Thus just as a recommendation from a Political was virtually a requirement to enter the Department, so too did service in Tibet usually require a 'patron'. There are indications that several officers sought a posting in Tibet without success due to lack of support from within the Tibetan cadre.[100]

While the lower postings were, to an extent, dependent on availability and chance, careful consideration was given to the appointment of the Political Officer Sikkim, with officers earmarked for that position some time in advance. For career-minded officers with an interest in Tibet, but an eye on their pension, the Sikkim post offered a stepping stone to a higher position, and candidates such as Williamson actively sought the appointment.[101]

On occasion, cadre officers actively co-operated to ensure that a vacancy was filled by an officer of their choice. For example in 1921, O'Connor took over briefly as Political Officer Sikkim while awaiting a posting as British Envoy to the Court of Nepal. O'Connor advised Bailey of his plans, suggesting he apply for the Sikkim post. Bailey who was on leave, then advised the Government of India that he wanted to be posted to Sikkim on his return, failing which he wanted to extend his leave until the position was vacant. O'Connor was then forced to cut short his stay in Gangtok to return to England due to his mother's illness, and Macdonald relieved for three months as Political Officer Sikkim, (in addition to his holding the posts of Trade Agent at both Yatung and Gyantse). Although Foreign Secretary J.B.Wood considered he was 'somewhat junior for the post', Bailey was the candidate most experienced in Tibetan affairs, and he was appointed. When the Kathmandhu incumbent retired, O'Connor's complicated plan succeeded and he returned to take over there in October 1921.[102]

### **SECTION 1.10: - FAILURES**

Among the 35 officers who served at Gangtok, Lhasa and Gyantse, there were a number who failed to suit the requirements of the Tibet cadre. It is instructive to examine the reasons why some officers failed to make a success of their careers there, in order to show qualities which were possessed by the successful. Firstly they had to be physically fit. After Smith was found medically unfit for service at altitude, medical examinations were introduced before an officer was posted to Tibet. Despite this a Major Laughton fell ill at Gangtok en route to Tibet in 1940, and his replacement, Sinclair, also suffered badly from altitude and returned early to India.[103]

Only one of the Sikkim Political Officers can be definitely adjudged a failure. Even in recent publications White's services in Sikkim are lauded, but this reputation was largely created by his own 'extremely self-laudatory' account of his time there.[104] White had been originally appointed to Sikkim when it was of only minor importance, and Curzon was initially attracted by White's 'forward' views on Tibet. But when the region gained prominence during the Curzon Viceroyalty, White's faults soon became apparent, and, although he was the obvious candidate to lead a mission to Lhasa, Curzon preferred Younghusband.

White was plainly out of his depth in Tibetan affairs, and unable to relate to the Tibetans. (He was also responsible for the policy of importing Nepalese labour into Sikkim and Bhutan, with serious consequences apparent today.) By the time of the Younghusband



expedition, White's opinions were largely disregarded by his government, who corresponded directly with the highly-rated O'Connor in Gyantse. White managed to avoid being dismissed despite being censured five times between 1904 and 1908. The most serious of these matters concerned White's overpaying himself 500 rupees a month in 1904-06, but despite his government's doubts as to his '*bona fides*' they were careful to word their refusal to extend his term 'so his not to hurt his feelings', apparently in consideration of his long service in an isolated post.[105]

There were several failures among the Gyantse Trade Agents. Captain D.G.Thornburgh was one officer found 'quite unsuited to the job', apparently due to his failure to relate to the Tibetans, while Rivett-Carnac was more concerned to be with his wife and young children in India than with service in Tibet. He was described privately by Weir as 'utterly useless' and 'more of an uxorious horticulturalist than a working political officer'. After Rivett-Carnac was transferred, the collapse of a private bank established in Gyantse with Government of India assistance revealed that he had borrowed 3,000 rupees from the bank and made no attempt to repay it. To make matters worse, he had previously filed a report clearing the bank of allegations of cheating the government. When it collapsed, the allegations were shown to be true. Rivett-Carnac's failures in Tibet were followed by very unfavourable reports from his subsequent postings, and, when further unpaid debts were revealed, he was forced to retire.[106]

Fletcher, though certainly the 'lean and keen' type favoured for the frontier, fell out with local Tibetan officials over hunting and fishing trips on which he demanded *ula*, the free transport to which Tibetan officials and guests on official duties were entitled.[107] Others, such as Russell, simply found life in Tibet was not to their taste, or regarded it as just another, albeit interesting, posting in a long career. They had no enthusiasm for studying Tibet, and hence for them it could be 'excessively tedious'.[108]

Mainprice reported that Gould was pleased to have an ICS trained officer at Gyantse after the three previous ex-Army Politicals had failed to make a success of the post. While a tension between ex-ICS Politicals and those taken from the Indian Army has been noted by many previous studies, this is the only reference I have seen to it in the Tibetan context. As Gould got on well with Escort Commander Robins, the subsequent Acting Trade Agent in 1945-46, it appears any such prejudice was based more on personal relations than wider bias. However it is apparent that the failures were all, with the exception of White, ex-Indian Army Politicals, and we may provisionally suggest that some types of character suited for military employ were unsuited to Tibet.[109]

Thus from those officers who failed to satisfy the requirements of the Tibet cadre, we can see several factors which were required of successful members. An officer such as Rivett-

Carnac falling by the wayside is not, in itself, significant, other than in showing that the system quietly removed its failures. More important was his desire to be with his family; successful officers, and their wives, always put duty first. The extreme example of this being Williamson, who, as will be seen in Chapter Five, knew that his last journey to Lhasa posed a serious risk to his health, but chose to go, a decision his wife accepted.[110] Ability to live at high altitude was essential, and so too was the ability to get on well with Tibetans of all classes. Obviously an interest in the country assisted in gaining this empathy, and those without that interest, or who found Tibetan society restricting, did not succeed.

### **SECTION 1.11: - RETIRED OFFICERS**

An indicator of the successful cadre officers' deep involvement in their role was their inability to detach themselves from Tibetan affairs after their departure. Most of the Sikkim Political Officers either sought to return to the frontier in some capacity, or devoted a significant part of their retirement to the Tibetan cause.

Bell and MacDonald both remained closely involved in Tibetan affairs. MacDonald made several attempts in the 1930s and '40s to return to Tibet in an official capacity, and attempted to persuade Bell to return and lead another mission to Lhasa. MacDonald was involved in a number of business enterprises on the frontier, and his Kalimpong hotel was a centre of Tibetan affairs there.[111]

O'Connor frequently gave advice on Tibetan matters to both the Tibetan and British Governments, and, after attempting a new career in business, worked as tour guide on the frontier. Bailey, posted to a Central Indian Princely State after leaving Sikkim, attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the Political Department to return him to the frontier. Gould extended his term of service on the frontier until he was forced to retire on medical grounds, and he and Richardson both supported the Tibetan cause in retirement. The lure of Tibet also affected a number of those who served there in lesser capacities, Escort Officers, Captain Perry and Captain Parker, and Telegraph Sergeants Lee and Martin were among those who applied to live in Tibet.[112]

These officers' continuing involvement in Tibetan affairs created problems for their successors. Most handovers in the Gangtok Residency were accompanied by personal difficulties between the officers concerned (or their wives), although with time the successors came to realise 'how it nearly broke your heart to leave Sikkim', and how there were 'foolish misunderstandings on both sides'. [113]

Bell posed a big problem for his successors. As will be seen in Chapter Seven, in retirement he pursued an independent line, refusing to submit his last three books for censorship or to allow the government to read his correspondence with the Dalai Lama. He continued to advise the Tibetans, and his successors naturally feared that with Bell's high status in Lhasa his advice was more valued than their own. Such was the prestige Bell acquired that the Tibetans continued to view him as having great influence at the highest levels of British policy making. This view was consistent with their own political system, in which retirement from government service did not necessarily mean the end of an individual's influence.[114]

Weir was especially worried when Bell planned a visit to Tibet in 1932, fearing that if Bell was in Lhasa he, or any any other Political Officer, would be 'considered [a] nonentity'. When Williamson was preparing to visit Lhasa in 1935, Foreign Secretary Olaf Caroe advised him to make it clear to the Tibetans that Bell no longer had any official status. Williamson requested a statement to this effect in writing from the Government of India, fearing that otherwise the Tibetans would not believe him.[115]

#### **SECTION 1.12: - 'IN THE MOULD'**

Robert Ford, who served as a Radio Officer in Lhasa and Eastern Tibet before being captured by the invading Chinese in 1950, agreed that by selecting and training suitable successors in their own likeness, the Tibet cadre was creating a 'mould', a distinctive type of officer who served in Tibet. The distinction was recognised at the time. Some thought 'they've all got something odd about them', while Ford's 'insider' view was that 'they've all got something special about them'. [116]

Ford saw a subdivision into 'military animals' and 'political animals', with the implication that the latter were more involved with Tibet, and hence more successful there. As he noted, however, the distinction cannot be applied strictly in military versus civil terms. Sherriff, Bailey, and to an extent O'Connor, although from military backgrounds, were, like Gould and Hopkinson, 'in the mould'. [117]

Certainly many of the military Politicals, Escort Commanders, and particularly the Medical Officers, were keenly interested in Tibet. Officers like Saker, Robins, Kennedy and Major J.Guthrie were sympathetic to the Tibetans' cause, and enjoyed their time in Tibet. They too felt, like Mrs Saker, who spent more time in Gyantse than any other European woman, that 'it was special, a great experience...a privilege to be there'. But they had careers which had to develop elsewhere, and so their involvement was more limited.

whereas those 'in the mould' devoted much of their life to Tibet.[118]

This is not to suggest that the officers themselves necessarily got on personally. While O'Connor and Bailey, or Ludlow and Sherriff, were obviously close friends, there were actually few opportunities for officers to meet, and relations were often 'fairly superficial'.[119] They appear to have been judged by their fellow officers mainly on the basis of their reputation, and the views they expressed in their reports.

There was certainly ill-feeling between some individuals on occasions. Altitude contributed to shortness of temper, and those stationed together in isolated posts such as Lhasa and Gyantse could find 'pressures built up and nerves became frayed'.[120] Obvious problems could arise when an officer played host to his superior, the Political Officer Sikkim, for long periods.[121] But evidence of such ill-feeling does not appear in the published works of the Politicals, for it was an unwritten part of their code, deriving from the public school code of 'no snitching', that such disputes were not aired in public. This is consistent with the finding that these types of memoirs

are quintessentially about community solidarity. The authors ignore or pass over issues of dissension and conflict while emphasising individual attributes such as strength, hard work, self-reliance, humour and communal attributes.[122]

Thus the only specific published remarks over personal differences are those by a female observer, Williamson's widow, although there are frequent references to ill-feeling in diaries or personal correspondence.[123]

For those 'in the mould', however, such differences were of little consequence in the long term, and service in Tibet had special attractions apart from the unique culture and environment. There were none of the communal troubles increasingly common in India, no caste barriers to contact with the local people, and great independence for the officers.[124] Those 'in the mould' whether posted to Tibet by choice or circumstance, found it congenial, immersed themselves in various aspects of its culture, and acquired an expertise which they communicated through their later publications.[125]

### **SECTION 1.13: - THE LEGEND OF THE FRONTIER**

The encounter between Britain and Tibet tended to be expressed in mythological terms.

due to its location outside of normal British imperial codes of meaning. Just as the frontiers of India were the setting for much of India's indigenous mythology, so they were the setting for a powerful mythology of empire expressed in novels such as Kipling's *Kim* and Political Department textbooks such as Thornton's *Sir Robert Sandeman*. Myth and legend generally require a placement outside normal constraints of time and space. Therefore, it was no coincidence that the frontier, the zone with the weakest area of definition and administration, was the strongest realm of Indian indigenous and imperial myth.

Within British imperial society, the men who served on the frontiers became part of a mythology of empire which was brought out in newspapers and imperial memoirs, and in popular books and magazines ('Boys Own Paper', for example). These imperial frontier legends can be used as a historical source, because they provide a valuable perspective on the understanding of the frontiersman's experience by his society, and tell us much about the character of these officers, their sense of place, identity, and the ethos in which they functioned.[126]

The frontiersman of legend was portrayed as strong and self-reliant, courageous, upright and noble; a pioneer of European civilisation. He gained the trust and respect of the 'unruly' indigenous peoples, and, through individual initiative and friendship with individuals or elements of the local society, imposed (whether through military or diplomatic action) the British concept of good order and civilisation, to the greater benefit of all. His efforts almost invariably resulted in the expansion of British imperial authority. These qualities of the frontiersman of legend thus mirror the qualities sought in recruits to the Political Department. The ideal was the legend.

The heroes in this discourse, officers such as Lugard, Rhodes and Sandeman, took on legendary status, and there were also martyrs, such as General Gordon and Captain Cavignari. As Peter Bishop states, 'Tales of explorers' hardships and deaths were utterly essential for the Victorian British...imaginative associations with the region.'[127]

In India, this imperial mythology developed most strongly on the North-West Frontier in the 19th century, but it included other mythical and legendary elements of regional traditions, and service traditions such as those concerning the Indian Politicals. There was a broad similarity among the various Indian regional and service traditions, with each tradition based on the service's fundamental purpose, upon which variations were developed. The Tibet cadre sought to exclude Russian and Chinese influence from India, whereas the Punjab tradition, as L.D.Wurgaft has shown, was based on a desire 'to create and preserve a stable rural base',[128]

Wurgaft's evocation of the 'Punjab style' is very similar to the ethos of the Tibet cadre, in that it was characterised by an idealised concept of

heroic action, the exercise of unlimited power... far from the red tape of settled areas...an ideology of action and independence as the primary instruments of imperial control'.[129]

Cadre officers had absorbed imperial frontier legends in their youth, through magazines such as *Boys Own Paper*, *Magnet* or *Gem*, in which 'it is always taken for granted that adventures only happen at the ends of the earth'.[130] As we have seen in the case of Bailey, those officers with family connections to India also absorbed the imperial ethos, with its inherent heroic mythology, at home. The cadre were thus predisposed to service in the frontier zone that was the setting for the heroes of empire.

In the 20th century, when the mythology of empire spread to embrace the new Tibetan frontier, the element of competition with Russia meant that the Tibet cadre were drawn into the mythology of the "Great Game", the struggle between Russian and British agents for control of Central Asia and the passes into India. The cadre legends were most clearly located in that context, and were given enhanced mystique by association with the Tibet of mystical renown.

The Tibet cadre's 'founding fathers', Curzon and Younghusband, were role models for would-be 'Great Gamers'. They were both legendary figures in the empire following their 19th century exploits in Russian and Chinese Central Asia, and Younghusband was already a famous 'Great Gamer' when he led the mission to Lhasa. His proteges, O'Connor and Bailey (as will be seen in Chapter Four), saw their role as continuing the traditions which Younghusband established.[131]

The cadre officer's placement in legend may also be seen to derive from their career's resemblance to a primary archetypal myth; 'the myth of the return'. In this myth, the hero's quest takes him out of his own society, and, with the assistance of an intermediary, into another culture. This hero then returns to his own society, having gained an object, which may be seen as a symbol of the knowledge gained through 'crossing over' and 'returning' (a concept examined in more detail in Chapter Eight).[132] Those officers who 'crossed over' to Tibetan society and who 'returned' to their own could be perceived in those mythological terms.

The Tibet cadre were imperial administrators, schooled in the ideals of positivist enquiry, and they took a pragmatic approach to their duty, as will be seen. Ultimately they placed their duty to protect the security of India's northern border, and serve the interests of the Government of India, above any consideration for the Tibetans. To describe them as mystics would be an obvious misconception. But Younghusband established an ethos in

which a place in imperial mythology was a part of the cadre's tradition and prestige, and an interest in the metaphysical was regarded as being an acceptable indication of intellect and vision.

In the concluding pages of his book *India and Tibet*, Younghusband attributes the source of the British 'forward' policy in Tibet, not to individual, geo-political, or economic causes, but to a 'great world-force, energizing through Nature'. Younghusband explains this "ubiquitous spirituality" at some length, as being the force which guides the affairs of men, and which had guided the British to Tibet. Characteristically, he concluded that this force in the Tibetan sphere would be best served by a British Agent in Lhasa. But Younghusband provided a precedent for his successors to exist in collusion with, not opposition to, Tibet's mystical image.[133]

The extent to which the cadre were drawn into the Tibetan spiritual milieu in which they were located, provides another example of the extent to which the imperial nations' 'men on the spot' were influenced by the host society. Long periods living in a spiritually-orientated society had its effect. Just as imperial legends became a part of the cadre officer's self-image, so too did an inclination to spiritual speculation become acceptable.

#### **SECTION 1.14: - TRADITION, IMAGE AND HISTORY**

David Potter has defined an administrative tradition as having two features; (1) content, consisting of values, norms and structure, and (2) a process of reproduction. If the features continue over three generations it may be defined as a continuing tradition, and Potter has isolated three factors as being necessary for the reproduction of a tradition; (a) obtaining similar successors, (b) shaping them to the tradition, and, (c) support from the political leadership.[134]

The traditions of the Tibet cadre, and the process of their reproduction among succeeding generations of officers, are consistent with Potter's definition. Although the British Tibet cadre lasted for less than fifty years, there were at least four generations of officers within that period; (1) the 'Curzon-Younghusband-O'Connor' era in which British control of Tibet was a realistic possibility; (2) the Bell and Macdonald period culminating in their visit to Lhasa; (3) the Bailey-Weir-Williamson era of Lhasa visits; and (4) the era after the establishment of a position at Lhasa, dominated by Gould, Richardson and Hopkinson.

A fifth generation may also be identified, that of their Indian successors. There was 'no substantial change in the ambience' of the Tibet cadre after the departure of the British, although the 'Imperial style' and the concern with 'preserving their imperial distinctness'

were dropped.[135] Certainly key elements of the tradition, such as location, method, readings, and the ideal of their predecessors, were all passed on to the new generation of Indian officers. We may, therefore, define the cadre as maintaining the key elements of an administrative tradition.

Previous studies of administrative traditions within British India have described a 'Punjab style' (Wurgaft) or a 'service code' (Ewing), a collective ethos maintained through selection and training, which bear many similarities with the distinctive group identity passed on in the traditions of the Tibet cadre. But these studies have adopted a more critical perspective on their subject groups than I have found necessary. Wurgaft has described the 'Punjab style' as a briefly successful one which became part of an imperial mythology that isolated the British from the complex realities of their environment. Ewing found ICS officers were 'hard headed realists who looked upon their time in India as a job and not a mission', a finding consistent with Bradford Spangenberg's criticism of ICS officers as 'aspiring to succeed in India primarily in order to provide for a comfortable retirement in England'.[136]

But the cadre seem to have had a far more complex motivation, including disinterested elements. The Tibet cadre does not seem to have been dominated by careerists. Certainly there was ambition, but there was also a strong sense of 'mission' (which Ewing found lacking in the ICS officers whom she interviewed), that emerges clearly throughout the period under consideration. Thus even ambitious officers promoted to other positions, such as O'Connor, continued to work for what they saw as the benefit of the Tibetans. This continued even after the departure of the British from India and Tibet.

Copland's study of the Political Department is most critical. It describes an 'intellectually second-rate' service, poorly trained in administrative skills, 'dominated by upright but slow-thinking and extremely unimaginative officers', their claimed efficiency 'a mere facade'.[137] As noted, Copland's criticisms of lack of intellect and administrative skills do not, from my analysis, apply to the Tibet cadre.

These critical studies do provide a balance to what Potter has called 'an active myth-making'.[138] those works, many by former imperial servants, which promote a romantically positive view of the imperial services and their officers. This may be compared with the promotion of a similar myth in recent times: that American Government policy and will failed in Vietnam, but the men who served there did not. There is however, a strong element of truth in this type of myth as it applies to the cadre. As will be seen, most cadre officers did their best to strengthen Tibet, albeit under British supervision, but the Tibetan cause was of little concern to Whitehall after World War One, and of no concern at all after World War Two. Thus the Tibetans were abandoned to their fate.



despite the efforts of the 'men on the spot'.

My concern here is to analyse the cadre through understanding their mentality, taking the perspective from the 'inside', rather than attempting to deconstruct their image from the 'outside'. This 'insider view', enhanced by the use of participant oral sources, does not produce an uncritical image, but one which represents a history recognisable as 'true' by the two main participants closest to events, the Tibetans and the Tibet cadre. Naturally it reflects the Anglo-Tibetan perspective of the sources, but as Edward Shils observes, traditions are defined by the insiders, not the observers.[139]

Judged by their own standards, rather than by the outcome of their policies, (a matter which was in the hands of higher government), the Tibet cadre were a success. While Copland's conclusions of course apply to a different field than my own, his 'outsider' approach may in itself tend to produce more critical findings, which do not necessarily represent history as seen by the participants, and thus do not enable us to understand the mentality of the period.

Therefore, analysing the accuracy of the cadre's image, and the extent to which the officers themselves lived up to this image, does little to assist understanding. The image was one created by the officers themselves; therefore it was largely self-descriptive. Officers who failed to live up to the image were not considered 'in the mould', and were not re-employed in Tibet. Those who remained there were naturally those who lived up to the image. Thus my concern is to describe the qualities of those 'in the mould' in order to understand their actions, rather than to deconstruct the image itself.

#### **SECTION 1.16: - PASSING ON TRADITIONS**

We have seen that the cadre's traditions were originally developed within existing imperial, and more specifically, Political Department traditions of frontier service, and the mythology and reality of the "Great Game". The character and exploits of Younghusband, and the support and ideology of Curzon and other 'forward school' figures such as MacGregor and Dane, provided the direction and much of its character. The traditions established by the early agents, direct disciples of Younghusband, were passed on throughout the 1904-47 period. Just as 'the first generation of frontiersmen in the Punjab had become legendary by the end of the 19th century',[140] so too had Younghusband and the founding officers of the Tibet cadre 30 years later, when they were seen as ideal types to emulate.

The cadre officers were aware of their legendary image; it was part of their identity. They

played a large part in creating it, and attempted to live up to it. One consequence of this was that their identification with 'forward' policies was an integral part of their sense of cadre identity as much as it was a reasoned analysis of potential means of protecting the security of India.

Although the romantic image of the Politicals has been criticised by scholars such as Copland and Wurgaft,[141] it was an important part of Political officers' own sense of identity and purpose. A certain amount of pride and self-confidence was usually an integral part of the ambition to attain the higher ranks of the Politicals. While the self-effacing Ludlow deplored the ego of some of his Political Department contemporaries,[142] Gould expressed this pride when he recalled that 'To a jealous outside world "a Political" might be a term of abuse. To us it was a term of glory.'[143]

The early officers such as Bell and Bailey, modest though they were by nature, learned the need for judicious self-promotion, and for obscuring their failures; this was a part of gaining both career advancement, and the advancement of the policies they favoured. Yet a fine line was drawn in the 'gentlemanly codes' they had learned in school, between quiet self-promotion and immodesty. This was defined by Bailey when he wrote of Sven Hedin, 'I think he did a great deal but it is a pity he did not let other people praise it instead of praising it himself.'[144]

To the Tibet cadre, the most important aspect of promoting their image was the maintenance of traditions within the cadre itself. Service traditions were deliberately passed on to newcomers by serving officers. While Younghusband and his proteges, O'Connor and Bailey, were more colourful figures, and hence featured more in the romantic mythology, the greatest influence on succeeding officers in Tibet was Sir Charles Bell. He was 'disposed to let a newcomer see things for himself and form his own conclusions',[145] but Weir, MacDonald, Williamson, Gould and Hopkinson all acknowledged a great debt to him, and their written work contains constant echoes of Bell's influence, both acknowledged and unconscious. These officers followed Bell in deliberately instilling their 'enthusiasm' and 'sense of mission' in their successors.[146]

Traditions were handed on within the cadre through the system whereby serving cadre officers selected promising individuals with an interest in Tibet, supervised their training, and instilled in them the history and traditions of the British presence there. For example, Ludlow describes how Bailey had taken he and another young officer and 'pointed out the old haunts of the mission in 1904-05[sic]'.[147] This was a deliberate policy, and the British sought to hand down these traditions to their Indian successors after 1947. Hopkinson wrote that he wanted

to get some Indians genuinely interested and sympathetic, who would help to continue the ideas on which British officers, in succession, had tried to work...and try to bring the Indians up to the right idea.[148]

Richardson too, hoped that he might encourage his successor to work 'along the right lines'.[149]

Officers naturally took an interest in the careers of those they had promoted; their own judgment would be considered at fault if their proteges failed. As Younghusband told Bailey's father, 'tell him [Bailey] to be sure and do me credit for I am responsible for him and I want any man I recommend to be a credit to me'.[150]

Most officers also solicited their predecessors' advice. For example, Bailey profited from O'Connor and Younghusband's counsel throughout much of his career, and Gould wrote to Bell in 1936, noting he had tried to meet Bailey and 'pick his brains', and now sought his old superior's advice.[151]

The cadre traditions were jealously guarded. In 1934, when the Italian Professor, Giuseppe Tucci, claimed to have been the first European to visit Rabgyeling monastery in western Tibet, H.Calvert ICS, who had been there en route to inspect the Gartok Trade Agency in 1906, was quick to write to *The Times* and correct the report. Since 1947 officers such as Richardson and Caroe have also been quick to defend their achievements against any criticism or misinterpretation.[152]

## CONCLUSIONS

What then were the defining characteristics of the successful members of the Tibet cadre? In common with officials of other Government of India services, they had close family connections with India and shared a middle, or upper-middle class origin. They were educated at British public schools, universities or military colleges, which gave them an almost unquestioning belief in the righteousness of the British Empire.

While made up of officers with very different types of personality, these differences were, at least for public consumption, submerged in a collective identity which incorporated the ideals inculcated in their upbringing and training, ideals which were largely synonymous with those of both 'gentleman' and 'muscular Christian'. Thus while self-confident, and not above subtle self-promotion, they were not immodest, or unsophisticated, and they generally maintained a high standard of ethical conduct. When individuals failed to maintain such standards, this failing was concealed from wider

knowledge, in order to maintain the prestige of the cadre.

They were strongly influenced by their reading, in youth, education and service training. The texts they read tended to reinforce their ideals, and their perception of frontier service. Role models such as Sandeman provided precedents for their actions, and an image to emulate. Later officers read books by their predecessors, which further reinforced the cadre image and their identification with it.

There were characteristics which they shared with other frontiersmen. They were 'lean and keen', and they preferred the frontier life to the more comfortable existence of an Indian State; implying that in their character was a 'touch of the recluse'. There was a strong military influence and they were courageous in the military sense, but did not view things exclusively in military terms. An intellect more broad than that often associated with army officers was required.

Like many other frontier officers, the Tibet cadre gained a strong empathy with the local people among whom they served, and the lengthy terms which several officers chose to serve, and their reluctance to retire completely from Tibetan affairs, are indications of this attachment. The pre-existing image of the frontiersman was definitely an aspect of their identity and, as on the North-West Frontier, there was a strong sense of regional cadre tradition.

In common with all Politicals, their selection had been personally approved by the Viceroy, which enhanced their own self-confidence and identification with the 'system'. But nearly half of them were not members of the Politicals when they were first appointed to Tibet. However closely they identified themselves with the Department, this implied a specialisation which contrasts with the 'generalist' ideal of the ICS and the Politicals. This ideal however, had become an increasingly outdated image in the 20th century, as Ewing has noted.[153]

This degree of specialisation within the Tibet cadre is one of their defining characteristics, and emerges most clearly in another integral feature of these men; their scholarship. In the early years officers were not 'a network of scholars',[154] but they developed their increasingly deep knowledge of the country into an expertise which later provided much of the European understanding of Tibet. Along with scholarship, the officers learned the importance of political skills, how to manipulate government opinion to achieve their desired policy aims, as will be examined in more detail in ensuing chapters.

We can see from those who failed to return to service in Tibet, that, given the fitness to live at altitude, the most important aspect of the job was a close identification with the Tibetans. Gaining this was a deliberate policy, and officers who failed in this aspect failed in their duty. Thus officers distracted by family concerns, or unable to endure the mores of

Tibetan society, did not succeed.

Despite some circumstantial evidence that the Tibetans were more at ease with married officers (they certainly wondered why officers remained alone), celibacy, a state then considered less unnatural than it is now, was required. It has been argued that sexuality in the British empire was sublimated in duty; this appears to apply to the Tibet cadre. While some of the 'lower ranks' of supporting staff in Tibet married into the community, or took mistresses there, I have found neither evidence nor rumour that any Political Officer did so.[155] Whether, as Ronald Hyam suggests we should consider, sexual factors played a part in their original decision to serve in the empire, is not revealed in the sources.[156]

Crucial to the Tibet cadre's maintenance of their collective identity and policy was their control of personnel intake. This created a chain of succession in which the influence of an early officer can be seen to emerge in a later period. The Yatung and Gyantse positions were used as training grounds; if the trainees proved suitable they were later returned to the higher ranking positions in Lhasa or Gangtok.

The cadre was, to an extent, a meritocracy. While the Political Department generally was the slowest government service to incorporate local peoples, three of the Tibet cadre were local or Eurasian officers. Acceptance of locals however, came only after long periods in which they had proved their loyalty, and ability to fit in with the ideals and ethos of the cadre, as will be seen in Chapter Three.

There was one other characteristic of the Tibet cadre which was not unique, but which is so often and clearly expressed in the sources that it must be examined in depth. This was the concern with prestige, personal, cadre and national, which we will examine in the next chapter.

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## FOOTNOTES

- [1] Coen (1971, pp.42-43), quoting a farewell speech in Simla on 5 September 1905, by the departing Viceroy, Lord Curzon.
- [2] Dewey (1993, p.V11); also see Fieldhouse (1982, p.230).
- [3] Officers who served at Yatung during the period when it was of importance (pre 1920), all rose to the higher positions, while only Indian staff chosen from the Provincial Services were posted to Gartok. 19 of the 22 officers we are examining were British; the backgrounds of the three local officers naturally differ in some ways, as will be seen in Chapter Three.
- [4] Margaret Ewing has found that 'something of the military mind lingered' and affected the world view of those ICS men who had seen active service in World War One; Ewing (1980, pp.120-121).
- [5] While information on the other 13 officers who served in Tibet only briefly, or who acted as Trade Agent Gyantse in the absence of a permanent appointee, is incomplete, their backgrounds appear similar. for example, F.P.Mainprice and Captain J.H.Davis had fathers or grandfathers in the Indian Army, and Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Kennedy IMS won a DSO. and an MC. in World War One. The four Escort Commanders who served as Trade Agent Gyantse in 1944-46 may have had somewhat different backgrounds. For example, Captain Allen Robins, who held a war-time commission, entered Sandhurst without attending a public school.
- [6] See Beaglehole (1977, pp.237-55); Crawford (1930, pp.650-51); Dewey (1973, pp.283-85); Heathcote (1974, p.140); Potter (1986, pp.57-58); Razzell (1963, pp.248-60); Spangenberg (1976, p.19).
- [7] For example, see Madden & Fieldhouse (1982); Symonds (1991).
- [8] Symonds *ibid* (p.47), quoting H.Edgerton, (Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford, c1910.
- [9] Heussler (1963, p.82), quoting personal correspondence with Sir Ralph Furse, August 1960.
- [10] Moore (1993, p.722).
- [11] Potter (1986, p.72); The schools most represented in the Tibet cadre were Marlborough, four officers, and Winchester and Edinburgh Academy, two each.
- [12] Potter (1986, pp.58-59, 71-75); Symonds (1991, pp.31-32); Girouard (1981, pp.164-67).
- [13] IOLR R/1/4/1035, personal file of B.Gould, Report by H.R.Cobb, 15 January 1910.
- [14] Mangani (1986, p.18); McKay (1994, pp.373-74).
- [15] Hyam (1990, p.73); McKay *ibid*; Potter (1986, pp.73-75).
- [16] French (1994, pp.9-10), quoting 'Epistle' by Henry Newbolt.
- [17] Dewey (1995).
- [18] Symonds (1991, pp.300-301); also see Madden & Fieldhouse (1982).
- [19] Symonds *ibid* (p.36), quoting Lord Curzon, from Lord Ronaldshay, *Life of Curzon*, London (1928, (1) p.49).
- [20] IOLR MSS Eur F157-272; various papers of F.M.Bailey.

- [21] Mason (1974, pp.365, 386); Shepperd (1980, p.9).
- [22] Heathcote (1974, p.168); IOLR MSS Eur F157-214, Lhasa diary of F.M.Bailey, entry of 1 August 1924.
- [23] Hilton (1955, p.12).
- [24] Ewing (1980, p.206); Symonds (1991, p.116); also see Beaglehole (1977); Ewing (1984); Potter (1973).
- [25] Potter (1977, p.875), quoting Maurice Zinkin ICS, *Development for Free Asia*, London (1963, p.89); also see Potter (1986, p.112); Simon (1961, p.15).
- [26] Potter *ibid*.
- [27] Mason (1974, pp.363-66); Potter (1977, pp.876-77); Potter (1986, pp.101, 109).
- [28] Potter (1977); Potter (1986, p.108), quoting Hunt Pope ICS, Cambridge archives.
- [29] Dewey (1993, p.V11); also see Dewey (1973, p.262); Potter (1977, pp.888-89).
- [30] IOLR MSS Eur F157-144, Younghusband to (Bailey's father) Lieutenant-Colonel Bailey, 12 March 1905.
- [31] Interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993.
- [32] Spear (1978, p.179)
- [33] Potter (1977, pp.875-89); (1986, pp.72).
- [34] Walsh (1945, p.112); Sykes (1945, p.134).
- [35] Simon (1961, pp.11, 100, 110, 198).
- [36] Beaglehole (1977, p.249), quoting A.R.Cornelius ICS, 15 October 1928, in IOLR L/S&G/6/351 Collection 3-16a; Ewing (1980, p.200); Simon *ibid* (p.100).
- [37] IOLR MSS Eur F157-142, Bailey's school and college reports.
- [38] IOLR MSS Eur F 203-84, Caroe Papers, draft autobiography (untitled), Chapter Two, pp.4-5.
- [39] Interview with Mrs R.Collett, March 1993; Interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993.
- [40] Interview with H.Richardson, November 1990.
- [41] Zinkin (1994, p.297).
- [42] Lyall (1973, pp.334-36 & passim).
- [43] Edwardes (1851, pp.1 & 722-23).
- [44] Thornton (1895, pp.24, 36, 290-91, 294-295, 306, 314-316, 320-21 & passim).
- [45] For more detail of these incidents see, McKay (1992a), & McKay (1992b).
- [46] French (1994, pp.35-37).
- [47] Williamson (1987, p.90); Bell's collection is listed in IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a 27.
- [48] 'I stayed at the Residency with Sir Basil Gould, and the first thing he said to me was "You'd better start your education. Here are some books." - Bell's *Tibet Past and Present*...Spencer Chapman's *Lhasa the Holy City*'; interview with R.Ford, March 1993.
- [49] IOLR MSS Eur D998-17, Hopkinson to Mrs Hopkinson, 14 October 1945; In his 'Report on Tibet August 1945 to August 1948', (MSS Eur D 998-39), Hopkinson repeats unacknowledged Bell's description of Tibet as the 'cinderella[sic] of the Indian Foreign Service, a phrase I used in the title of my 1992 'South Asia Research' article.

[50] Morgan (1973, p.58); Trench (1987, p.11); Interview with Mrs A.Saker, April 1993; IOLR MSS Eur F157-319, Bailey typescript autobiography (untitled), p.18; also see Swinson (1971, pp.42-43).

[51] IOLR MSS Eur F157-166, Bailey to his parents, 11 January 1906; R/1/4/1236, Personal file of E.W.Fletcher; NAI FD, 1923 Establishment B 39(1), Macdonald's Political Department entry application, various correspondence. MacDonal was refused entry into the Political Department as a result of what now appears his peripheral involvement in events involving his son-in-law, Frank Perry, Escort Commander in Gyantse, 1918-20; see IOLR L/P&S/11/235-2906, India to Bailey 12 December 1923.

[52] IOLR R/1/4/1261, Personal file of A.J.Hopkinson, P.S.Lock to Hopkinson, 16 March 1923.

[53] IOLR MSS Eur R/1/4/2003, Personal file of P.C.Hailey, various correspondence.

[54] NAI FD, 1906 General B, October 14-15, Lieutenant-Colonel P.G.Weir IMS, to Dane, 1 September 1906.

[55] IOLR R/1/4/1297, Personal file of A.A.Russell, Russell to India, 15 February 1924.

[56] Coen (1971, pp.35-36).

[57] *Ibid*; Copland (1982, pp.80-81).

[58] NAI FD, 1923 Establishment B 39(1), Macdonald's Political Department entry application, file note, 21 December 1922, signature unclear.

[59] NAI FD, 1913 Secret E January 120, file note by Foreign Secretary A.H.McMahon, 3 October 1912.

[60] NAI FD, 1906 General A December 56-59, Morley to India, 6 July 1906.

[61] Trench (1987, p.13); Fletcher (1975, p.228).

[62] Lamb (1966, fn.22, p.138; Addy (1985, p.192), quoting Morley to Minto, 19 February 1908, IOLR D573-3, Morley Papers.

[63] IOLR MSS Eur F203-84, Caroe papers, draft autobiography of Sir Olaf Caroe, Chapter 8, p.4.

[64] IOLR L/P&S/7/183-168, O'Connor to India, 19 November 1905.

[65] IOLR MSS Eur D998-39, 'Report on Tibet August 1945 -August 1948', by A.J.Hopkinson.

[66] NAI FD, 1913, Secret E January 120, file note by A.H.Grant, 10 September 1912.

[67] These links continued in subsequent years. While Curzon was Foreign Minister at Whitehall, O'Connor and Bailey were posted to control of the British positions in Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and Bhutan.

[68] Trench (1987, p.13).

[69] Mainprice papers, various diary entries, May to August 1944; Personal information courtesy of his sister, Mrs L.J.Mainprice.

[70] Gould (1957, p.17); Interview with Mrs A.Saker, April 1993.

[71] IOLR MSS Eur F157-219, Younghusband to Bailey, 4 December 1913.

[72] NAI FD, 1907, Secret E September 238-250, O'Connor to India, 13 May 1907, & India to O'Connor, 4 June 1907, 15 June 1907.

[73] IOLR L/P&S/7/214-652, Gyantse Quarterly Trade Report. This report, for the third quarter of 1907, was not submitted by White until 31 January 1908 as he had 'overlooked' it, while preparing for a trip to Bhutan.



- [74] Copland (1982, p.78); IOLR MSS Eur F157-219, Younghusband to Bailey, 4 December 1913.
- [75] Gould (1957, pp.21, 192-93).
- [76] Copland (1978, pp.280-81); Ewing (1980, p.56).
- [77] Isolation was also a factor. Gyantse was always an inhospitable posting, and two year terms were usually the maximum served. Gangtok and Lhasa were more congenial, and longer terms were possible.
- [78] O'Connor (1940, pp.99-100).
- [79] Interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993.
- [80] The question was raised in the House of Commons by Colonel Howard-Bury, the former Himalayan climber, who asked why two year terms were favoured in Tibet. In reply, the Minister concerned noted the stagnation factor, but the principal reason he gave was that officers felt their promotion prospects would suffer from long service outside India; IOLR L/P&S/12/2345-3200, copy of Hansard entry of 21 May 1930.
- [81] Interview with R.Ford, March 1993.
- [82] MacLeod (1973, p.1403); Potter (1986, pp.34, 74-75); Robb (1992, p.38).
- [83] Interview with Mrs J.M.Jehu, March 1993; Interview with A.H.Robins, April 1993.
- [84] Copland (1978, p.287, also see pp.277 & 289); Dewey (1993, pp.5, 7); Misra (1970, pp.178-79, 246).
- [85] Landon (1905, (2) p.152)
- [86] IOLR MSS Eur F157-241, Ludlow to Bailey, 3 June 1930; MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary, entry of 8 November 1926; Fletcher (1975, p.233).
- [87] For example, see Mariani (1954, pp.221-23). The officer referred to is Arthur Hopkinson.
- [88] For example, Ludlow wrote that, 'If they wanted me I would come back from the ends of earth to Tibet'; IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entry, 10 November 1926.
- [89] Macdonald (1932, p.121).
- [90] Interview with A.H.Robins, April 1993; Interview with R.Ford, March 1993; personal correspondence with R.Ford, October 1994; Walter's papers, 'Gyantse to Tibet 1940/1', (unpublished article) p.7.
- [91] These files are contained in the NAI Foreign Department Establishment B series, ie Gould's letters are in FD, 1913 Establishment B May 168-173, and FD, 1932 Establishment B 180. Williamson's preferences are shown in his personal file; IOLR R/1/4/1319, Williamson to India, 18 August 1923.
- [92] Weir was planning for his retirement, and a Second-class Residency would add 100 rupees a month to his pension, while a First-class Residency would add 200 rupees; Weir Papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 9 December 1930.
- [93] Hopkinson is the only officer who specified a post he did not want - Hyderabad. It is illustrative of the different types of personality which were blended into the Politicals that it was the magnificence of the Residency there which inspired Sir Olaf Caroe, later Indian Foreign Secretary, to join the Political Department; IOLR MSS Eur F203-84, Caroe papers, draft autobiography (untitled); Hopkinson's preferences are in NAI FD, 1928 Establishment B, 47 (14) E/28.
- [94] IOLR MSS Eur F157-166, Bailey to his parents, 3 January 1909 [dated 1908 in error]; Bell

(1992, p.259); IOLR MSS Eur D998-39, 'Report on Tibet August 1945 - August 1948' by A.J.Hopkinson.

[95] Bell *ibid*.

[96] NAI FD, 1913 Establishment B May 168-73, File Note, 20 February 1913, signature unclear.

[97] IOLR L/P&S/12-2345, India to Secretary of State, 19 May 1945; Mainprice papers, various correspondence, 1943-44.

[98] IOLR MSS Eur F157-166, Bailey to his parents, 13 January 1908; NAI FD, 1911 Establishment B March 10-17, Bell to India, 23 December 1910.

[99] For example, Gould asked for Richardson to be posted to Gyantse, knowing he was interested in Tibet; personal correspondence with H.Richardson, June 1992.

[100] For example, see IOLR MSS Eur F157-236, Laden La to Bailey, 18 September 1930, re a Major Lock's hopes of a Tibet posting.

[101] IOLR MSS Eur F157-236, Laden La to Bailey, 18 September 1930; MSS Eur F157-269, Weir to Bailey, January 1929; Weir Papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 9 December 1930.

[102] NAI FD, 1921 Establishment B Nov 199-223, various correspondence.

[103] Weir papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 24 October 1929; IOLR R/1/4/986, file note by B.Gould, 14 August 1940, file note (unsigned), 27 May 1940 & related correspondence; R/1/4/992, Gould to India, 25 March 1941. The dangers of altitude were real, several deaths occurred among Agency or Escort personnel en route to Gyantse, e.g. Lieutenant Warren, appointed to the Gyantse Escort, died at Yatung in September 1939.

[104] NAI FD, 1910 General B April 156, file note by Viceroy Minto, 25 March 1910.

[105] Lamb (1960, p.220); McKay (1992a, pp.404-05); NAI FD, 1908 External A April 33-34, various correspondence. For recent laudatory comments on White, see Collister (1987, *passim*).

[106] Mainprice papers, diary entry, 15-19 October 1943; Weir papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 4 June 1929 & 1 October 1929; NAI FD, 1935 Establishment B 32 (54) E, various correspondence.

[107] Weir papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 6 May 1930; IOLR MSS Eur F89 5a 92 & 5a 93 both contain reports on Fletcher sent from Tibet, dated 7 December 1930, apparently by David Macdonald.

[108] Interview with Mrs J.M.Jehu, March 1993.

[109] Mainprice papers, diary entry, 15-19 October 1943; Interview with A.H.Robins, April 1993.

[110] Williamson (1987, pp.186-87).

[111] Interview with A.H.Robins, April 1993; IOLR MSS Eur F80, 5a 92, & 5a 93, various correspondence, 1929-31, Macdonald to Bell.

[112] Re O'Connor, see Weir papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 10 November 1932; re Bailey, see NAI FD, 1930 Establishment B 214 E, Bailey to E.Howell, 3 November 1930 & related correspondence; re Perry, Parker, Lee and Martin, see FD, 1910 Secret E Dec. 430-31, Bell to India, 10 November 1910 & related correspondence. It was theoretically possible for British citizens to live at the trade marts if they claimed to be traders, but none were permitted to do so after this loophole had been exploited by an eccentric missionary, Annie Taylor, who lived in Yatung from 1894-c1906.

[113] IOLR MSS Eur F157-269, Mrs Weir to Mrs Bailey, 10 June 1932.

[114] IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Bailey to Norbhu Dhondup, 29 August 1927; L/P&S/12/3982, various correspondence, 1923-27.

[115] IOLR L/P&S/12/4295-5863, Weir to India, 11 September 1932; L/P&S/12/4295-5238,

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Caroe to Williamson, 4 July 1935, India to Secretary of State, 10 August 1935, and reply, 21 August 1935;

[116] Interview with R.Ford, March 1993.

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] *Ibid.*; Interview with A.H.Robins, April 1993; Interview with Mrs A.Saker, April 1993.

[119] Interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993.

[120] Williamson (1987, pp.39 & 207).

[121] For example, see IOLR MSS Eur F157-241, Ludlow to Bailey, 19 November 1944.

[122] Molloy (1991, p.17).

[123] Williamson (1987, pp.39, 207). Women could also cause disputes, there was a long-running vendetta between two Political Officers' wives, which cannot have helped their husbands' relationship; Weir papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 7 September 1930.

[124] 'You were your own master'; interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993.

[125] Interview with R.Ford, April 1993.

[126] Wurgaft (1983, p.XV11), suggests that the 'heroic mythology' attached to the frontier regions arose from a turning 'away from the complexities of contemporary India to a simpler reality that reflected their ideal of paternal rule'; but this ignores the influence of the indigenous placement of the Himalayas as a realm of myth.

[127] Bishop (1989, p.111).

[128] van den Dungan, (1972, p.31).

[129] Wurgaft (1983, p.35).

[130] Orwell (1957, p.196). George Orwell's description in this article of the ethos of these magazines has not been bettered.

[131] Re Curzon and Younghusband in the "Great Game", see French (1994), and the popular account by Hopkirk (1990).

[132] Campbell (1988, p.123); Eliade (1955).

[133] Younghusband (1985, pp.434-38). The full extent of Younghusband's spiritual character and beliefs has recently been brought out by Patrick French, see French (1994).

[134] Potter (1986, pp.13, 249-50). Potter takes a thirty-year period as representing one administrative generation. Here, however, I rely on Shils, who concludes that definition of how long a generation lasts depends upon the context. Potter (1986, p.6); Shils (1981, p.15). The problem is discussed in Spitzer (1973, pp.1353-1385).

[135] Interview with J.Lall, October 1993.

[136] Ewing (1980, pp.181-84, 382, 389 & *passim*); Spangenberg (1976, pp.53-54); Wurgaft (1983, pp.XV11, X1X, 83, 170).

[137] Copland (1978, pp.277-299).

[138] Potter (1986, p.248).

[139] Shils (1981, p.14).

[140] Wurgaft (1983, p.37).

[141] Copland (1978, pp.277-78, 289, 299); Wurgaft (1983, pp.XV11-X1X).

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- [142] IOLR MSS Eur F157-241, Ludlow to Bailey, 26 November 1934, & 4 December 1945.
- [143] Gould (1957, p.3).
- [144] IOLR MSS Eur F157-166, Bailey to his parents, 2 May 1909.
- [145] Gould (1957, p.19).
- [146] Awareness of predecessors was also brought about by enquiries after them from the local Tibetans, or, in Mainprice's case, from browsing through the confidential files in the offices, which went back to 1905. Interview with R.Ford, March 1993; Interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993, Interview with A.H.Robins, April 1993; Mainprice papers, diary entry of 24 June 1944; Ford (1990, p.194).
- [147] IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entry, 12 September 1924.
- [148] IOLR MSS F157-258, Hopkinson to Bailey, 5 December 1949.
- [149] IOLR MSS Eur F157-259, Richardson to Bailey, 25 February 1949.
- [150] IOLR MSS Eur F157-144, Younghusband to Bailey senior, 6 February 1906; also see MSS Eur F157-219, Younghusband to (F.M.) Bailey, 10 May 1906.
- [151] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a 127, Gould to Bell, 22 March 1936.
- [152] IOLR L/P&S/12/4247-1517, cutting from *The Times* 9 January 1934; also see Caroe (1974); Richardson (1974).
- [153] Ewing (1980, p.376).
- [154] McKay (1992a, p.407).
- [155] This is in contrast to the history of the Politicals' most remote posting, at Kashgar; see Everest-Phillips (1991, p.21 & *passim*).
- [156] Hyam (1990, pp.211-12).

## CHAPTER TWO

### 'TOP OF THE HEAP':

#### ASPECTS OF BRITISH PRESTIGE IN TIBET.

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#### INTRODUCTION

In 1903, Secretary of State Lord George Hamilton, in a letter to Viceroy Curzon, expressed the view commonly-held by British-Indian ruling circles that 'our power in India was largely based on prestige'. [1] Prestige, in the British understanding, involved creating an impression of personal and national superiority over the local peoples and local power structures. Superior status was demonstrated through both individual and national behaviour, and through outward forms and symbols. In assuming this superior status, the British in India could claim to be following local custom; the precedent of *izzat*, the charismatic authority of the Mughal rulers. To this they added aspects which were quintessentially British; Gould dined at eight every evening, and always donned formal dress for dinner, even in camp. [2]

In the wider context, British prestige was a part of the prestige of European civilisation; there was a solidarity of purpose among Europeans generally to demonstrate and uphold the superiority of their society. Thus Madame Alexandra David-Neel, the French traveller, wrote to Bell when he had her deported from Sikkim, that 'It is not good that Europeans appears[sic] to be quarreling before natives who do not like them.' [3]

The belief that 'natives' were essentially hostile contributed to the social segregation which became a feature of the British Indian social system. Imperial distinctness was preserved by both physical separation, expressed in architecture and living space, and social separation, which was enforced by rules and customs. Again, the Raj claimed local precedence for this. The Hindu caste system and Muslim segregation of women made intercommunal social intercourse difficult, and these local social divisions provided the precedent for the British to remain a distinct 'caste'. This concern for social distinctness predominated in British India despite the existence of a counter trend towards lessening the distance between the races.

Although the British in India believed that maintaining status was crucial to their rule, prestige was, Younghusband claimed, 'little understood in England, but...of immense practical value in the East'. [4] Prestige was considered of 'practical value' because it was believed that if British power was seen as invincible, resistance to it would be considered futile. Prestige was thus an alternative force, a symbol of power which became increasingly important as the British sought to avoid the political and economical cost of using military force as an instrument of policy in India. [5]

There was considerably less social separation from the local people in Tibet than in British India, but the concepts of correct behaviour and appropriate action associated with the maintenance of prestige were equally assiduously followed. After the Younghusband Mission had demonstrated British military power to the Tibetans, the Tibet cadre followed the strategy used in India. They sought to create an impression of power which would instill in the Tibetans a respect for the British, and influence them to support imperial interests. As Curzon stated,

What I want is that our present intolerable and humiliating relationship with the Tibetans shall not continue, and that they shall be sufficiently impressed with our power as to realise that they cannot look to any other quarter for protection. [6]

This was a common strategy in contemporary European imperial expansion; Russian frontiersmen stressed the need to support Russia's prestige in Central Asia, just as the Tibet cadre promoted British prestige in Tibet. [7]

We have seen that a particular type of officer was considered ideal for service in Tibet. In this chapter we shall examine how this ideal type was considered to embody the characteristics necessary to uphold British prestige (in contrast to local employees, whose failure to do so was regarded as being due to their race). We shall examine how the cadre attempted to restrict the Tibetans' contact with any but this ideal British type, as revealed by their efforts to control European travellers to Tibet, and how the cadre used prestige as a weapon to advance their personal and cadre status within government, and to advance policies they favoured.

This study demonstrates the importance of different forms of prestige to the British in Tibet, and illustrates how concepts of prestige influenced the cadre's image of both Tibet and themselves, and their actions consequent upon this understanding.

## SECTION 2.1: - PRESTIGE AS POLICY

Prestige, in British Indian usage, was not an incidental quality, but a potent weapon of British power which was deliberately cultivated. Considerations of prestige were manifest in most British actions, from personal dress and bearing to government policy, and the British concept of prestige was constantly re-evaluated and refined, just as weapons of military power were. In Tibet the maintenance of British prestige was an important factor, both in the field of policy and because its symbols were an important part of an individual officer's self-esteem. Thus Macdonald proudly recalled how, in 1911, when he was inadvertently caught between opposing Chinese and Tibetan forces, they recognised him by his white topee, and both sides stopped firing to allow him to leave the battlefield.[8]

The Escort and Medical Officers played an important part in this process. The Medical Officers' concern with personal status matched that of the Politicals. While the advantages of modern medicine, and its free application to all classes of Tibetans naturally enhanced the British reputation, the 'right type' of doctor was also considered to do 'a tremendous lot for British prestige'.[9]

The Trade Agent's escort symbolised British military power. Attempts to withdraw the escort for political or financial reasons were successfully resisted by the cadre on the grounds that 'it would leave the Trade Agents divested of the needed symbols of authority'.[10] A Gyantse Escort Commander recalled how, when the Trade Agent paid official calls, they 'showed the flag'.

We rode out in great pomp and style. Liveried scouts riding on ahead, then the Mounted Infantry with the bugler, and the men carrying a huge Union Jack, and finally the B.T.A. and Officers. I feel sure the locals found this an imposing sight.[11]

Concern with prestige was manifest in an almost surreal attention to detail. When Bailey mentioned in a report that he had presented the Panchen Lama with a white silk scarf (the usual Tibetan practice on greeting a religious figure), his government promptly asked the Political Officer Sikkim, 'whether he considers that it is in any way derogatory to the dignity of British officers to do so'.[12]

When the British concern with prestige was combined with the Tibetans' own concern for details of etiquette, it could result in great importance being attached to the smallest detail of diplomatic ritual. While arranging the Panchen Lama's visit to India in 1906,

O'Connor sought to ascertain how far the Viceroy would advance to meet the Lama, and vice versa. This was an important consideration in Tibetan etiquette, but it led even Foreign Secretary Dane, a strong supporter of O'Connor, to comment, 'Really these Tibetan officers are very unreasonable', and to pronounce that 'We are not Buddhists and cannot pay this extravagant spiritual homage.' But O'Connor insisted, and eventually an official in Calcutta was deputed to count the number of steps at the entrance to the Viceregal residence, although he concluded ironically that, 'number of paces to be taken in each case [is] unascertainable.' [13]

This correspondence illustrates the two schools of thought regarding the appropriate British response to local cultures. In the Indian context, Clive Dewey has described how the British 'veered between two clusters of axioms', which he calls the 'Gospel of Uplift' and the 'Cult of Friendship', as they faced the problem of whether to impose Western solutions to Indian problems, or whether to take the local cultural context as the primary reference point in policy formation. [14]

In Tibet, the 'Gospel of Uplift' was represented by Bailey, who considered that it was 'inconsistent with the maintenance of dignity to pander too much to native ideas'. Thus White, who followed this tendency, believed that O'Connor should have 'simply have told the Tashi Lama what he is expected to do'. [15]

O'Connor represented the other school of thought, the 'Cult of Friendship'. He believed that respect for Tibetan traditions enhanced the dignity of the British. The 'Cult of Friendship' which O'Connor followed, and of which Bell was to be the primary exponent, was the path followed by the more successful officers of the Tibet cadre.

## **SECTION 2.2: - QUESTIONS OF STATUS**

We have seen that there was a type of officer considered ideal for service in Tibet; the qualities inherent in this type were those regarded as necessary to the creation of an image of the British which the Tibetans would respect. Hence the definitions of an officer with the necessary prestige match those definitions of the ideal type defined in the previous chapter.

As a part of their self-creation of a role in Tibet - an aspect which will be considered in Chapter Four - the Tibet cadre sought to establish their status *vis-à-vis* the Tibetan and Chinese officials with whom they dealt. During the 1904-13 period the Chinese attempted to use the uncertain status of the British officials to their advantage, and the issue was never fully resolved. Campbell had served in Peking, and his expertise in Chinese etiquette was then of great value; on one occasion he returned a letter as he understood that it was



'addressed to me only by name in a manner only possible [when] addressing an inferior'.[16]

After 1936, when both British and Chinese Missions were present in Lhasa, the two countries were in constant competition to enhance their status with the Tibetans. Thus British and Chinese accounts of the installation of the 14th Dalai Lama differ greatly, as each attempts to claim a higher status for their reception. The British even reported that when they rode into Lhasa with their dogs carried in a dandy, the Tibetans were favourably impressed by this, as Chinese officials were usually carried in dandies.[17]

Establishing the cadre officer's status *vis-à-vis* Tibetan officials was easier. Bell sought the highest possible status for the Political Officer Sikkim, and arranged that he rank with the Tibetan Chief Minister. This meant that, although within British India the Sikkim post was never more than a second-class Residency, in Tibet the Political Officer could justly claim, 'You couldn't get any higher.... We were the top of the heap'.[18]

This status was much higher than that to which cadre officers might have aspired had they remained in Britain. But while officers from British middle and upper-middle class backgrounds became the ruling class in India, they reverted to their previous status when they returned to Britain (which must have been a factor in the Political Officer's reluctance to retire from Sikkim), and the British aristocracy were inclined to view the status these men held in India as being unwarranted. This paradox was reflected in British concern that minor Indian princes were treated with great ceremony on European visits, despite their relatively low stature in India.[19]

Individual British officers were keenly concerned to maintain and increase their own personal status, and even when the Tibetans were not directly involved no detail of protocol was ignored. For example, when Campbell was Trade Agent in Yatung, he objected to receiving letters from the Political Officer Sikkim signed by the Gangtok clerk, while when Gould visited Gyantse he insisted on being received at the precise distance (several miles) dictated by Tibetan etiquette. If he reached this spot before his reception party, Gould would sit and wait until they arrived to escort him into the Agency.[20]

In these matters, however 'tiresome' they seemed to witnesses, the officers were supported by their government. Bell reported that Campbell, then in charge of the Chumbi Valley, 'insists and perhaps rightly so on the local people dismounting from their ponies and removing their hats whenever they see him'. Bell was not personally given to demanding such public deference, but he clearly supported the all-important principle of maintaining the highest possible prestige. If the British 'were to represent a superior race, they had to act the part'.[21]

Spangenberg, in reference to the ICS, described their concern with prestige as

'obsessive', but he viewed prestige as an individual concern with career advancement. In Tibet, the cultivation of prestige was an integral part of an officer's duties. The development of both national and personal prestige were aspects of a deliberate policy to strengthen what the British saw as a primary weapon of imperial influence.[22]

### **SECTION 2.3: - WAS PRESTIGE A BRITISH QUALITY?**

British officers were considered inherently able to represent British status, but in 1906, the IMS proposed posting an Indian officer, one Captain D.P.Goil, to Gyantse to replace the first Medical Officer there, Lieutenant Robert Steen. The Political Department objected, stating that, 'On political grounds it is important that the Medical Officer in a pioneer post like Gyantse should be a European.'[23]

The question of whether the necessary British prestige could be maintained by local officers was also raised by the posting of Indian provincial officers to the Gartok Trade Agency. Relations with western Tibetan officials were always problematical, for the Agent's efforts to protect the interests of British Indian traders were at odds with the interests of the Tibetan officials, whose income came from trading and tax gathering, official or unofficial.[24]

It was suggested that a British officer should make an annual visit to Gartok, 'as such a visit would improve, in the eyes of the Tibetans, the status of Thakur Jai Chand' (the first Gartok Trade Agent).[25] But financial and logistical problems meant that visits by British officers to western Tibet became increasingly rare. In their absence, the actions of the Gartok Trade Agents seriously threatened British prestige in this remote region.[26]

As the Indian officers posted to Gartok were from the Punjab Hill States bordering western Tibet, they were invariably open to accusations of bias in favour of traders from their own clan. In addition, the neglected and poorly paid Agents had numerous opportunities to take financial advantage of their post. Jai Chand, although approved personally by Younghusband, proved to be 'a thoroughly hopeless person and quite unsuited for his appointment' and he was eventually dismissed for misusing government funds. His successor, Lala Devi Das, while marginally more efficient, also made the fullest possible use of his travelling and personal allowances.[27]

Das's successor, Pala Ram, unnecessarily antagonised the local officials, and was found to have 'little tact and less discrimination...an exaggerated sense of his own importance and...a petulance and lack of dignity which were unworthy of one in his position.' His replacement, Thakur Hyatt Singh, gained such a bad reputation for profiteering that he was

banned from entering Tibet after his dismissal, which followed a drunken brawl over a woman with a local official. The Tibetan official was killed soon after by lightning, but he had felt strongly enough about Hyatt Singh to write to the Government of India pointing out the threat to bilateral relations posed by the poor choice of Agents.[28]

While the performance of these Agents was damned in a series of reports by inspecting officer E.W. Wakefield in 1928, he had some sympathy for them on account of their poor pay and conditions, which were held to have contributed to their failures. Wakefield's reports ultimately led the Government of India to conclude that the Agents had not failed through any fault of their own, but because they were not 'of the right class'. In order to increase their prestige, it was decided to select Agents of a higher caste than previously and increase their pay and rank. Wakefield's reforms were apparently successful. His visit, had, the new Trade Agent, Dr Kanshi Ram, reported, enabled the Tibetan officials 'to understand the status of the Trade Agent'. [29] But any improvements were not long-lasting; Captain Saker, following his visit in 1942, reported that 'the position of the British Trade Agent has gradually deteriorated', and it must be concluded that the Gartok post was never particularly successful.[30]

The question of whether only a British officer could embody British prestige was never entirely resolved. In 1909 Bell had set out the respective advantages of British and Indian officers for the Yatung Trade Agency. He concluded that if no British officer were available, an intelligent Indian of 'good family' already in local government service, would be cheaper, more capable in administrative work, and 'liable to live on terms of closer friendship with the Chinese and Tibetan officials than a European could do'. [31]

Bell's definition of a suitable Indian officer implied that an Indian could uphold sufficient prestige if he were of 'good family'. A distinction was drawn here between those local social groups who were accustomed to authority, and those outside traditional power structures, with the former group being the target of the Politicals' attempts to 'cultivate the friendship of the local Ruling Chiefs'. [32]

One of the rewards offered to British supporters from the local power structures was government employment in posts of authority which reflected their traditional status. The British considered that their prestige could be represented by the traditional personal authority of their supporters from local ruling elites, who were accustomed to command and to the external symbols and trappings of authority. However, while they might maintain the prestige of British rule, as members of the subject race these local leaders could not equal the personal status of a British officer.

The Government of India wanted a local officer at Yatung for financial reasons. While this meant that the Trade Agent there would have less status than a British officer, this

factor would, if Bell was correct, be balanced by his greater ability to cultivate the friendship of local officials, which was of paramount importance to his role (an issue that is discussed in Chapter Four). In the event, the officer chosen signified a compromise. He was an Anglo-Sikkimese, David Macdonald, a local government employee who had served on the Younghusband Mission. While not from an aristocratic family, he was intelligent and got on extremely well with Tibetans, and even the Chinese.

Macdonald was uniquely well qualified, and thoroughly conversant with British concepts of prestige. As he later recalled 'There was the prestige and pomp of the empire to be maintained and this meant one reflected the glory.' In contrast, when the Lhasa Mission was headed by a local officer of Tibetan origin in the 1940s, it was felt that 'the want of a Political Officer [i.e. a British officer] in charge of the Mission was felt by our friends'. [33]

Questions of manpower and economy, allied to the need to reward local supporters, meant that local employees had to be given positions of authority, but they were generally kept away from the key positions in which policy decisions were made. MacDonald was the only local officer given a Political post in Tibet until the late 1930s, and he was originally appointed to Yatung, which had little or no influence on policy formation.

Ultimately, although the British had to use local employees, they felt that, with the exception of an exceptional individual such as Macdonald, their prestige could only be fully represented by British officers. Local officers had not been trained to command at British public schools, and thus could not be expected to understand and maintain public school codes of behaviour. In consequence, if a local officer failed to maintain the required status and standards of behaviour, his failure was blamed on his race or class, whereas if a British officer failed, it was the individual who was blamed: 'A man who does not play the game at the outposts is a traitor to our order.' [34]

#### **SECTION 2.4: - QUESTIONS OF RELIGION AND LANGUAGE**

The various locations and cultures in which the British operated prevented a single all-embracing definition of what upheld a British officer's status, and what adversely affected it. Prestige was localised in application and the boundaries of appropriate behaviour were redrawn in the light of local circumstances and cultures. In Tibet, this process occurred in two areas, religion and language, which provide further insight into the collective mentality of the Tibet cadre.

In British India, following Neitzche's dictum that 'political supremacy always gives rise

to notions of spiritual supremacy',[35] the prevailing tendency was that too close an association with Hinduism was apt to be regarded with suspicion. While sympathy and interest in Indian religions was not unknown, Hinduism and Islam were themselves commonly denigrated. Christianity was an important part of British distinctness, and provided a moral justification for British rule. The character of the ideal official was described in terms of what were considered Christian virtues; courage, honesty, truthfulness and so on. But a distinct religion was not made an aspect of British prestige in Tibet. None of the Tibet cadre became practising Buddhists (indeed, most were practising Christians), but the successful officers were all deeply respectful towards Tibetan religion.

Aware that the Tibetans regarded missionaries as a threat to their religion, the cadre totally opposed any attempts to influence them towards Christianity. In this they enjoyed the full support of their government, which steadfastly refused to allow any missionaries to work in Tibet, or even to contact the Tibetan leadership. A sympathetic approach to the local religion was thus another defining characteristic of the Tibet cadre,[36] in contrast to the prevailing trends in India.

In contrast to colonial systems which required the indigenous peoples to learn the language of the dominant power, British Indian officials regarded their ability to learn the local languages as an important part of their personal and national status. While an Indian 'gentlemen' was expected to converse in English, and indeed his ability to do so was a defining mark of his status, British officers were expected to be able to converse with all levels of Indian society, which required a mastery of local language and dialects. As Bernard Cohn has shown, this also enabled the British to use, and to ensure they received, the forms of the local language appropriate to their social status, and thereby maintain prestige.[37]

In pre-1947 Tibet there were only a handful of English-speaking individuals, and these were middle-level government officials who had been educated or trained by the British. Tibetan 'gentlemen', such as Tsarong Shape,[38] were not defined by their command of English. The cadre, therefore, had to learn to communicate in Tibetan, or rely on translators. The choice of O'Connor as the first Gyantse Trade Agent, and of Bailey as his successor, owed much to their being the only candidates capable of speaking Tibetan. In Gartok the first Trade Agent apparently spoke Tibetan but not English; he reported in Urdu.

The association of language and prestige had a wider significance that was not restricted to Tibetan. Cohn has shown that there are codes of meaning within official colonial language;[39] a finding which we may apply to Tibet. Throughout the Tibet cadre's reports, certain words and phrases recur. There were those aimed at enhancing the cadre officers' personal reputation, and those which were to reinforce British policy.

Annual reports from the Agencies always contained a positive statement of good relations with local officials. The same phrase, 'Relations with all officials continue to be friendly', occurs in every Yatung report from 1930 onwards. When the Yatung Agent omitted this phrase from the 1939-40 report it was added by the Political Officer Sikkim before the report was submitted to the government. Through the use of this phrase the cadre sought to demonstrate to their government that they were successfully cultivating the friendship of the Tibetans and that their presence there was welcome. This contrasted with alternative evidence which suggested that, particularly in the early period of the British presence, significant elements of the Tibetan power structure opposed their presence. O'Connor, for example, reported that, 'Although the country people and some of the traders are well enough disposed towards us...the monks and officials regard us with ineradicable suspicion and dislike.'[40]

Similarly we may examine descriptions of the Tibetan Government as 'naive', or 'unwilling to make decisions' (as will be seen in Chapter 7.1), and see these statements as justifications for British actions which the Tibetans opposed. Seen through British eyes, the Tibetan Government were often naive, (and many Tibetans today would accept that statement), but by emphasising this, the cadre sought to justify their own actions through the medium of the dominant language.

## **SECTION 2.5: - PRESTIGE AS A MEANS OF CONTROL**

The cadre used prestige as both an instrument of policy towards Tibet, and as a weapon of personal or cadre empowerment within government. The latter aspect is clearly apparent in their efforts to ensure that the cadre had sole control over direct Anglo-Tibetan contacts.

If the Tibet cadre were to succeed in promoting the policies they favoured, and consequently promote their own careers, they had to establish themselves as the sole channel of communication between Whitehall and Lhasa, and ensure that they were Whitehall's only official source of information on Tibet. Other voices, which might present policies opposed by the cadre, had to be silenced.

The clearest example of this is in the cadre's struggle against the Chinese imperial services, which reflects the wider struggle for influence at Whitehall between the Government of India, and the Foreign Office, responsible for imperial affairs in China. As noted in the introductory chapter, the interests of the Government of India were often in conflict with those of other British interests, such as trade with China. In these circumstances, the Tibet cadre naturally represented India's interests, protecting both their

own, and their government's, prestige.

One threat to the cadre's position emerged soon after the Younghusband Mission. Following the 1893 Agreement between Britain and China, British officers of the China Maritime Customs Service were posted to Yatung.[41] These officers had little or no contact with the Government of India prior to 1903, when the fifth officer to serve there, Captain W.R.M. Parr, was attached to the Younghusband Mission. Contact with Parr alerted India to the possibility that their presence could be taken as indicating that the trade marts were Chinese Treaty Ports; in which case they would be open to all foreigners and the Government of India would lose much of its influence in Tibet. 'This', Louis Dane ruled, 'we cannot allow'. But when Parr was replaced by Mr V.C.Henderson in September 1904, the threat became a real danger.[42]

Henderson officially refused to recognise the right of the Government of India, in the person of Trade Agent O'Connor, to be advised of his movements and motives within Tibet, on the grounds that he was an officer of Tibet's suzerain power, China. Unofficially however, he got on well with O'Connor, and revealed Chinese intentions to get rid of the Trade Agencies, as well as his own ambitions - a posting in Lhasa as 'advisor' to the *Amban*, which he hoped would mean 'practically running the country'. O'Connor warned his government that 'Henderson, nice fellow that he is, is a very dangerous and skillful opponent to us and the sooner he leaves...the better.'[43]

The issue with which O'Connor was concerned here was not only that Henderson represented the Chinese Government and its plans to establish their authority over Tibet, but that he was not under Government of India authority. It was part of the Government of India's prestige that it represented the highest, and undivided, authority in the region. If its authority was seen to be successfully challenged, even by other British elements, that prestige would, it was held, be damaged throughout the 'East'. Any weakening, or division, of the cadre's authority would also reflect badly on the prestige of individual officers.

The cadre set out to remove the China Customs officers from Tibet, using the need to maintain prestige as their principal argument within government. Maintaining the Tibetan's respect, the cadre argued, required the presentation of the correct type of European to the Tibetans, and the China Customs men were, according to Younghusband, 'not of a particularly refined type and add little to our prestige'. Younghusband warned that the Tibetans 'believed that the Chinese must be superior to us from employing Englishmen in their service.' O'Connor charged that the China Customs men ill-treated the Tibetans, which reflected badly on all British officers, and pointed out that their advice to the Tibetans might be very different to that of the Government of India.[44]

Armed with these allegations, India sought Whitehall's assistance in removing European officials in Chinese employ from Tibet. This was apparently done informally, to avoid creating an issue in which Sir Robert Hart, the powerful Head of Chinese Customs, would intervene to safeguard the prestige and interests of his own force, and, in April 1907, Henderson was replaced by a Chinese officer. The Chinese service, apparently forgetting the previous difficulties, attempted to send another British officer on an inspection visit to the redundant Chinese Customs post at Yatung in 1913. They abandoned the attempt in the face of strong opposition from the Government of India, which instructed frontier officials to prevent the officer from crossing the border. The principle of Delhi's control over European officials in Tibet was now firmly established.[45]

Prestige was also a weapon in the struggle to remove from Anglo-Tibetan relations the influence of the China Consular Service (the equivalent in China of the Indian Political Department). There were two China Consulates in a position to become involved in Tibetan affairs, but one of these, the Kashgar Consulate, was maintained and staffed by the Government of India, as it was more easily reached from India than from Peking. The Kashgar Consuls were preoccupied with Russian influence in Sinkiang, and the Consulate had only peripheral involvement in Tibetan affairs.[46]

In 1913 however, the China Consular Service opened a post at Tachienlu, on Tibet's eastern border, in order to gather intelligence concerning events on that frontier. The cadre regarded this post as having a pro-Chinese perspective, and it posed a definite threat to their monopoly on the supply of regular intelligence from Tibet, and thus to their authority. Matters improved in 1917 with the posting to Tachienlu of Eric Teichman, whose views on Tibetan policy were in agreement with those of the Tibet cadre, but when Teichman departed in 1919, his replacement was W.H.King, whose pro-Chinese views were seen by Bell as a threat to his efforts to cultivate Anglo-Tibetan ties.[47]

Alastair Lamb has shown how Bell orchestrated a rather unseemly campaign to ensure King's removal from Tachienlu. Bell showed his mastery 'in the great game of bureaucratic survival and self-promotion'. and by forcing King's removal, restored the Government of India's full control over British relations with Tibet.[48]

King's despatches to Peking were sent via Sikkim, where they were seen by Bell and his government. After a long report by King in April 1921, which argued that the Eastern Tibetans would be better off under Chinese rule, Bell, who was then in Lhasa, became sharply critical of King's ability. In the Secretariat they watched with interest as 'Mr Bell and Mr King...are warming to the fray, and vigorously criticizing each other's despatches.' Bell homed in on King's weakness in Tibetan. On one occasion Bell pointed out 'forty lines in Mr King's Tibetan text with eighty-nine mistakes...The style of writing is not that



used in letters, and the handwriting is that of an uneducated man' which might 'result in disastrous errors'.[49]

Bell enlisted the aid of the Tibetans, who requested that India withdraw King as he was 'hostile to the Tibetans'. These requests continued after Bell's retirement, and, after a decent interval to avoid the appearance of bowing to Tibetan protests (which, it was believed, would have threatened British prestige), King was withdrawn and the Tachienlu post combined with that of Chengdhu.[50]

The removal of European China Customs officers from central Tibet, and China Consular officers from Tibet's eastern border, enhanced the status of the Tibet cadre, reflecting their increased influence on Anglo-Tibetan relations. Yet their removal also meant that an opportunity of understanding China's perspective on Tibet was lost. But most cadre officers disliked the Chinese as a race, and made little effort to understand them, as evinced by Ludlow's comment to Bailey that 'Williamson hates Kashgar and the Chinks. I agree with him as regards the chinks[sic].'[51]

## **SECTION 2.6: - CONTROL OF TRAVELLERS**

Prestige was an important factor in British policy towards European travellers' access to Tibet. The Tibet cadre were, to an extent, caught between the conflicting desires of Tibet's conservative ruling class to maintain its isolation, and the outside world, which sought to end it. The cadre generally favoured opening Tibet to foreign visitors, but sought to control both the numbers and the types of visitors allowed, in order to avoid antagonising the Tibetans and to ensure that those visitors allowed into Tibet represented the type of European who would maintain or enhance British prestige.

In the 19th century Tibet had, with Chinese assistance, generally excluded foreigners from its territory, their primary motive being the protection of their religion. In 1873, in order to prohibit unauthorised visits which would upset the Tibetans, India introduced the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, which, while permitting the continuance of traditional local cross-border relations, barred persons who were neither officials, nor (non-European) local inhabitants, from entering Tibet. Travellers required government permission to cross designated 'Inner Lines' set back from the Tibetan border. One unwanted effect of this was to increase Tibet's allure for Western travellers.

Individuals and institutions such as the Royal Geographical Society had hoped that the Younghusband Mission signalled the opening of Tibet to foreign travellers. But the strength of Tibetan opposition to this, allied to fears that Russians and Chinese could then

travel freely there, meant that the British continued to discourage most individuals who sought to enter Tibet. Following Bell's visit to Lhasa, access to Tibet was eased at his suggestion, and individuals were permitted to travel on the trade route via Yatung to Gyantse. The Tibetans continued to voice objections to these visitors, but the Government of India was always sensitive to criticism that it was the instigator of Tibet's isolation, and generally allowed travellers on the trade route.[52]

Access to Lhasa, or places away from the trade route, such as Shigatse, remained tightly controlled. The Tibetan Government's approval was required for these visits, and the Governments of India and Tibet regularly played out an elaborate charade, in which each claimed the other was refusing access. In practice, apart from a handful of visitors who obtained a invitation direct from the Tibetans, permission to visit Lhasa was obtained through unofficial representations by the British to the Tibetan Government. Those whose visit was strongly supported by the British were generally approved by the Tibetans, and permission was always forthcoming for British officials. The cadre were thus able to ensure that the British who came in contact with the Tibetan leadership represented the ideal they sought to present.[53]

The Government of India had legitimate reasons for wanting some control over European entry to Tibet. They sought to exclude known criminals, and those seeking to exploit Tibetan ignorance of the outside world. Unauthorised individuals could create incidents such as that involving an American 'adventurer' in 1907, who shot a tribesman in Eastern Tibet in a dispute over *ula*. [54]

In addition to the criminal element, however, there was another class of visitor the cadre opposed. The usually perceptive Teichman, in supporting the opening of Tibet to visitors, had concluded that 'once the novelty of the thing had worn off none would want to go there but Indian traders and wool buyers'; but Teichman greatly underestimated Tibet's appeal.[55]

Tibet attracted large numbers of Europeans who were outside the mainstream of their own culture. the culture which the Tibet cadre was attempting to present in the most positive light to the Tibetans. Large numbers of religious seekers (particularly Theosophists), eccentrics, adventurers, and even the mentally disturbed, sought to enter Tibet. Such persons were unlikely to present the image of Europeans which the cadre sought to project, and were thus seen as a threat. This 'threat' grew with the increasing number of visitors in the 1920s and '30s.

The cadre were particularly concerned with travellers' dress and mode of travel. Thus they objected to a Swiss traveller with 'only' two coolies who borrowed bedding from the *dak* bungalow *chaukidars* as, 'Such conduct...lowers the prestige of foreigners'. Even in

the 1930s they considered that, 'while nowadays no one expects to see a Curzonian frock coat in the middle of a desert, it is a pity that occasionally even Englishmen should travel...looking like sweeps'. To the cadre, the desired ideal visitor represented a particular type whose bearing and behaviour emulated that of the officers themselves. Travellers of that kind were considered to be 'a type which many other tourists would do well to emulate'.[56]

From the perspective of officers whose contact with women was restricted throughout school, university and colonial posting, female travellers were a particular threat to British prestige. Ludlow, noting the visit of one 'weird lady', wrote that 'we do get some funny people as visitors. All the women seem to be only too glad of an excuse to wear puttees and breeches all day long.' Richardson considered it 'particularly undesirable that European ladies should live in the servants quarters of dak bungalows'. To counter this problem, Gould decreed that female travellers were not permitted to travel in Tibet without a male escort. This was even applied to cadre officer's wives, although, in the case of the Politicals, they had usually been socially assessed by the Viceroy, along with their husbands.[57]

The cadres' attitude to religious seekers in Tibet was ambivalent. Travellers who were sympathetic and respectful to Buddhism were less liable to upset Tibetan sentiments. Many of the cadre officers themselves were also personally, as well as professionally, interested in Tibetan religion, and were not untouched by the attractions of the wider shores of Tibetan mysticism. But they were brought up with a belief in scientific lines of enquiry. When a traveller such as the American, Theos Bernard, visited Lhasa as a student of Buddhism, his exotic dress and manner were not unacceptable, but when he claimed to be the incarnation of an important Tibetan religious figure, and to have participated in 'secret ceremonies', British (and Tibetan) support for him vanished.[58]

However, the crucial issue was political. The dress and bearing of religious seekers could be distinct from that of other Europeans without threatening British prestige, for such distinctness was characteristic within Tibetan society. Seekers whose actions did not alienate the Tibetans, and whose later writings and speeches avoided Himalayan politics, and particularly British policy there, were considered acceptable; indeed it appears to have been regretted that there were no British seekers of their type.[59] But if these seekers became at all involved in political issues, they became *persona non grata* with the British, and generally with the Tibetans also.

The cadre reserved the greatest disapproval for William McGovern, an American lecturer from the School of Oriental Studies in London. McGovern was a member of a self-titled 'British Buddhist Mission' which visited Gyantse in 1922, but which was refused

permission to visit Lhasa. The India Office had warned Bailey that the Mission, although otherwise composed of Oxford University graduates, 'are a queer crowd..(who)..clearly show the cloven hoof'.[60]

McGovern returned with his fellows to India, but then secretly made his way back through Tibet in disguise, reaching Lhasa on 15 February 1923. He revealed his presence to the Tibetan authorities, who expelled him from Lhasa six weeks later. His subsequent book, and newspaper articles, widely publicised in Britain, made a number of comments on British policy in Tibet.[61]

McGovern's worst 'crime' in the Tibet cadre's eyes was his statement that there was a pro-Chinese party in Lhasa. Any evidence suggesting the Tibetans, particularly in Lhasa, in any way favoured the Chinese rather than the British was always denigrated. In this instance, Bailey obtained the assistance of Arthur Hinks, the Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society, with the result that the journal of the society published as strong an attack on McGovern's reliability and reputation as was legally possible to make. The journal claimed that 'whatever little value the story [of McGovern's journey] might have possessed is discounted by Dr. McGovern's obvious predilection for sensational journalism'. His conduct, they claimed, had done 'great disservice to good relations with Tibet', while his 'boast' that Indian frontier police were punished for failing to prevent his visit meant McGovern 'stands self-condemned'. Future references to him by cadre officers were inevitably derogatory; two decades later Bell described McGovern's book as 'a thriller' and incorrectly alleged that his disguise had been penetrated.[62]

The Government of India's embarrassment over the McGovern affair was compounded by Tibetan protests that McGovern had not been punished. Delhi had decided that the available penalty was so small as to be not worth enforcing, as it would only give McGovern more publicity. This led the Tibetans to suspect McGovern's journey was not an illicit one, and provided ammunition for conservative elements in Tibet to oppose Europeans' right to travel in Tibet.[63]

In retrospect it is difficult to see that McGovern's visit had any great effect on Anglo-Tibetan relations, and it is perhaps surprising that none of the cadre officers, no strangers to illicit journeys themselves, revealed any admiration for McGovern. It may be that the cadre felt their failure to intercept McGovern reflected badly on the controls exercised by their government, and hence harmed their own prestige within the system.[64]

## SECTION 2.7: - FOREIGN TRAVELLERS

For the cadre, the ideal traveller was one whose character and behaviour were of the type thought necessary to uphold European prestige, and whose visit would further British interests in Tibet in some way. Although non-British travellers were generally discouraged, the epitome of the traveller considered ideal was the Italian, Professor Guiseppe Tucci, who made a number of visits to Tibet.

Tucci, already an eminent scholar when he first applied to visit Tibet in the 1920s, cultivated good relations with important British officials such as Basil Gould and the Indian Foreign Secretary E.B.Howell, and he gave the British detailed reports of his travels, including maps and copies of his books. Tucci took care not to transgress the Tibetan travel regulations, and he had considerable personal funds, which, together with his professed Buddhism, ensured that he established good relations with the Tibetans. The Government of India continued to support Tucci's travels throughout the 1930s, even after another Tibetologist, Marco Pallis, had written to Delhi criticising Tucci's removal of large numbers of artifacts from Tibet.[65]

In 1946, with Britain and Italy still technically at war, and with the British Council informing the India Office that Tucci had lost his chair at Rome University for supporting Mussolini, support for Tucci was more circumspect. But Richardson in Lhasa, while not prepared to support the Italian officially, suggested to Tucci that he send the Lhasa Mission eight copies of his latest book, 'for distribution as ground bait' to Tibetan officials: Tucci did so and duly got approval for another trip to Tibet. Continued support for Tucci came because his researches were 'a valuable contribution towards...our main aim of policy viz. that Tibet always has had, and continues to have, a separate national existence'.[66]

Although Tucci was the ideal traveller, there was a general reluctance to allow non-British travellers into Tibet. Most foreign travellers were seen as representatives of their native government. As the interests of Japan, France, Germany, America, Russia and China (who provided the bulk of non-British travellers to Tibet), were not normally synonymous with those of the British in Tibet, foreign visitors were viewed with great suspicion. Non-British travellers with sufficient backing from official circles, or a few wealthy individuals who obtained an invitation directly from the Tibetans, were able to visit Tibet, but those who entered from India were closely monitored by British contacts among the guides, syces and other caravan personnel that travellers needed.[67]

Alastair Lamb sees this attitude as a 'deliberate policy of limiting Tibetan opportunities for acquiring knowledge about, and contacts in, the outside world'.[68] Certainly the available evidence suggests that progressive elements of Tibetan society (such as Tsarong Shape, the

outstanding secular personality in 20th century Tibet), were keen to contact any foreign travellers. But there were obvious cases where foreign visitors potentially posed a great threat to British Indian interests. One example was the 1939 German Mission to Lhasa.

The German expedition, led by Dr D.E.Schafer, had Himmler's personal support; several of its members were SS. officers. India was placed under considerable pressure by Whitehall, then following Chamberlain's 'appeasement policy', to allow them to enter Tibet. India bowed to this pressure, and Richardson was instructed to assist the Germans to obtain Tibetan permission to visit Lhasa. Richardson was very reluctant to do so, and most unusually received a 'private and personal' telegram from the Viceroy which stated, 'I have to ask you to do what you are asked'.[69]

The Germans, however, achieved little. Before he left Germany, Schafer had accidentally shot his wife and, if British reports are to be believed, was mentally unstable. Schafer also formed an indiscreet relationship with his young caravan leader, and tried to arrange to take him to Germany. The unexpected outcome of the German's visit, Richardson was happy to report, was 'results of lasting value to us...they created an unfavourable impression in Lhasa...and by contrast heightened our prestige'. Richardson thus implied that the Tibetans distinguished between British and Germans, and would henceforth favour the British.[70]

In general, the Tibet cadre were successful in restricting access to Lhasa to British officials of the desired 'type'. Those Europeans who were able to reach Lhasa without British support were either individuals of no political importance, or on missions which failed to achieve their political objects. Neither impaired British prestige in Tibet.

### **CONCLUSION: - THE TIBETAN VIEW**

As the British used prestige as a weapon of policy, the question arises as to how successful a weapon it was. English language sources represent the view of the dominant culture, and references to Tibetan views are usually filtered through British perceptions, but what evidence is available suggests the Tibetans were less impressed by the symbols of British prestige than the British hoped. The Tibetans were concerned with their own ceremonial forms, and British adherence to these was undoubtedly contrasted favourably with the approach of the Chinese. But the waxing and waning of Tibetan fondness for the British does not appear to relate to British prestige.[71]

Certainly outer forms such as dress appear to have gained the British nothing. After seeing a picture of the 'Trooping of the Colour', a Tibetan official commented. "You are just like us when you are at home. Why don't you wear bright colours like this when you

come to Tibet." [72] Nor were the Tibetans likely to think less of the British when women travelled cheaply or alone. Both were common within Tibetan society. The Tibetans were far more concerned that European women, like men, would affect Tibetan culture; as may be seen by the ban on 'bobbed hair and foreign style shoes' which the Tibetan Government sought to impose on women in 1946. [73] Similarly the local officials in western Tibet were unlikely to hold the Gartok Trade Agent in any less regard because he indulged in personal trade, as this was the accepted practice among Tibetan officials there.

Several studies have shown how, in the context of British India, architecture was an important weapon in establishing British prestige, with Residencies acting as symbols of British power. [74] Although Richardson stated that 'it never occurred to me that the buildings at Yatung and Gyantse had any importance in terms of prestige', other cadre officers described the British buildings there as 'incompatible with dignity' or 'a disgrace to the name and prestige of the British Government'. The Tibetan view was expressed by their officials in discussions with Bailey over the building of an English school in Gyantse in the 1920s. Bailey reported that 'They said our houses were always badly made and required repairs so they wanted to build the school themselves.' [75]

Nor do the British appear to have created such a deep impression on the Tibetans as British sources indicate. Many Tibetans, even monks in Lhasa, were actually unaware of the existence of British representatives in Tibet, while to Tibetan officials outside central Tibet, the Government of India was 'a shadowy and far-off power, agreements with which can be safely ignored'. [76]

While the Younghusband Mission had brought home to the Tibetan Government the extent of British power, the Tibetans were well aware of subsequent events in India as it moved towards independence. British leniency in dealing with Indian nationalists was seen as a weakness. [77] Success in two World Wars had little effect on British prestige, for the Tibetans were, much to the frustration of the British, almost entirely indifferent to these events. They may, however, as Lamb suggests for the period after 1942, have made it obvious to the Tibetans that the British were no threat to Tibet, a perspective which was probably to British advantage. [78]

Despite the evidence suggesting that Tibetans interpreted British status in a very different form from that intended, there does not appear to have been any real questioning by the British as to the effectiveness of prestige as a weapon. This was taken for granted, for reasons which reflect the imperial confidence. During the 1940s however, while there was no decline in the British use of symbols of prestige, there was an increasing emphasis on another, apparently more successful, means of impressing the Tibetans. There was an increasing use of financial support for key elements of the Tibetan power structure; a move

perhaps, from over-reliance on outdated modes of cultural expression to a more cynical *realpolitik*. The cadre were again at the heart of this change of policy, which will be examined in Chapter Four, after we have, in the next chapter, examined the role of the intermediaries.



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## FOOTNOTES

- [1] Addy (1985, p.94), quoting IOLR MSS Eur F111-162, Curzon papers, Hamilton to Curzon, 19 February 1903.
- [2] Cohn (1983, pp.165-209); Robb (1992, pp.39, 43, 385); Interview with Dr M.V.Kurian, January 1994.
- [3] Sikkim State Archives, General 1916, (7) 10/3/(XX11)/1916, David-Neel to Bell, 31 August 1916.
- [4] Younghusband (1910, p.11).
- [5] Nilsson (1968, p.115); Yapp (1980, p.12).
- [6] Prasad (1979, p.506), quoting Curzon to Secretary of State John Broderick, 7 November 1903.
- [7] Allworth (1967, p.57).
- [8] Macdonald (1991, p.84).
- [9] IOLR MSS Eur F157-241, Ludlow to Bailey, 19 November 1944; Interview with Dr M.V.Kurian, January 1994; re the IMS organisation, see Crawford (1930); Heathcote (1974, pp.63-64).
- [10] IOLR L/P&S/12/4217-4253, Gould Mission report; also see L/P&S/12/4166-2754, India to Gould, 12 September 1939.
- [11] Walters papers, 'Gyantse to Lhasa 1940/1', (unpublished article).
- [12] NAI FD, 1906 External B August 61-67, India to White, 30 May 1906.
- [13] NAI FD, Secret E March 45-46, O'Connor to India, 23 December 1906; India to O'Connor, 24 December 1906; file notes by Dane, 21 and 23 December 1905. Dane's comment is noteworthy for indicating that the Tibet cadre were seen a distinct entity as early as 1906.
- [14] Dewey (1993, p.V11, & *passim*); Robb (1992, p.38).
- [15] McGovern (1924, p.39); NAI FD, 1906 Secret E March 45-46, White to India, 20 December 1905.
- [16] IOLR L/P&S/7/216-1287, Frontier Confidential Report of 1 June 1908.
- [17] Williamson (1987, p.205). For details of the contrasting accounts of the Dalai Lama's installation, see Lamb (1989, pp.297-98).
- [18] Bell (1987, p.455); Interview with Mrs J.M.Jehu, March 1993.
- [19] Ballhatchet (1980, pp.116-20); Spangenberg (1971, pp.348-360).
- [20] NAI FD, 1916 Index, Estimate May 109-110 Part B; Mainprice papers, diary entry, 5 August 1944.
- [21] NAI FD, 1929 External Secret 178-X, File note by Sir Denys Bray, 23 June 1929; FD, 1908 Secret E August 226-229, Bell to India, 16 June 1908; Robb (1992, p.43).
- [22] Spangenberg (1976, p.143).
- [23] NAI FD, 1906 External A December 31-38, File Note by V.Gabriel, 16 July 1906.

[24] IOLR L/P&S/11/79-2495, BTA Gartok to Superintendent, Punjab Hill States, 10 December 1913; also see McKay (1992a, pp.410-11, 414-15).

[25] IOLR L/P&S/10-186, Captain Rawling to Dane, 2 November 1905.

[26] The following British officials visited Western Tibet on inspection duties: C.Sherring in 1905, H.Calvert 1906, W.Cassels 1907, N.C.Stiffe 1911, C.M.Collet 1912, G.M.Young in 1912, H.Ruttledge 1926, E.W.Wakefield 1928, F.Williamson 1932 (demi-official), and Captain R.K.M.Saker in 1942. Those before Wakefield were ICS officers. Only Williamson and Saker otherwise served in Tibet; Hugh Ruttledge led the 1933 Everest Expedition.

[27] In addition to his basic salary of 100 rupees a month, he drew around four and half thousand rupees in expenses in 1924; IOLR L/P&S/12/4163, Wakefield report number 6; NAI FD, 1913 Secret E January 79-81, Report of G.M.Young, 29 July 1912. Young's visit was specifically to enquire into the accounts of T.J.Chand.

[28] NAI FD, 1911 Secret E June 170-172, File note by E.H.S. Clarke, 25 May 1911; FD, 1913 Secret E January 79-81, file note by 'T.W.', 7 October 1912; FD, 1911 External B May 20-22, file note by E.H.S Clarke, 17 February 1911; FD, 1905 Secret E February 1398-1445, file note by 'F.Y.' (Francis Younghusband), 4 November 1904; IOLR L/P&S/12/4163, various reports by E.W. Wakefield and G.Worsley, and Barkha Tarjum to India, 15 November 1928, (in Appendix D to Wakefield report Number 2.).

[29] IOLR L/P&S/12/4163, Government of the Punjab to India, 3 July 1930; L/P&S/12/4163-7900, BTA Gartok to Superintendent Punjab Hill States, 3-9 August 1931.

[30] Saker Papers, 'The future of the British Trade Agency', copy of a report by Captain Saker, c1942.

[31] NAI FD, 1909 Establishment B December 318-321, Bell to India, 29 July 1909.

[32] See Robb (1992, pp.34, 40-45).

[33] IOLR L/P&S/12/4223-6672, Hopkinson to India, 31 October 1945; MacDonald papers, 'A Himalayan Biography' (p.57), unpublished manuscript by D.Macdonald jnr.

[34] Stewart (1989, p.108), quoting E.W.Howell to Clarmont Skrine c1923.

[35] Neitzche F., Birth of Tragedy, London, 1923 (p.117).

[36] Interview with Mrs R.Collett, March 1993, Interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993; also see Bell (1987, p.217); Williamson (1987, p.54); Weir papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 6 April 1930. There are numerous files in which the policy of excluding missionaries from contact with Tibet is articulated; e.g. IOLR L/P&S/10/1011 and NAI FD, 1906 External B January 209-210. Christian missionaries did manage to enter Tibet, but no European missionary in this period reached Tibet's main centres, Lhasa and Shigatse. John Bray, of the Policy Research Institute, London, is currently researching the history of missionary contacts with Tibet.

[37] Cohn (1985, pp.312-13); Robb (1992, p.41).

[38] Born Chensal Namgang Dasang Dadul, Tsarong (1886-1959), who was of humble origin, took the name of the aristocratic family he married into. *Shape* was a title [see glossary]. Among other posts, Tsarong served as Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan Army, and as Tibet's Finance Minister.

[39] Cohn (1985).

[40] NAI FD, 1908 Secret E February 307-366, O'Connor to India, 13 January 1908; Yatung Annual Reports for this period are contained in IOLR L/P&S/12/4166.

[41] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E March 294-308; file note by 'K.L.G.', 20 September 1904; also see McKay (1992a, p.417).

[42] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E March 294-308; various correspondence; FD, 1907 Secret E January 538-541, file note by Louis Dane, 2 December 1906. The issue of Yatung as a Treaty Port had apparently first been raised in 1894; see Louis (1894, p.38).

[43] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E March 294-308; various correspondence; FD, 1907 Secret E February 295-353, O'Connor to India, 26 December 1906.

[44] Lamb (1966, pp.39-40), quoting Foreign Office 17/1754, India Office to Foreign Office, 14 February 1905, and 23 May 1905; NAI FD, 1905 Secret E March 294-308, Younghusband to Dane, 27 August 1904.

[45] INA FD, 1905 Secret E March 294-308, various correspondence; FD 1913 Secret E August 276-291, various correspondence; FD, Secret E June 502-511, Mr Chang to Government of Bengal, 3 May 1907. Re the China Customs Service, see Wright (1950).

[46] Another Consulate was opened in Urumchi in 1936, but this was also concerned with events in Sinkiang. There were proposals to open a consulate in Urga after Mongolia gained independence in 1913, but they were not followed up.

[47] Lamb (1989, pp.52-75); IOLR L/P&S/11/81-3122, Sir John Jordan to C.R.Coales, 3 November 1915. Sir Eric Teichman GCMG. KCMG. (1884-1944), who was of German descent, was educated at Charterhouse and Cambridge. He joined the China Consular Service in 1907 and rose to be head of the Service as Chinese Secretary at the Peking Legation from 1924-36. He returned from retirement in 1942, and served at Chunking, where Richardson was also then stationed. Teichman had travelled widely in the eastern Tibet frontier region, and was held in high regard by the cadre, with whose views he was in close accord.

[48] Lamb (1989, pp.101-02, 125-128).

[49] IOLR L/P&S/10/883, various correspondence 1921; Lamb (1989, pp.125-28).

[50] IOLR L/P&S/10/884, various correspondence 1922.

[51] The only officers who appear to have devoted any real attention to the Chinese perspective were Bell, who visited China in 1907, where he read the British Legation files on Tibet, and Campbell, although Richardson also had good personal relations with his Chinese counterparts in Lhasa; NAI FD, 1908 Secret E February 467-482, Bell to Dane, 19 December 1907; MSS Eur F157-241, Ludlow to Bailey, 5 January 1930.

[52] Visits to Yatung were almost unrestricted and the numbers grew annually, culminating in more than 200 visitors in 1945-46, when the journey was popular with military personnel awaiting demobilisation. Bell's policy is outlined in IOLR L/P&S/10/1011-1286, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 May 1921, quoting Bell to India, 9 May 1921.

[53] There are a wide variety of primary sources concerning British control of access to Tibet. Of particular importance is IOLR L/P&S/12/4343, Gould to India, July 1938 (exact date unclear), in which Gould asks whether the grant of permission to the Schaefer Mission should be left 'to the discretion of the Tibetan Government or whether Norbhu should be instructed to obtain the desired permission'. Also see L/P&S/12/4201-6471, Lhasa Mission Report, 24 August 1942, regarding Richardson's obtaining permission for the visit of two American officers.

[54] NAI FD, 1907 Secret E October 381-387, Consulate-General Chengdhu to India, 13 June 1907, and Thakur Jai Chand to India, 12 July 1907; also see FD, 1909 External B January 16-21, various correspondence re W.S.Paxton; IOLR L/P&S/11/286-114, various correspondence re

F.Houshka.

[55] IOLR L/P&S/10/716-140, Teichman report, 29 February 1920.

[56] IOLR L/P&S/12/4325, India to Government of Bengal, 23 October 1936; L/P&S/12/4197-3864, Gould report, 30 April 1937; L/P&S/12/4175-8833, article No.5 by Captain R.K.M.Battye (unpublished).

[57] IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entry, 30 September 1926; L/P&S/12/4332, Richardson to India, 5 June 1937; NAI EAD, 1940 Index File No 102 (5)-X; Interview with Mrs A.Saker, April 1993; Williamson (1987, pp.225-26).

[58] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a 130, Rev. Tharchin to Bell, 11 December 1937; L/P&S/12/4193, Lhasa Mission diary entries, 24 June 1937, & 4 September 1937; L/P&S/12/4202-6154, Lhasa Mission report, 16 February 1947. Re Bernard, see Cooper (1986); Bernard's own account (1939) is unreliable.

[59] Examples of religious seekers in this 'acceptable' category include the American, Edwin Schary, and the German-Bolivian, Lama Anagorika Govinda, who travelled in western Tibet during World War One, and in the 1940s, respectively.

[60] IOLR MSS Eur F157-221, Hirtzell to Bailey, 15 November 1922. The term 'cloven hoof' may be interpreted as indicating that they were regarded as communist sympathisers; personal correspondence with Dr Brendan Simms (Cambridge University), March 1995.

[61] McGovern's account of his journey is in McGovern (1924).

[62] IOLR MSS Eur F157-269, Bailey's letter of 12 October [1923?], apparently to Mrs I.Bailey; RGS, Bailey Correspondence, 1921-30, Bailey to Hinks, 8 April 1924, Hinks to Bailey, 28 April 1924, Mrs Irma Bailey to Hinks, 6 December 1923; Bell (1987, p.355); *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1924 (2) pp.170-71. McGovern (1924, pp.407-08).

[63] IOLR MSS Eur F157-238, General Pereira to Bailey, 21 May 1923; MSS Eur F157-290, Bailey report, 28 October 1924; L/P&S/10/1011-3605, Viceroy to the Secretary of State, 5 September 1923.

[64] Also unpopular with the 'men on the spot', were the many 'gate-crashers and spongers', often well-known personalities, who considered they were entitled to free hospitality from British officials; see IOLR MSS Eur D 998-17, Hopkinson to Mrs Hopkinson, 21 March 1945, 12 April 1945 and 21 April 1945; Mainprice papers, diary entry of 11 July 1944.

[65] Tucci responded by advising the Tibetan Government to set up a Department of Antiquities which would, among other duties, prevent the removal of artifacts from Tibet. The Government of India was inclined to accept that until they did, artifacts were better off in Tucci's keeping.

[66] IOLR L/P&S/12/4247, Gould to E.P.Donaldson (India Office), 6 April 1946; this file contains a detailed record of Tucci's applications and related correspondence.

[67] For example, in 1930 the cadre arranged for a particular caravan leader to accompany the wealthy American traveller Sydam Cutting; IOLR MSS Eur F157-236, Laden La to Bailey, 18 September 1930.

[68] Lamb (1989, p.189).

[69] Interview with H.Richardson, November 1990.

[70] IOLR L/P&S/12/4165-7795, Lhasa Mission report 1938-39, by H.Richardson, in Gould to India, 24 October 1939; details of the Schafer mission are contained in L/P&S/12/4343.

[71] The British had some success however, Williamson's wife reports that in Sikkim the locals

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found it difficult to believe that there were people above the Political Officer; Williamson (1987, p.42).

[72] Ford (1990, p.91).

[73] L/P&S/12/4202-2424, Lhasa Mission report, 3 March 1946. The ban was ineffective. Such edicts often appear to have been moral guidelines, rather than laws in the European sense.

[74] See Nilsson (1968, pp.105, & 111-115); also see Jones (1985, p.53), & Robb (1992, p.174).

[75] Personal correspondence with H.Richardson, October 1990; IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-2781, Gould to India, 22 February 1939; L/P&S/12/4166, Gyantse Annual Report 1929-30; MSS Eur F157-214, Bailey's Lhasa Mission Diary, entry of 14 August 1924. There were numerous problems in maintaining the Agency buildings, particularly at Gyantse, which was subject to flooding and suffered from corrupt and inefficient building contractors.

[76] Richardson & Skorupski (1986, p.V11); NAI FD, 1911 Secret E June 170-172, Government of the Punjab to India, 17 May 1911.

[77] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a 92, Macdonald to Bell, 8 July 1930.

[78] After V.E. Day in 1945 it was reported that Britain's victory was 'a matter of more or less indifference to them'. IOLR L/P&S/12/4201-2859, Lhasa Mission Report of 13 May 1945; Lamb (1989, p.300).

## CHAPTER THREE

### **'THE RIGHT HAND OF EVERY POLITICAL OFFICER':**

#### **THE ROLE OF THE INTERMEDIARIES**

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The process of European expansion in South Asia created a need for intermediaries between the imperial and indigenous societies. Government officials, and other groups involved in the imperial process such as explorers and missionaries, needed local employees who could translate the language, culture and aspirations of one society to the other. This demand led to the creation of a distinct, and ultimately powerful class of local government officials who served as intermediaries for the British.[1]

These intermediaries played an important part in Anglo-Tibetan relations; and the most trusted of them were appointed to Political Department posts. As individuals and as a class, they were strongly influenced by the character and mentality of the Tibet cadre officers. In this chapter we will examine the careers of the most important of them in order to illustrate how local employees were chosen, trained, and used by the British, and the effects that this process had upon their character, culture and mentality. This study forms part of a wider debate over the role of local intermediaries in the imperial process, and explores the issue which the British in India never fully resolved; what was the ideal character of a local employee? Was he British in all but race, or should he retain certain aspects of his own culture. and if so, which aspects?

#### **SECTION 3.1: - THE EARLY INTERMEDIARIES**

During the 19th century the Government of India employed various types of local people to obtain information about Tibet. The most important of these were the *pandits* (trained surveyors, native to the Indian Himalayas, who travelled in various disguises to

clandestinely map Tibet), and the school teacher Rai Bahadur Sarat Chandra Das CIE. (1849-1917).[2]

The *pandits'* main duty was to gather geographical data, and they were extremely successful in this task. But whereas they travelled among the lower social classes in Tibet, Chandra Das's mission was to contact powerful figures in Tibetan society in order to collect political information. Just as Political officers were directed to 'cultivate the friendship of the local Ruling Chiefs', Das was under instructions to 'cultivate the friendship of influential persons'.[3]

Chandra Das, a Tibetan speaking Bengali, was the first headmaster of the Bhotia Boarding School in Darjeeling, which was opened in 1874 specifically to train Bhotia and Sikkimese intermediaries in preparation for the opening of Tibet to the British. In 1891 the Bhotia school merged with the Darjeeling school to become Darjeeling High School.[4]

Das became the first of many intermediaries from the school when he was given a nominal government post as a school inspector, freeing him to travel to Tibet. He was accompanied by Rai Bahadur Urgyen Gyatso, a Sikkimese lama from an aristocratic family, who had been employed as a teacher at the Bhotia School after serving on the staff of the Rajah of Sikkim. Urgyen Gyatso made a number of journeys to Tibet under British auspices, alone, or accompanying Chandra Das. Unlike the *pandits*, the two school-teachers continued to be employed as Tibetan specialists after their return to India.[5]

When the Tibetan Government later discovered that Chandra Das had visited Lhasa, and correctly assumed that he had been spying for the British, the strength of their reaction underlined the Lhasa Government's determination to preserve Tibet's isolation. The Panchen Lama's Prime Minister, Kyabying Sengchen Tulku, an incarnate lama from Dongtse Monastery who had been Das's principal sponsor, was executed, and the Dongtse ruling family, the Palhes, close associates of Sengchen Tulku, were severely punished.[6]

The decision to force the Tibetans to open diplomatic relations with British India meant that a new type of intermediary was required, one who was accustomed to dealing with the Lhasa aristocracy. Such people were particularly difficult to locate in such an isolationist society as Tibet, where the ruling class appeared to present a united front against high-level foreign contact. Increasing Western contact with Tibet in the late 19th century had produced a small body of men with experience in guiding European travellers there, but these guides, such as caravan leader Mahmood Isa, were mostly members of the Central Asian trading class, and they had little social status.[7]

Individuals of low social status had neither the contacts, nor the prestige and social skills, necessary to approach and influence the Tibetan ruling class. However the punishment inflicted on the aristocratic Palhe family had alienated them from the Lhasa

ruling classes, creating an opportunity for the British to exploit their estrangement, as well as to reward the assistance they had given the British agents.

Kusho Palhese, (later Dewan Bahadur Palhese) exiled scion of the Palhe family, came to Kalimpong when Bell was seeking a suitable Tibetan instructor, and he became Bell's personal assistant. Bell's notebooks reveal the enormous contribution Palhese made to his understanding of Tibet, and Bell was, by the standards of the time, generous in his praise of the Tibetan's contribution to his work. The two men became close friends, and Bell brought Palhese to Britain in the 1920s to assist his research. Palhese's association with the British enabled him to restore the family estates, although Bell's account attributes his primary motivation to more personal factors.[8]

The punishment of the Palhe family also provided O'Connor with his principal assistant, a Buriat monk, Sherab Gyatso (later Rai Sahib Sherab Gyatso; d.1909), known as Shabdrung Lama. He had been a personal attendant of Sengchen Tulku when the lama was executed for assisting Chandra Das. Imprisoned and tortured along with his master, Shabdrung Lama escaped to Darjeeling. There he was given employment as a teacher at the Bhotia school, and as a British agent gathering information from Tibetans in Darjeeling bazaar, before being employed by O'Connor as his personal secretary on the Younghusband Mission.[9]

According to David MacDonald, Shabdrung Lama saw his service with the British as an opportunity for revenge on the Tibetan Government; during the Younghusband Mission he told Tibetans the expedition was to punish them for their treatment of Sengchen Tulku.[10] O'Connor's action in securing the release of two of Shabdrung Lama's colleagues who had been imprisoned in Lhasa since Das's 1882 visit,[11] must have tended to confirm that impression. Certainly it carried an implicit message, that the British supported those who supported them, an essential message to convey if they were to receive loyalty in return.

Palhese and Shabdrung Lama differed from later important intermediaries in that their primary loyalty was to a particular officer, rather than to the British in general. Thus Palhese's first loyalty was to Bell; he served on the understanding that if Bell left 'government service today, I leave tomorrow'.[12] Later cadre officers continued to have assistants loyal to them personally, but these assistants were not politically influential.[13]

Michael Fisher has shown that two patterns of service were common among intermediaries in the Indian Princely States. One group of *munshis* were linked to a particular British patron throughout their careers. In the second group there was a pattern of family service, in which after one family member was recruited, he would endeavour to secure employment in British service for other family members.[14] Both patterns are apparent in Tibet at different times.



In later years the dominant pattern was one of cadre service, largely because the rewards of service with a single officer ceased when that officer departed. The shorter terms served by later Tibet cadre officers also made the individual patron pattern of service less common, and there may be an evolutionary progress from the personal type of loyal assistant to the second pattern Fisher isolated, as British terms of service were reduced. But this move to cadre service was also a symbol of local employees' attempts to strengthen their positions in the imperial hierarchy as British officers appropriated the authority for collection and definition of local knowledge and for communication with the Tibetan ruling class.

Previous studies have shown how in the early stages of the imperial process, local employees were used both to translate, and to gather information concerning the traditional society. Nicholas Dirks has shown how Colin MacKenzie, later the first Surveyor-General of India, relied upon his principal assistant, Kavelli Boria, to gather, collate and interpret the wide variety of information which MacKenzie sought. Boria trained other assistants, including two of his brothers, but after MacKenzie's death they were refused permission to continue the work on the grounds that supervision of such a project was beyond the capability of any 'native'. [15]

MacKenzie, like Bell, fully acknowledged the debt he owed to his local assistant, but, as Dirks demonstrates, when the information which the local assistants had gathered was collated in colonial archives, it became a part of the imperial body of knowledge, rather than local knowledge. The credit for collection went to MacKenzie, not to his local informants, just as Bell was credited with Palhese's knowledge. Similarly, while they were the Political's Tibetan-language examiners until 1909, neither Ugyen Gyatso or Chandra Das played any further significant part in Anglo-Tibetan relations after Curzon's arrival. Their journeys had been part of the process by which British India extended its influence over the periphery. Firstly new territory was mapped, and thus located within the European imagination, then its power sources were identified, and intermediaries despatched to establish communication with them. When contacts were established - or refused - British officers took over.

As the imperial power strengthened its control over the periphery, as it did during the Curzon viceroyalty, the authority for supplying information about, and establishing political ties with, Tibet, was appropriated by British officers. When Europeans appropriated this authority for knowledge gathering and dissemination, 'native' informants came to be seen as unreliable. Where the early intermediaries had been given responsibility for the collection of knowledge, the translation of cultures, and initial contact with the traditional rulers beyond India's frontiers, the authority for these duties passed to British officers. This process, which reduced the importance of intermediaries, was typical of

British Indian frontier policies, and may also be observed in the establishment of ties with Bhutan or north-eastern India.[16] In response, the intermediary class sought to strengthen its position within the imperial bureaucracy by transferring its loyalty and service from individuals to government.[17]

### **SECTION 3.2: - THE IDEAL INTERMEDIARY**

While Palhese and Shabdrung Lama were of great personal assistance to Bell and O'Connor, they were, like Chandra Das, unpopular at Lhasa. It proved to be impossible to offer Tibetan employees full legal protection from Lhasa's authority by naturalising them, and Palhese remained the only important Tibetan-born intermediary used by the cadre.[18]

Ideally, what the British wanted was an individual who could match the status and talents of Agvan Dorzhiev, the Buriat monk who acted as an intermediary between Russia and Tibet. A Russian citizen, Dorzhiev took his degree in Buddhism at Lhasa's Drepung monastery and rose to be an assistant tutor to the 13th Dalai Lama; he was thus a member of Lhasa's religious elite. At the same time, he represented Russian interests in Lhasa, and sent valuable information back to Russia. Dorzhiev was a formidable opponent for the British, but they recognised that he was the ideal type of intermediary, a loyal citizen of the imperial power, but highly placed in the local society.[19]

Lacking any existing British Indian equivalent of Dorzhiev, the Government of India began to develop suitable candidates from among the Tibetan-speaking peoples within India. Pupils of the former Bhotia school, set-up for just such purpose, and its replacement, Darjeeling High School, were obvious candidates. These Darjeeling pupils were not necessarily advantaged individuals in local society; many came from marginalised communities on the periphery of traditional society. But the school offered an opportunity for disadvantaged children to progress to imperial employment, where their lack of ties to local power elites could be seen as an advantage by the British.

The Younghusband Mission recruited a number of clerks and translators from the frontier region, and although there are few records of these early employees, it appears that the favoured candidates were Tibetan-speakers who been taught English language and cultural values at Darjeeling High School.[20] After the Younghusband Mission, many of these local staff were given further employment at the Trade Agencies or with the Political Officer in Sikkim. This group formed the basis of an emerging class of intermediaries on the Tibetan frontier, and most of the early influential local employees of the Tibet cadre were from that group.

### **SECTION 3.3: - EXCLUDING INDIANS FROM TIBET**

Prior to the appointment of Pemba Tsering in 1941, the Gartok Agent and his staff were always Hindus, with the occasional Muslim peon. Gartok was considered too isolated and strategically unimportant to require the presence of a British officer, and Hindus from the Garwhal hill-region, who had traditional ties with western Tibet, served there. However, no Hindus or Muslims were chosen by the Political Department for the senior cadre posts.[21]

When they selected local officials for Tibetan service, the cadre favoured the predominantly Buddhist, British Indian frontier peoples. With their close historical, cultural, racial and linguistic ties with Tibet they could be expected to adapt most easily to the Tibetan social system.[22] When it became obvious that India would become independent, Richardson tried to locate suitable Indians to serve in the Gyantse Agency in preparation for more senior cadre posts, but it was not until after Indian independence that any Hindu or Muslim was given a senior cadre post in Tibet.[23]

The British prejudice against using Hindus or Muslims in Tibet can be traced back to the first British visitor there, George Bogel. He noted that it was 'inconvenient carrying Hindu servants into foreign parts'.[24] Later frontier officials distinguished between 'Indians', meaning Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and so on, and the predominantly Buddhist frontier peoples, and maintained a barely-concealed personal preference for the latter. The predilection for hill-peoples over the peoples of the plains went beyond the usual colonial officer's favouring of the peoples among whom he worked. In British India, mountain people were commonly seen as morally and physically superior to those of the plains.[25]

By such actions as rejecting Captain Goil's posting to Gyantse, early cadre officers established a precedent for the exclusion of Hindus and Muslims from any but menial positions in Tibet, and no further consideration was given to employing them there until Indian independence was imminent. An Indian officer, Lieutenant Chatterjee, did serve at Gyantse as Escort Commander, but died at the end of his term there.[26]

When Bell discussed appointing an 'Indian' as Yatung Trade Agent, he claimed that 'Indians are handicapped by their inability to speak Tibetan, by the difference of their religion and by their ignorance of the habits of the people'.[27] Bell's judgment reflected the ethos of the time; the British obviously had a similar handicap, but were assumed to be able to overcome it. 'Indians' were perceived as a subordinate race, lacking the necessary qualities to overcome these handicaps. Kenneth Ballhatchet describes these stereotypical views of Indians as fitting

the classical models of dominance and subordination. Members of the dominant group ascribe to themselves the qualities needed for the tasks which they wish to monopolize. They are unable to perceive such qualities in persons of subordinate groups, who are excluded from positions in which they can demonstrate these qualities.[28]

There was however, another aspect to the preference for frontier peoples over 'Indians'. It implied that the Tibet cadre recognised that India was a British construction, a state made up of different peoples, some of whom had their strongest ties (socio-cultural, political and economic), with peoples classified as being non-Indian, and existing outside India's borders. While it was necessary for British strategic and administrative purposes to define certain areas as 'Indian', the frontier was perceived as a separate zone, inhabited by peoples whose status was ambiguous, and the artificial nature of the administrative boundary was implicitly recognised.[29]

The exclusion of Indians was also a symbol of the Tibet cadre's sense of identity and purpose. While being an Indian service, and orientated towards their central authority in Delhi, the cadre saw themselves as diplomats, serving on the frontier, and among frontier peoples. They had no wish to be drawn back into the Indian administration, with its image of *babus* and bureaucracy.

#### **SECTION 3.4: - MACDONALD; DORJI OR DAVID?**

Within British India, Anglo-Indians, those of mixed British and Indian parentage, were often subject to greater prejudice than Indians, and they were excluded from several areas of government employment.[30] But in Tibet, Anglo-Indians were preferred to Indians. The difference is difficult to account for, but certainly some aspects of British Indian social attitudes were relaxed on the frontier,[31] and there was the precedent of a number of legendary Anglo-Indian frontiersmen, such as the Hearsey family, and General James Skinner, founder of Skinner's Horse, an irregular cavalry division. Several Anglo-Indian Medical Officers were used, including Dr Dyer, who accompanied Bell to Lhasa in 1920. In the 1940s, two Christian Medical Officers, the Anglo-Indian Dr Humphreys, and Captain M.V.Kurian, paved the way for the subsequent posting of Hindu Medical Officers at Gyantse.[32]

One Anglo-Indian was chosen for a Political post in Tibet, David MacDonald, the son of a Scottish tea planter, who became an important figure on the frontier. Although his father

had left India when MacDonald was five years old, the boy was well provided for, receiving the then generous sum of twenty rupees a month in trust. His Sikkimese mother, Aphu Drolma, entered him in the Bhotia Boarding School, from where he entered local government service, before joining the Younghusband Mission.[33] While MacDonald began regular Tibetan service as a Trade Agent, not an intermediary, unlike the other two local officers classified here as Tibet cadre (Norbhu Dhondup and Pemba Tsering) he shared a similar background to the intermediaries, and his career may be more appropriately considered in this section.

MacDonald had a truly multi-cultural background. Raised as a Buddhist with the name of Dorji MacDonald, he converted to Christianity and adopted the name David under the influence of his wife, the Anglo-Nepalese, Alice Curtis. These various influences gave him command of all of the principal languages of the region, Tibetan, Nepali, Hindi, Lepcha and English, and insight into both Buddhist and Christian religious cultures. MacDonald had the character and skills needed to attract the patronage of British officers, a necessary quality for an ambitious individual of his background. He assisted both Charles Bell and Colonel Waddell, Chief Medical Officer on the Younghusband Mission and early scholar of Tibetan Buddhism, to learn Tibetan, and their support gained him Political employ.[34]

Bell's patronage was crucial; MacDonald was held in high regard by Bell, and owed his position to Bell's support. When his patron left, MacDonald lost influence. His efforts to support his son John, and his son-in-law Frank Perry, in various employment schemes on the frontier brought him into conflict with Bailey, the new Political Officer Sikkim, and his final years in Tibet were difficult ones. In retirement however, he ensured the family security by turning his Kalimpong home into a successful hotel, which still exists today.[35]

### **SECTION 3.5: - THE PRINCIPAL INTERMEDIARIES**

Tracing the intermediaries' career paths is complicated by both a lack of source material, and the fact that local staff were not normally given fixed-term appointments to a particular post, but were used throughout the British posts on an 'as-needed' basis.[36] However there are sufficient sources to examine the careers of several of the most important individuals, and this produces a number of significant findings.

Norbhu Dhondup, was born in Kalimpong with no aristocratic connections, and is described variously as being Sherpa or Tibetan. Taken from Darjeeling High School by O'Connor to serve as a translator on the Younghusband Mission, he was then given a

clerical post at Gyantse. Norbhu gradually worked his way up to become the most trusted intermediary, and in the late '30s was taken into Political employ, the first intermediary to be so honoured. Although originally recruited by O'Connor, Norbhu was not associated with any particular British officer, but became 'the absolute right-hand of every Political Officer. He knew the ways of everybody, how to speak to them, what to say, what not to say, [and] how to be diplomatic.'[37]

Norbhu was personally popular with the British; his character fitted the British ideal of the frontiersman. Gould described him as having 'lots of common sense, a ready laugh and infinite guts'. General Neame, who accompanied Gould to Lhasa in 1936, observed approvingly that Norbhu was 'one of the few Oriental officials...who will tell one his real opinion, palatable or not, and strong and decisive opinions too'.[38]

As Norbhu was a Buddhist, there was some doubt that he could 'put things bluntly' to the Dalai Lama. But Norbhu satisfied his superiors that he could take a firm line where necessary. In the late 1920s he argued that the weakness of the British position required the posting of 'some strong officer, I mean not so polite as we all do now[sic]...[to] deal with the Tibetans more strongly'. Like O'Connor, his original mentor, the strength of Norbhu's written opinions caused the Secretariat to question his tact, but they were assured that despite his 'brusque' telegrams, 'Norbhu Dhondup can be trusted to employ most diplomatic language in his actual dealings with the Tibetan Government'.[39]

Norbhu visited Lhasa on 15 occasions prior to the establishment of a permanent British Mission there in 1936, and developed excellent ties with the Tibetan leadership. They rewarded him with Tibetan aristocratic rank, making him a *Dzasa* of the fourth grade, and he appears to have had automatic access to the Dalai Lama. His popularity with Lhasa's aristocratic ladies also provided him with a valuable source of information, generally neglected by the British until Mrs Sherriff and later Mrs Guthrie took up residence in Lhasa with their husbands.[40]

By the 1930s, Norbhu had become a trusted 'insider', and was given appropriate honours. Awarded the title of Rai Bahadur in 1923, he was appointed Trade Agent at Yatung in 1936 and subsequently headed the Lhasa Mission, where he was treated with all the ceremony considered necessary to uphold the prestige of a British officer; for example on his arrival at Gyantse from Lhasa in 1941 he was met by Trade Agent Captain Saker with 25 troops, who rode out to escort him into the Agency.[41]

Norbhu headed the Lhasa Mission for around four years in total, and was therefore, by our classification, very much a member of the Tibet cadre. His acceptance by the cadre as an 'insider' was not only due to the manner in which he performed his duty; it owed much to his adoption of British forms of behaviour. He played football, rode well, and acted with

'tact and common-sense'. Yet he also wore particularly colourful Tibetan clothing, was proud of his Tibetan rank and heritage, and, off-duty, aspired to the lifestyle of a Tibetan aristocrat, rather than a British officer.[42]

Norbhu's acceptance by the Tibet cadre suggests that he represented the ideal type of Tibetan the British hoped would emerge from a modern Tibet; one who had retained what the British considered were the best features of his own culture, while adopting the necessary British officers' modes of thought and behaviour. Norbhu was also liked and respected in Lhasa, and his career represents evidence that an individual could understand, and be accepted by, both imperial and local societies, an issue we return to in Chapter Eight.

Norbhu's contemporary, Rai Bahadur Sonam Wangfel Laden La (1876-1937), was a very different type of individual. A Sikkimese, he was a nephew of Ugyen Gyatso, and worked his way up in the Bengal Police. Displaying a great aptitude for intelligence work, he escorted both the Panchen and Dalai Lamas during their visits to India, in return for which he was given the Tibetan rank of *Depon*. Laden La also visited Europe, accompanying four Tibetan schoolboys who were sent to Rugby school in 1913. Like Norbhu, he made numerous visits to Lhasa in the 1920s and '30s on behalf of the British.[43]

Laden La became an extremely powerful figure on the frontier, and was active in frontier politics in opposition to the growing power of the Nepali community.[44] Unlike Norbhu, he made many enemies in India and Tibet. The independent observer, William McGovern, accused him of using his position for personal profit, and there is considerable doubt that his own claim to personal popularity in Lhasa bore any close relation to fact. As will be seen in Chapter Four, the Dalai Lama personally intervened to prevent his appointment as Trade Agent Yatung. Despite that, Laden La remained of great value to the Tibet cadre, which, in the light of his failures in other areas, suggests this was because of his intelligence skills. As one officer commented 'Laden La is very full of himself, but is very interesting regarding events and personalities in Lhasa.'[45]

Laden La also differed from Norbhu in that he adopted British dress and social customs, and aspired to a British lifestyle.[46] While he retained the support of the Tibet cadre, he was less successful than Norbhu in cultivating the friendship of the Tibetan leadership, and was not appointed to a Political post. He remained, therefore, by our classification, an intermediary, rather than a member of the Tibet cadre. Thus succeeding local officers of ambition followed the Norbhu model. Ultimately Laden La failed to achieve the desired balance of British and Tibetan understanding and forms of behaviour, and he was not trusted by the Tibetans after his involvement in the events of 1923-24, described in the next

chapter.

There was an obvious tension between Norbhu Dhondup and Laden La in addition to that arising from their different life-styles; they represented different local interests and communities. Laden La had connections with Sikkimese aristocracy through his uncle, while Norbhu, though of undistinguished background, was favoured by the Tibetan community with which he identified. These diverging interests have affected subsequent history, with traces of their rivalry remaining among the available oral sources in the Himalayas.

The Rudolphs have shown that competing lineages were common within a particular body of intermediaries in Rajasthan.[47] Similarly, British service offered both Norbhu and Laden La the chance to ensure future prosperity for their families, and, ideally, to establish a family administrative lineage. Thus they competed to establish themselves as the most reliable intermediary between British India and Tibet; a contest won by Norbhu, as his promotion to the Tibet cadre indicates. While his son died young, Norbhu's value to the Tibetans may be reflected in the fact that his daughter now works for the Tibetan Government in Dharamsala. Laden La failed to establish a family administrative tradition, but he acquired considerable wealth, and while he died early, his family, like the MacDonalds, established a successful hotel business.

As a nephew of Urgyen Gyatso, Laden La did represent one of the two patterns of service Michael Fisher described.[48] Whereas Palhese and Shabdrung Lama's careers were linked to a British patron, the family tradition of service became the predominant mode among local employees in Tibet. Thus A-chuk Tsering, a Darjeeling Tibetan, and his son Lha Tsering, both served as intelligence agents for the Government of India. Tonyot Tsering, a Sikkimese educated in Kalimpong and Patna Medical College, served as a Sub-Assistant Surgeon in Gyantse, and his son, Tonyot Tsering jnr., served at Gyantse under the British, and from 1949 to 1960 at Lhasa under the Indian Government. Bo Tsering, a Sikkimese Sub-Assistant surgeon at Gyantse and Lhasa from 1914 until c1950, was closely related to Sonam Tobden Kazi, who succeeded Norbhu Dhondup as Trade Agent Yatung.[49]

Family patterns of loyalty could represent great changes in allegiance, symbolising the process by which the British allied with existing local ruling classes after establishing their place at the top of the political hierarchy. Sonam Tobden Kazi was a great-grandson of the Sikkimese Prime Minister Dewan Namgyal, whose treatment of the Darjeeling Superintendent Dr A.Campbell and botanist J.D.Hooker in 1849 precipitated the eventual British take-over of Sikkim. Whilst Dewan Namgyal had been exiled by the British, Sonam Tobden was to be one of their most valuable employees.[50]



### **SECTION 3.6: - FOLLOWING THE BRITISH MODEL**

Just as the British officers of the Tibet cadre were educated and trained to meet the particular requirements of the service, so too were the intermediaries. Their schooling was on the British model, giving them an understanding of British language and culture, and teaching them the correct behaviour patterns as defined by the dominant culture. When the intermediaries' training began, the British frontiersmen provided the behavioural model to emulate. Those accepted for British service were those who potentially matched that model.[51]

The local officials educated and trained by the British formed a distinct group in Himalayan society, readily identifiable by their social behaviour. They passed on these behavioural patterns to their children, who were educated in the same way, thereby creating an bureaucratic 'caste' which still persists today, with many contemporary Sikkimese bureaucrats being descended from former British employees.

Successful intermediaries learned that advancement came from the adoption of both work and certain social patterns of the British model. We have seen that many of the early lessons the cadre learned were unwritten guidelines, such as those implicit in Sandeman's biography, and it appears that successful intermediaries learned such unwritten codes, and echoed cadre rhetoric while following more practical models implicit in the cadre's actions.

Like the successful cadre officers, the intermediaries studied privately to improve their language skills and local knowledge. For example, Pemba Tsering, the other intermediary who, by virtue of heading the Lhasa Mission for more than a year, can be classified as having become a Tibet cadre officer, was fluent in five languages and worked hard to improve himself. He read English literature and underlined unfamiliar words to look up later. His character matched the British ideal; he was 'straightforward', a man of integrity, with a good sense of humour, punctual, meticulous and disciplined. In the British fashion he relaxed with theatricals, tennis, music, and billiards.[52]

Just as the British officers of the Tibet cadre formed a distinct, and largely self-perpetuating group, so too did the intermediaries. Norbhu Dhondup, like David MacDonald, showed that merit (as judged by the British) was the main factor in promotion, although as recruitment was largely controlled from within the Tibet cadre, selection also depended upon their being approved by the cadre. Intermediaries had little or no contact with the Government of India unless they received a Political posting; their careers were judged by their immediate (British) superiors.

The successful local employees of the Tibet cadre were those who learned British frontier codes of behaviour and patterns of thinking; those who 'understood' the British. But while

these men 'behaved just like sahibs', in carrying out their duties, they also maintained their own cultural identity. A long-serving local such as Bo Tsering might speak of "we British", but he remained a Buddhist, and wore local dress off-duty. Just as the British officers did not adhere to Tibetan forms of behaviour in their private life, they did not require, or want, the local officials to abandon their own traditions. In presenting Urgyen Gyatso with his Rai Bahadurship in 1893, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal noted approvingly that, while rendering valuable service to the British, 'he has not forgotten the traditions of his ancestors, nor failed in his reverence for, and duty towards, his religion'.[53]

Dress was a significant issue. Adopting European dress was an indication that the wearers identified themselves with modern society. In the late 1940s, while European dress was already common among local peoples in the frontier region, the leading intermediaries of the time such as Sonam Tobgye and Pemba Tsering, wore traditional dress. Their employers considered that they should not be 'dressing like third-rate Europeans...they must adhere to their own customs and wear their national dress'.[54]

The Government of India did not need its local employees in the Tibetan sector to 'become British'. They needed employees able to understand, and express themselves in British forms, in order to translate their understanding of Tibet to the British. But just as the British in India deeply mistrusted any European who 'went native', so the reverse applied. The result was that successful local employees were those able to function as 'insiders' in both British and Tibetan cultures, while retaining their own cultural identity.

### **SECTION 3.7: - THE INTERMEDIARIES' MOTIVES**

Why did the intermediaries work for the British imperial government? Their motives were quite simple. Even without the various allowances paid, salaries were two or three times higher than in any comparable position, conditions were good, and government employees, even in menial positions, gained great prestige in the local community. Although relationship to a serving government employee was an advantage in recruitment, promotion was on merit, and there was a clear ladder of opportunity in serving the British.

The intermediaries, particularly those from Sikkim, did not then have a sense of loyalty to an independent India. There was little or no independence movement in Sikkim, which, at least in theory, controlled its own internal affairs. Sikkim was isolated between India and Tibet, and very few Sikkimese travelled widely in India or beyond. Even today there is no exile or emigrant community of Sikkimese elsewhere. The result was that the Sikkimese

were the ideal imperial bureaucrats, with no geo-political overtones to their service.

While Sikkimese were not confronted by crises of loyalty, problems did arise for Palhese, a Tibetan, and for Norbhu, who identified himself as a Tibetan. Bell recorded that Palhese 'was known in Tibet as "two-headed" because he had to serve two masters'. But, again according to Bell, Palhese was able to reconcile any divided loyalties because 'on most of the main issues the interests of the two countries lay very close together'.<sup>[55]</sup> The Tibetan perspective is not recorded, but it is noticeable that Palhese was not given any rank by the Tibetan Government, in contrast to Indian-born officers such as Norbhu.

Norbhu was close to retirement age when he was confronted by an issue where British and Tibetan interests were very far apart. Gould recalled how Norbhu, 'brought up in the straight-minded school of Bell, had never...attempted to persuade the Tibetans to believe anything of which he was not himself convinced', until he was required in 1942 to press the Tibetans to accept the 'Trans-Tibet Transport' scheme to open war-time supply routes to China. Norbhu shared the Tibetans' fear that this scheme would increase access to Tibet, and his failure to persuade the Tibetans to accept the plan led to his being replaced in Lhasa by Frank Ludlow.<sup>[56]</sup> Norbhu reverted to being Trade Agent Yatung for six months before he retired, and he died of tuberculosis just over a year later.

Previous studies have shown how local employees could arrange administrative details to their own advantage. The records upon which revenue collection depended could be tampered with, whether with the connivance of local rulers, or, in the case of intermediaries with no fixed ties to the local community, solely for their own benefit.<sup>[57]</sup>

There is plentiful evidence of corruption at the lower levels of the British presence in Tibet, by both British and local staff, particularly in regard to building work at Gyantse. Early in his career Norbhu Dhondup was implicated in a case where a building contractor bribed Gyantse Trade Agency staff to win a contract. Norbhu (who denied the accusations) was not charged on the curious grounds that he was absent at the time charges were preferred, and the matter does not appear to have been raised again.<sup>[58]</sup>

A cadre officer was aware of 'what masses of money...I could make if we wanted to be corrupt'<sup>[59]</sup>; and two officers, White and Rivett-Carnac, were, as we have seen, involved in cases which cast serious doubts as to their personal honesty. Although incorruptibility was generally part of the image of the cadre officers, the need to maintain that image meant that such cases were not publicised. But in the case of corruption among local staff, evidence for the cadre's attitude is generally lacking. In 1944, however, Frederick Mainprice clearly found corruption among local staff, and noted that 'sacking anyone from the [Gyantse] Agency had been almost unheard of'.<sup>[60]</sup>

Thus there must be a suspicion that some cadre officers, however honest themselves,

applied a different standard to their local employees, and were prepared to turn a blind eye to a certain level of corruption if the persons concerned were sufficiently valuable to them. Thus the expectation of extra reward must be considered as a motivating factor for some of those who sought imperial employment.

### **SECTION 3.8: - THE INTERMEDIARIES' ROLE AND DUTIES**

The British acknowledged that the success of their posts in Tibet relied 'largely on the personality and contacts' of local employees.[61] Unlike British officers, intermediaries were permanently employed on the Tibetan frontier. This led to a gradual build-up of experienced local staff, who provided a valuable continuity as the British officers came and went.

While there were originally advantages to the imperial government in recruiting persons with no ties to the local power elites, those recruited tended to form their own power elite, whose support became important to the imperial power. As a loyal body, this elite was then a natural imperial recruiting ground, although the loyalty and ability of each generation had to be proven anew. It was clearly in the interests of the intermediaries to promote their family loyalty and service to the British, and to construct this tradition. As the Rudolfs have shown in regard to Jaipur in the same period, 'family traditions' of service were not necessarily long-established.[62]

The recruitment of persons related to those already employed by government was a common pattern in British India, for example in Army recruitment.[63] In Tibet, while there were numerous family connections in service, positions were by no means hereditary; Norbhu, MacDonald, and Laden La all failed to obtain imperial employment for their sons.[64] But there was a very small body of educated personnel suitable for service in Tibet available in the frontier districts, and most of these were related in some way, or became related through marriage. As the preference for recruits who were related to serving personnel was characteristic of the Political Department's recruitment of British officers, it is no surprise that the policy was repeated in the recruitment of subordinates.

The intermediaries' experience meant that part of their duty was to 'guide' newly arrived British officers. This naturally required a great deal of tact: their position might be compared to a battle-hardened sergeant 'assisting' a new officer in wartime. While the intermediaries might wonder 'who have they sent us now?', such tactful instruction was an important part of their function, and was an integral part of the system which allowed the Political Department regularly to rotate its officers' postings.[65]

The process of selecting and training local subordinates was part of the process by which the Tibet cadre ensured the continuity of their traditions. By the 1940s, the process had produced a few individuals who could carry them on. During the last 11 years of the British presence in Tibet, three local employees were promoted to Political Department postings (although they were not, as far as I can ascertain, taken into the Department). Norbhu Dhondup and Pemba Tsering both served as Trade Agent Yatung and Head of British Mission Lhasa, while Sonam Tobden Kazi, 'a worthy successor to Laden La and Rai Bahadur Norbhu' was being groomed for a senior position with postings as Trade Agent in Gartok and Yatung.[66]

It is difficult to judge the extent to which the Lhasa Mission was ever effectively controlled by a local officer. Their terms overlapped with visits by the Political Officer Sikkim, and Major Guthrie, the Tibetan-speaking doctor attached to the Lhasa Mission from 1945 onwards, was an important figure there in the absence of other British officials. Doubts were expressed in the Secretariat as to the efficiency of the Mission when headed by a local official, and, while the Tibet cadre officers followed their usual tradition of publicly defending their own, it appears they did have some reservations as to whether local cadre officers were of the required standards.[67]

But personal relations between the British officers and local employees were good, with Norbhu being particularly popular. The isolation of the posts, and the easier social relations with Buddhists, as opposed to Hindus, made for a relaxation of the social codes of British India, as did the reliance placed by the cadre on the local employees' experience. While the Tibet cadre officers' regard for those in their charge, particularly in the case of lower ranking servants, fits into the 'paternal' mould described by Lionel Caplan in his study of British relations with the Gurkhas, the Sikkimese today remember the individual officers of the Tibet cadre (as distinct from the policies which they represented) with fondness.[68]

## CONCLUSIONS

The British presence in Tibet led to the creation of a small 'caste' of peoples on the north-eastern frontier of India who identified with British aspirations and culture. The British educated and trained these Tibetan-speaking frontiersmen to act as intermediaries between British India and Tibet because they presumed they could understand Tibet and its people and pass on their understanding to the British. There was, therefore, a reciprocal process of power reinforcement and inculcation of understanding. The British also relied upon their local employees to maintain the continuity and institutional identity of the Trade Agencies.

and to carry out much of the day-to-day work there.

The role of the intermediaries in the imperial process has been largely submerged in historical discourse. Most memoirs of colonial officials pay a brief tribute to their great contribution, but their significance has been largely forgotten. Most have remained obscure, and, in common with other marginalised groups, or social classes in the imperial process (including British subordinates, an issue examined in Chapter Seven), their 'voice' has been historically submerged beneath the 'voices' of both imperial and indigenous empowered social classes.

This process has partly been due to the needs of Indian nationalist historians, who have preferred to emphasise those who engaged in indigenous resistance to the Raj and to highlight the oppositional nature of the imperial process. Those who had given great service to the imperial power, such as Norbhu Dhondup, were viewed with less enthusiasm in independent India. However indigenous resistance to colonial rule was arguably less common than support or acquiescence. Just as the subordinate class position of the intermediaries meant that their historical voice was submerged under imperial voices, so the creation of an Indian nation-state obscured the voices of those who had supported the British.

The intermediaries needed to understand both British and Tibetan cultures, but there was considerable mistrust of an individual such as Laden La, who clearly identified himself with the modern imperial society, and who was perceived by many in both camps as having left his own culture behind. The British came to favour, and to promote, those, like Norbhu Dhondup and Pemba Tsering, who were able to function in British society without adopting external British forms of behaviour. The British mistrust of locals who abandoned their own culture consequently created sophisticated and cosmopolitan individuals, at home in both imperial and indigenous societies.

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## FOOTNOTES

- [1] Robb (1984, p.16); For the missionary use of intermediaries, see Bray (1992, pp.371-375). For examples of further studies of intermediaries in British India and the Princely States, see Fisher (1987) and (1991); Frykenberg (1965); Rudolph (1984).
- [2] Waller (1990), classifies Chandra Das and his companion Urgyen Gyatso as *pandits*. For our purposes however, it is important to note that these two men were of a very different class to the usual *pandits*.
- [3] Waller *ibid* (p.201).
- [4] Sandberg (1987, p.163); Waller *ibid* (p.193, {quoting NAI FD, Secret January 1882, 722-725, Sir Alfred Croft to A.C.Lyall, 12 April 1879}, pp.194, fn.8, p.292).
- [5] MacDonald (1991, pp.138-40); Bell (1992, p.59); Waller *ibid* (pp.196, 206); Gyatso papers. For Das's account of his journey, see Das (1902).
- [6] Das *ibid* (pp.80, 101); Johnson (1994, pp.191-206); Waller *ibid* (pp.193-213).
- [7] For details on Mahmood Isa, a Ladakhi Buddhist convert to Islam who led a number of Central Asian exploration parties in the 1890s, see Allen (1982, p.203); French (1994, p.54).
- [8] British Museum Bell diaries, various entries; Bell (1946, pp.25-26); IOLR L/P&S/12/4166, Gyantse Annual Report 1926-27.
- [9] MacDonald (1991, pp.137-140); Snelling (1993, p.68).
- [10] MacDonald *ibid* (pp.139-40).
- [11] Youngusband (1985, p.307).
- [12] Bell (1987, pp.25-26).
- [13] For example, Gould had as his personal servant, 'a notorious robber who looked after Gould excellently and maltreated everyone else'; IOLR MSS Eur D998/17, Hopkinson's Lhasa diary/letter, 27 September 1945.
- [14] Fisher (1991, pp.332, 344).
- [15] Dirks (1994, pp.279-313).
- [16] Re Bhutan, see Collister (1987); re north-east India, see Robb (1994, esp, pp.7-23); also see Ludden (1994, p.253). During Russian expansion in Central Asia a similar process occurred, with local agents being superseded by Russians when security fears (real or constructed) arose; Allworth (1967, p.42).
- [17] Dirks (pp.300-01 & *passim*); Ludden (1994, pp.252-53)
- [18] NAI FD, 1909 External A April 3-4, File note by L.W.Reynolds, 10 March 1909, following an enquiry by F.M.Bailey. As noted, Shabdrung Lama was a Buriat, his actual citizenship is not recorded.
- [19] Snelling (1993, pp.26-35). After meeting Dorzhiev in 1912, Gould described him in approving terms as 'a man who impresses one a great deal..[he has a]..frank manner... earnest purpose..[and is]..certainly respected by the Tibetan officials'; NAI FD, 1912 Secret E October 59-82, Gould to India, 16 July 1912.
- [20] As the Rudolphs' study of Jaipur intermediaries indicates 'English communication and a grasp of English customs and expectations...was increasingly required' in this period of the imperial

process; Rudolph (1984, p.98).

[21] Murray Hogben concluded that the British were reluctant to admit Indians into the Political Department due to the innate conservatism of the Department, and their doubts over Indians' loyalty and character suitability. The policy also recognised the reluctance of rulers, both in the Princely States, and outside British India, to accept Indian rather than the British representatives of the Raj; Hogben (1981, esp., pp.767-769); also see Copland (1982, p.75); Potter (1986, pp.119-20).

[22] As suitable Ladakhis were needed for service on Kashmir's frontier, this narrowed the field of recruitment to India's north-eastern frontier region.

[23] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-6072, Report on 1946 Mission to Lhasa, by H.Richardson; personal correspondence with R.Ford, November 1994.

[24] Woodcock (1971, p.96), quoting Bogle's journal.

[25] Bishop (1989, *passim*, esp. pp.46-49). Also see for example, Younghusband (1949, pp.131-32, 141-42).

[26] MacDonald (1991, pp.154-55); IOLR L/P&S/11/235-2906, various correspondence.

[27] IOLR L/P&S/7/229-923, Gyantse Annual Report 1908-09, cover note by Bell, 11 May 1909; NAI FD, 1909 Establishment B Dec 318-321, Bell to India, 29 July 1909.

[28] Ballhatchet (1980, p.8).

[29] Further recognition of this 'construction' of India came after Indian independence, when Bell stated that Ladakh, along with Bhutan and Sikkim, had been taken from Tibet by the British, and should be returned; Bell (1987, p.55).

[30] Ballhatchet (1980, pp.4, 164-65).

[31] MacDonald (1991, p.147).

[32] Interview with Dr M.V.Kurian, January 1994; Ballhatchet (1980, pp.164-65) records the prejudice against Anglo-Indian Medical Officers in India as being due particularly to the question of their examining British women. When British women were in Lhasa, a British Medical Officer was available there.

[33] Information on MacDonald is derived from: Interview with Dr K.Sprigg, January 1992; MacDonald papers; MacDonald (1991); McKay (1992c), in which article I erred in naming Alice Curtis's mother, Palmo Sherpari, as MacDonald's wife; personal correspondence with (MacDonald's daughter) Mrs Betty Cartwright, March 1993.

[34] MacDonald did face prejudice against Anglo-Indians. For example, as late as 1931, RGS. Secretary Arthur Hinks described him as 'much more oriental than I expected; Royal Society for Asian Affairs, Bell collection, Hinks to Bell, 26 August 1931.

[35] IOLR L/P&S/11/235-2906, various correspondence; MacDonald papers, Bell to India, 17 October 1909 (draft copy), Bell to MacDonald, 22 September 1909.

[36] Personal correspondence with H.Richardson, October 1990.

[37] Interview with Mrs J.Jehu, 26 March 1993. Regarding the lack of nationalist consciousness among Sherpas, see the account of Everest climber Sherpa Tenzing in Ullman (1956, pp.27, 145, 278, 282-83).

[38] Gould (1957, p.206); Neame (1939, p.237).

[39] NAI FD, 1907 External B May 245-248, various correspondence; IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-



1758, India to Weir, 7 February 1929; L/P&S/10/1113-5170, Weir to India, 22 July 1929; MSS Eur F157-240, Norbhu Dhondup to Bailey, 30 August 1927. Norbhu's 'brusque' telegraphic style may have been due to his lack of expertise in English. Telegram drafting was 'an art in itself'; personal correspondence with R.Ford, November 1994.

[40] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197, Gould report of 30 April 1937; Interview with Mrs J.Jehu, March 1993.

[41] Saker papers, Saker to Mrs Saker, 5 September 1941.

[42] Interview with Dr T.Y.Pemba, March 1994; Interview with Mrs J.Jehu, March 1994; Gould (1957, p.206).

[43] Lamb (1966, pp.376, 416). Re the four Tibetans at Rugby school, see Shakya (1986).

[44] Information on Laden La's political activities from local sources courtesy of Dr Michael Hutt, (SOAS), from a forthcoming paper.

[45] McGovern (1924, pp.16-17); Weir papers, Weir to Mrs Weir, 25 May 1930; Following service tradition, MacDonald complimented Laden La in his memoirs, but was extremely critical of both he and Norbhu Dhondup in private correspondence; see MacDonald (1991, pp.21, 297-98), in contrast to IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a92, MacDonald to Bell, 3 February 1930.

[46] Goldstein (1989, p.122); Interview with Dr K.Sprigg, January 1992.

[47] Rudolph (1984, p.84).

[48] See note 14, above.

[49] Interview with Namgyal Tsering, February 1994; Interview with Dr T.Y.Pemba, March 1994; personal information regarding Norbhu Dhondup courtesy of his daughter, Mrs Dekyi Khedrub.

[50] Lamb (1960, pp.92-110).

[51] Where not otherwise credited, information in this section was obtained in March 1994 during fieldwork in Gangtok, from serving officials of the Government of Sikkim, who are required to remain anonymous.

[52] Pemba Tsering was from a Tibetan family who had settled at Ghoom. His uncle had served as Head Clerk at Yatung under MacDonald, and after he matriculated from Darjeeling High School he was recruited by Bailey. He rose to serve as Head of Mission Lhasa, and as Trade Agent in all three Agencies; Interview with Dr T.Y.Pemba, March 1994.

[53] Interview with A.H.Robins, April 1993; Interview with Dr T.Y.Pemba, March 1994; Gyatso papers, address by Sir Antony MacDonald, 30 October 1893.

[54] Sangharakshita (1991, p.73); IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entry of 1 February 1924.

[55] Bell (1987, p.247).

[56] Gould (1957 p.238).

[57] Dewey (1978), Dewey (1993, pp.207), Frykenberg (1965, pp.126, 234-42).

[58] Re Norbhu, see NAI FD, 1912 External B December 208-244, various correspondence. There are numerous other references in the sources to corruption at the Trade Agencies. For example, see Mainprice papers, diary entries of 14 July 1944, & 23-25 July 1944; also see NAI FD, 1915 Establishment January 125-26 Part B.

[59] IOLR MSS Eur D998/18, Hopkinson to Mrs Hopkinson, 19 May 1946.

[60] Mainprice papers, diary entry of 13 July 1944.

[61] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-6072, Report on 1946 Mission to Lhasa, by H.Richardson.

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[62] Rudolph (1984, pp.83, 125, 162).

[63] Mason (1974, pp.314, 350-58).

[64] John MacDonald applied for the post of Trade Agent Yatung when his father retired; NAI FD, Index, 1924-27, File No. 275-E 1924; re Laden La's failed application for a scholarship to Britain for his son, see NAI FD, Index, 1914 Internal July 81-82 Part B.

[65] Interview with R.Ford, March 1993.

[66] Personal correspondence with R.Ford, November 1994. Local employees also had more responsibility at Gyantse in World War Two, during the period when the Escort Officers acted as Trade Agents.

[67] IOLR L/P&S/12/4202-4534, Lhasa Mission Report, week ending 5 August 1945, undated cover note.

[68] Personal correspondence with R.Ford, November 1994; Caplan (1991, *passim*, esp. p.590). In my interviews with those Sikkimese or Kalimpongese who had served with the British, or whose family had done so, any criticisms were directed at British policies not individuals.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 'FREEDOM TO ACT AS THEY THOUGHT BEST':

#### CREATING A ROLE; ASPECTS OF POLICY

\*\*\*\*\*

#### INTRODUCTION

We have seen that the distinct collective identity of the Tibet cadre was maintained through its selection process. Those who appeared suitable for the specialised requirements of Tibetan service were usually assessed during a junior posting to Gyantse or Yatung, and, if they proved able to maintain the prestige and further the aims of their predecessors, they were later promoted to the senior cadre posts at Gangtok or Lhasa. This selection process meant that the senior cadre officers shared a similar mentality, which produced a broad continuity of approach to Tibetan policy. The common theme of the policies the cadre promoted was that they were designed, or served, to deepen British involvement in Tibet, and increase Tibetan dependence on British structures and 'advice'. The cadre thus resisted the dominant trend of British Indian policy in this period, which was 'a retreat to the centre'.<sup>[1]</sup>

While the Government of India's policies emerged as a result of discussion and consensus between opposing, or different, schools of thought, and the cadre's influence is not always apparent in the policies finally adopted after this process, their predominant influence on policy was 'forward'. This meant that their role was considerably more significant than Whitehall had intended and the title 'Trade Agent' might suggest.

The cadre's aims and methods become more apparent, and the results significant, when we examine the nature of their role in Tibet. It suited the British to avoid precise definition of the cadre's role, as the formal posting of British diplomatic representatives in Tibet would have raised the question of Tibet's status at the expense of relations with China and other powers. In this chapter we will examine how, in the absence of specific instructions as to their function, the Tibet cadre created a particular role for themselves.

The effects of the cadre's definition of their role can be seen in two, sometimes

overlapping, areas. In this chapter we will examine the effect that they had on policy by their promotion and support of particular programmes, and this will be developed in the next chapter where we will examine in depth the issue which the cadre saw as most crucial - British representation in Lhasa. The second area is that of their effect on the image of Tibet held in Western academic and political circles today, which we examine in Chapter Six.

#### **SECTION 4.1: - DEFINING THE CADRE'S ROLE**

When J.C.White was posted to Sikkim in 1889, his government 'depended upon him to define the limits of his job without recourse to precedent..[to]..bring it more into line with British policy.'[2] Similarly the Trade Agencies were established without an accepted definition of their intended function. What then was the intended role of the Tibet cadre?[3]

In that they represented British government and culture, and gathered information about those of their hosts, the cadre can be best defined as diplomats.[4] But the inherently 'forward' nature of their view of the purpose of a British presence in Tibet often blurred the distinctions between diplomat, foreign advisor and 'empire builder'.

Publicly, government maintained that the Trade Agents' duties were 'to further Indian trade in Tibet and generally to protect the interests of British subjects'. Yet it is obvious that they were not qualified to be Trade Agents. None of the officers chosen to serve in Tibet had any experience of customs work or trade, indeed the word 'trade' carried pejorative connotations in official British Indian circles.[5]

Within government, the Agencies' purpose was disputed. In 1904, the Political Department claimed that a civil dispensary at Gyantse would be 'politically advantageous'. However, the acting Viceroy, Lord Amphill, cautioned that

We must be very careful that anything we do does not even wear the appearance of establishing a political centre at Gyantse.....and I hope that the Department will refrain from suggesting political intrigue.[6]

It was a vain hope. Although India tried to maintain a non-political definition of the Agents' role when it advised Secretary of State Morley in 1906 that their function 'was without doubt primarily commercial', it was admitted that 'it has been necessary to entrust him [O'Connor] also with important political work, as he is the main channel of communication between the Government of India and the Lhasa Government.'[7]

The term 'Trade' Agent was a convenient fiction, which owed its usage to political circumstances. Whitehall had prevented Curzon from stationing British officials in Tibet for political purposes, but pressure from British and Indian trading interests meant that it had accepted the need for British officers to oversee trade in Tibet. By placing them under the Political Department's command, the Government of India ensured that the Agents' role would be political and diplomatic, as Lord Curzon intended.[8]

Whitehall was thus outmanoeuvred by the 'forward school' and, while the name remained, the pretence that the Agents' primary role concerned trade was largely abandoned after Morley's departure from the India Office. By 1932, government censors did not object to Macdonald describing his duties as including 'watching and forwarding reports on the political situation to the Government of India'.[9] In later years internal government correspondence clearly stated that even the Agency Medical and Escort Officers had a primarily political role, although a trade role remained a convenient fiction for public consumption.

The Gartok post came closest to Whitehall's ideal of a Trade Agency, although it owed its origin to Louis Dane's fear of Russian influence in the region. During the Younghusband Mission, Dane proposed combating Russian influence in Khotan by extending the Indian frontier across western Tibet to the Kuenlun range, a massive commitment which he must have known Whitehall would reject. But Dane appears to have been using what became a common 'forward school' policy-making tactic - advancing an extreme policy in order to obtain a lesser aim by compromise. When Viceroy Amthill duly replied that 'HM Government would have a fit if we proposed anything of the kind', Dane promptly made a successful proposal for a trade mart in western Tibet.[10]

As I have discussed elsewhere, the Gartok Agency was created without adequate thought for its location and function, and it proved difficult to attract suitable candidates to the poorly paid post of Trade Agent there.[11] The early Gartok Agents had neither personal knowledge of, nor influence on, policy and events in Central Tibet, and had no direct contact with the Political Officer Sikkim until after 1932. Thakur Jai Chand, the first Agent appointed there, was, however, given instructions as to his duties. He was to send government a weekly diary of 'routes traversed...trade prospects and such political information as he may be able to gather'.[12]

But Dane's fears of Russian influence in western Tibet never materialised, and no Chinese officials ever visited the region. As there was only local intelligence to be obtained in Gartok, it was of little interest to the cadre; the Agency remained largely peripheral to the events with which we deal. The post mainly functioned as a Trade Agency, devoted to assisting Indian traders. Its comparative neglect is further evidence that the cadre's primary

role in Tibet was political and diplomatic, and that they considered trade a low priority which could be dealt with by local employees.

The Trade Agents' duties were never defined. Bailey admitted in 1907 that 'I don't know whether I am cantonment magistrate or not', as 'everything is very unsettled'. This was not a situation unique to Tibet. As Gerald Morgan has observed, 'early Political Officers often suggested their own jobs'.<sup>[13]</sup> This absence of definition fitted the Politicals' belief that frontier officers needed the freedom to act on their own initiative, and that the right type of individual, once trained, could be relied upon to act correctly in the furtherance of British interests.<sup>[14]</sup>

David Potter has shown that ICS officers, as 'trusted servants of the state, identifying themselves...with the values and interests of those who employed them', fit Renner and Goldthorpe's models of 'service class' professional employees. They could be relied upon to act in accordance with 'the interests and values of the organization' and, in return for the trust endowed in them, 'expected considerable independence and freedom...to...act as they thought best'. The model may be equally applied to the Tibet cadre. Cadre officers were relied upon to act consistently in the service of their employer's values and interests, and, in return, expected 'proof that the Government of India were prepared to support their officers when they necessarily incur responsibilities'.<sup>[15]</sup>

But how, in the absence of orders, were the cadre to choose what was within their province, and how and why did they define their role as they did? In appointing O'Connor as Gyantse Trade Agent, Younghusband ensured that the foremost British position in Tibet was occupied by an officer whose views on Tibetan policy followed those of Curzon and himself. O'Connor's successor, Bailey, was trained to follow the same path, regularly receiving private advice from Younghusband and O'Connor. In Gangtok, Bell continued and refined these 'forward' policies.

Thus in the formative years of the British presence in Tibet the officers there all represented the 'forward school' of thinking on frontier policy. In creating a 'forward' role for themselves they were filling the role envisaged by their creators. The issues which the cadre identified as important were those left unresolved by the Younghusband Mission - in particular the question of British representation in Lhasa.

Different men, chosen from different backgrounds, might have identified other goals - perhaps Tibetan representation in India and abroad, or trade, or even unifying Tibet and China. The point of such speculation is to show that British interests in Tibet by no means demanded the particular programmes promoted by the cadre; indeed their actions could be inconsistent with the policies of Delhi and Whitehall.

The cadre's definition of their role reflected their mentality. Their upbringing, training

and sense of identity meant that they saw their role as Curzon and Younghusband intended; as diplomats representing the Government of India, but also in the tradition of frontier officials who were expected to advance British interests and position. Whitehall intended them to be overseers of frontier trade, but as members of what was in effect India's diplomatic corps, the cadre defined their role within the identity and traditions of that service. Information-gathering, which we examine in the next section, provides an example of how this role developed.

#### **SECTION 4.2: - 'INFORMATION' and INTELLIGENCE**

Many aspects of Tibetan politics were little-known to the British prior to the Younghusband Mission, and the systematic gathering of political intelligence became a primary part of the Tibet cadre's role, with paid informants used to gather information. I have previously examined how, during the period 1904-09, the Government of India collected information on Tibetan affairs from Tibet's neighbouring governments (particularly Nepal), and from missionaries on the Eastern Tibetan frontier. Other important news was obtained by the interception of Chinese and Tibetan communications through the Indian telegraph system. In Tibet, cadre officers had informants at all levels of society, and gathered news from European travellers and Indian traders. Intelligence gathering was thus recognised as an integral part of the Tibet cadre's duties.[16]

The National Archives of India show that Trade Agents were provided with a regular Secret Service allowance to pay informants. In 1910, this allowance was greatly increased (from 200 to 1000 rupees per month in the case of Yatung), as 'the local people as well as passing travellers require to be bribed liberally in order to brave the risk of being seen about this Agency by the Chinese'.[17]

Lists of the actual recipients of these funds reveal the wide range of informants used. Those listed naturally include those whose interests coincided with the British - the Nepalese representative in Gyantse (who received a regular monthly payment of 50 rupees), Indian traders, and Bhutanese officials. O'Connor, building on contacts he had established during the Younghusband Mission, extended this range of informants. Villagers were rewarded with one or two rupees, servants of Lhasa officials and clerks at the Panchen Lama's monastery in Shigatse received 10-50 rupees. The Gyantse *Jongpon's* clerk and a Gyantse monk were regular paid informants, and a number of other monks from leading monasteries throughout Lhasa and central Tibet also profited. Perhaps O'Connor's greatest success was in obtaining informants from the Chinese army, and there

were also regular payments to a 'Chinese Agent from Lhasa'.[18]

Local agents who proved valuable were taken into regular cadre employment. For example, in 1912, A-chuk Tsering, who later accompanied Bell to Lhasa, was employed as a 'Secret Service Agent' at Ghoom under the District Commissioner Darjeeling, watching the movements of two Japanese studying Tibetan language there.[19]

British travellers also received Secret Service payments. In 1914, the botanist Frank Kingdom-Ward received a token 50 rupee payment for his report on south-eastern Tibet, while new light is shed on the nature of Bailey's travels by entries which reveal he received a substantial payment from Secret Service funds for his journey from Peking to Sadiya in 1911.[20]

Hugh Richardson has claimed that information gathering in Tibet was 'done openly' and that 'there was no clandestine activity or the employment of secret agents which are generally associated with the idea of spying'. But although there are no breakdowns of Secret Service expenditure in official records after 1909, there are private papers from later periods which show that Secret Service funds continued to be used to pay local informants. For example in 1944, Gyantse Trade Agent Mainprice refers to a 'Secret Service' payment of 450 rupees. In addition, the Indian archive indexes confirm that what the Government of India themselves termed 'Secret Agent(s)' were still used to report on Tibet in the 1940s.[21]

Therefore, while British sources claim that, due to the open nature of Tibetan aristocratic society, information was freely obtained in Lhasa, there was nevertheless an ongoing use of 'secret agents' by the British throughout the period of their involvement in Tibet. Once the Tibet positions were established in an intelligence-gathering role there was no further need to articulate this role; the tradition had been established.

There was, however, a reorganisation of intelligence gathering in the 1936-37 period, around the time when Gould and Richardson became respectively Political Officer Sikkim and Trade Agent Gyantse. The relevant archives remain classified, but it is possible to reconstruct the effect of these changes from scattered references to intelligence on the north-eastern frontier.[22] Much of the responsibility for intelligence gathering in the region was apparently shifted from the Political Officer Sikkim to the Central Intelligence Officer in Shillong.

The Central Intelligence Bureau, which had been created by Curzon in April 1904, came under the Home Affairs Department, although it liaised closely with the Political Department; after 1944 all telegrams concerning Tibetan affairs were copied to the Shillong office. This post was occupied during the 1940s by an Irish police officer, Eric Lambert, and after 1946 he was given an assistant based in Kalimpong with particular concern for



Tibetan affairs. Lambert's chosen assistant was Lieutenant Lha Tsering, the son of Bell's confidant, A-chuk Tsering.[23]

Lambert's office became an important influence on Tibetan policy in the '40s, but the close links between Lambert and the Political Officer Sikkim suggest they shared similar aims. For example, in September 1944, Lambert recommended an increase in government contributions to Tibetan monasteries, a policy which was enthusiastically followed by the cadre, as will be seen.[24]

The Government of India may not have had a monopoly on clandestine British operations in Tibet. The foreign policy interests of Whitehall and Delhi were not identical, and Whitehall may have used their own agents in Tibet. Certainly Whitehall took over the duty of obtaining British intelligence in Tibet after 1947, with the British High Commission in Delhi suggesting likely avenues of intelligence.[25]

#### **SECTION 4.3: - CULTIVATING FRIENDSHIPS**

The cadre's definition of their duties followed Political Department guidelines, written and unwritten. The Department's 'Manual of Instruction' stated that 'The first duty of a Political Officer is to cultivate direct, friendly, personal relations with the Ruling Chiefs with whom he works.[26] Through friendship, the cadre aimed to influence Tibet's leaders to follow policies favoured by the British. As Mrs Williamson recalled, 'it was important that we get to know people, and...thereby be able to exert a positive influence on Tibet.[27] The unwritten codes were those inculcated during officers' early training and service in Tibet, and these codes taught the cadre that their role was a 'forward' one, in which the establishment of good relations with local rulers was an important means of advancing British interests.

The withdrawal of the Younghusband Mission from Tibet left a power vacuum which made it difficult for the Tibet cadre to identify suitable 'Ruling Chiefs' whom they might cultivate as supporters. Although the cadre had initially been prepared to work with the Chinese, as Younghusband had done, they found the Chinese 'unpleasant neighbours',[28] whose rule was neither effective, nor beneficial to British interests. China was nominally the suzerain power in Tibet, and was recognised as such by Whitehall, but the British positions in Tibet posed a threat to Chinese power and prestige in the region, and the Chinese, who considered Tibet part of their empire, sought to regain control there.

When China re-established a degree of control over Tibet in 1907-11, their presence threatened to destroy any effective British influence there, and, while Whitehall was

prepared to sacrifice the Agencies in the interests of wider international relations, the Tibet cadre sought to maintain and strengthen their position. As the Chinese were the main threat to the cadre, they became their enemy; there was no possibility of establishing close personal relations that might have assisted the tri-partite solution favoured by Whitehall. The result was that Tibet in the period 1904-47 was the setting for a struggle between British and Chinese agents for power and influence.

Having discounted the Chinese as suitable 'Ruling Chiefs' to befriend, the cadre were then faced with identifying suitable Tibetan leaders. This meant defining Tibet, an issue we deal with in Chapter Six, and identifying the rulers of this 'Tibet'. The one obvious candidate was the Dalai Lama, who was, theoretically at least, at the apex of the Tibetan system of theocratic government. But with the Dalai Lama in exile in Mongolia, Tibet was ruled by a Regent, the Abbot of Ganden monastery.

The Regent, however, was an unsuitable ruler in British eyes. He was a religious leader, with neither knowledge of, nor interest in, worldly affairs. An alternative leader was needed, but the traditional Tibetan power structure was a complicated system of 'checks and balances' which devolved the power of the Dalai Lama among various monastic and aristocratic factions. The incarnation system also meant regular long periods of rule by a Regent. The effects of this complex power structure were by no means immediately apparent to the British, and greatly complicated the search for leaders to cultivate.[29]

As Whitehall prevented their having any direct contact with Lhasa officials, the cadre's first choice as an alternative leader was the most powerful figure the cadre could contact, the Panchen Lama. He had an independent power structure at Shigatse, with his own court and officials, tax-paying territory, and even foreign policy. Significant numbers of Tibetans regarded the Panchen, rather than the Dalai Lama, as their supreme sovereign in both the religious and secular realms.[30]

Soon after the opening of the Gyantse Agency, O'Connor visited Shigatse where he (and subsequently Bailey), got on well with the Panchen Lama, a somewhat worldly figure of similar age to the Agents. The Lama was given various gifts, including modern rifles and a motor car, and in 1906 he was invited to India, where he was treated with great ceremony in (as was clearly stated) an attempt to impress him.[31]

In the immediate post-Younghusband period, before the Tibet cadre identified the Chinese as their enemy, Louis Dane had seen the Panchen Lama as a potential solution to the Tibetan problem. He considered that if the Chinese replaced the Dalai Lama with the Panchen Lama, the British could then recognise Chinese authority in Tibet, as it would 'effectively settle the unruly Tibetans and exclude Russian influence'. But while Dane sought details of historical precedents concerning the Chinese deposition of the 6th and 7th

Dalai Lamas, he also considered the possibility that the Panchen Lama 'may yet be an Indian Ruling Chief'.<sup>[32]</sup>

Given Dane's close relationship with O'Connor, it was no surprise that the Gyantse Agent should promote a plan to centre British policy in Tibet around the Panchen Lama. In February 1907 O'Connor proposed that the Panchen Lama should be encouraged to declare his independence from Lhasa and create a separate state in southern Tibet, ruled from his Shigatse headquarters. Britain should then, O'Connor argued, recognise and support the new entity, which would act as a strong 'buffer state' for British India.<sup>[33]</sup>

Richardson states that this plan 'suggests that O'Connor was not fully in touch with the depths of Tibetan history and religious feeling'. Even at the time it aroused great opposition. Morley was 'horrified', White attempted to use it to engineer O'Connor's dismissal, and the plan was never acted on.<sup>[34]</sup> But O'Connor's plan was consistent with 'forward school' thinking. While Tibet was too large for Britain to protect militarily, a southern Tibetan state could have been supported, would have provided a forward position for British interests beyond the Himalayas, and had the potential to be drawn within the frontiers of British India in due course.

O'Connor's perspective was limited, and wider geopolitical implications (such as Russian and Chinese opposition) made it impossible for his government to support the plan. But O'Connor acted before 'Tibet' was created by the British as a geographically determined state with fixed borders, and his relations with the Panchen Lama gave him a different perspective on Tibetan identity to that of later cadre officers, who defined Tibet in accordance with the Dalai Lama's perspective.

The Panchen Lama certainly saw the advantages of a break-away. Bell, who met him in 1906, wrote of their meeting that, 'he opened his mind to me. He wanted to be independent of Lhasa and to deal with the British Government as an independent State'.<sup>[35]</sup> The Panchen Lama's view of Tibet as a state therefore, cannot be said to have coincided with that of the Dalai Lama, or of the cadre in later years.

Cadre support for the Panchen Lama was soon abandoned. They became preoccupied with holding their ground, and the Chinese prevented them from making personal contact with the Panchen Lama while they made their own efforts to court his favour. The Chinese offered the Lama the Regency in 1907, and persuaded him to stay in Lhasa for six months in 1911, and although ultimately he refused to accept secular power in Tibet, the unfortunate Panchen Lama lost the trust of significant elements of the Dalai Lama's supporters as a result of these flirtations with foreign powers.

Although he corresponded with several cadre officers until the 1930s, the Panchen Lama also lost the trust of the British as a result of his dealings with the Chinese. In 1913 Bell

rejected his request to be represented at the Simla Convention, noting that 'the sentiments of the Tashi Lama and nearly all his court are of pro-Chinese tendency', and it was to China that he went into exile in 1923.[36] His decline is an example of how contact between modern and traditional societies tended to bring about the collapse of traditional structures because of the modern societies' definition of a state as ultimately ruled by a single entity, with whom they preferred to deal.

The Dalai Lama's flight to India in 1910 gave the cadre the chance to befriend the traditional Lhasa leadership. MacDonalld earned the Dalai Lama's life-long trust by aiding his flight into exile, and once the Tibetan leader was in India, Bell successfully cultivated his friendship, becoming the Tibetans' most trusted foreign confidant. Bell encouraged the Dalai Lama to begin transforming Tibet into a modern nation-state, guided by British expertise in such matters as the development of mining, improvement of communications, and strengthening of its armed forces.

As the British were forbidden by the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention from intervening in Tibetan internal affairs, Bell concealed the extent to which he guided these changes, but, while the Dalai Lama was open to other influences, there can be little doubt that Bell was the major influence on his thinking. Bell wrote that 'the Dalai Lama...has accepted all the opinions that I have given him, and has acted on them'.[37]

To avoid a charge of exceeding his instructions, Bell refers to giving advice in his 'private capacity'; but it is doubtful the Tibetans recognised the difference. As with the 'advice' given by Political Agents in Indian Princely States, it was clearly understood by the recipients as intended to be acted upon if British support was to be obtained. In return for the Dalai Lama's acquiescence, Bell supported his rule, advancing policies based on support for the existing power structure in Tibet. In so doing he also created a powerful role for himself as the individual best able to deal with the Tibetan Government, a role his successors jealously guarded.[38]

#### **SECTION 4.4: - A PERIOD OF DECLINE**

After Bell's final retirement in 1921, a number of problems arose in Anglo-Tibetan relations. Modernisation policies aroused conservative opposition within Tibetan monastic and aristocratic circles which proved too strong for the Dalai Lama to ignore. When Bailey took over as Political Officer Sikkim he had been out of contact with central Tibetans for more than a decade, and had no close ties with their existing leaders; Bell having ignored the opportunity of taking him to Lhasa.[39] As noted, Bailey also mistrusted Macdonald,

and consequently was unable to make use of the then Gyantse and Yatung Trade Agent's experience in dealing with Tibetan opposition to modernisation. In addition, a number of other incidents, such as McGovern's illicit visit to Lhasa, strained Anglo-Tibetan relations.

In the years since he had been at Gyantse, Bailey had made a name for himself. He had explored the eastern extremities of the Brahmaputra, been shipwrecked off the China coast, and served at Gallipoli before being withdrawn from war service and sent on an intelligence mission to Tashkent to report on the situation as the Bolsheviks took control. Unlike Bell, Bailey's view of a Political Officer's role was more orientated towards command than advice; McGovern described how, in contrast to Bell, 'Bailey has followed the more ordinary lines of British administrators, who believe it inconsistent with the maintenance of dignity to pander too much to native ideas.'<sup>[40]</sup>

But Bailey was not lacking influential support. The appointment of his former mentor, O'Connor, as British representative in Kathmandu, and of Lord Curzon as British Foreign Minister, strengthened his position. As Bailey lacked Bell's long friendship with the Dalai Lama, he attempted to cultivate his own contacts in Tibet's power structure and, given his military background, found natural allies in the newly emerging military forces in Tibet.

Tibet's growing military power was closely associated with Tsarong Shape, who rose from humble beginnings to become Commander-in-Chief of the Tibetan Army in 1915. Tsarong had made his name commanding a small force which held off the Chinese army pursuing the Dalai Lama as he fled to exile in India in 1910, after which MacDonald had disguised him as a British mail-runner to enable him to escape to India. Tsarong was clearly an outstanding individual, a powerful figure in Lhasa politics who enjoyed a close relationship with the Dalai Lama. Tsarong was also exceptional in having a great interest in the world outside Tibet, and while British sources emphasise his ties with them, he was clearly equally interested in meeting other foreigners, for he befriended the Japanese travellers to Lhasa in the 1910-20 period, and in later years always met other foreign travellers to Lhasa.<sup>[41]</sup>

Bailey naturally identified Tsarong as a potential ally. Tsarong, however, lacked either a monastic or aristocratic power base, and his main supporters, army officers who had been trained by the Gyantse Escort Commander or at Quetta Military College, were suspected by conservative Tibetans of having adopted European values.

With his government still reluctant to allow its officers access to Lhasa, Bailey faced a problem in establishing close ties with Tsarong. In 1922 he managed, apparently without the support of the Government of India, to arrange for General George Pereira, a former military attache at the British Legation in Peking, to visit Lhasa en route from Peking to

India. Although officially described as a 'private traveller', Pereira met Tsarong in Lhasa and sent Bailey detailed reports on Tibetan military forces, recommending that to organise their army 'it is absolutely necessary to send a military advisor to Tsarong'.<sup>[42]</sup>

In Lhasa, Pereira obviously exerted some influence on the Tibetan Government to follow Bell's earlier recommendation that a police force be established in Lhasa. The day after Pereira left Lhasa the Tibetans asked the Government of India to lend them the services of Laden La to establish and train the Lhasa police.<sup>[43]</sup> This request gave Bailey the chance to develop ties with Tsarong.

Bailey certainly knew that Whitehall would not sanction posting a British military officer at Lhasa, but Laden La was an experienced police and intelligence officer. He was trusted by the Tibetans, and had recently been in Lhasa with Bell. Just as in 1903, when Curzon had recognised that the distinction between a 'political' and a 'trade' agent was not 'mutually exclusive',<sup>[44]</sup> Bailey realised Laden La could fill a dual role. Bailey therefore persuaded his government that it was of 'great political importance' that Laden La be sent to Lhasa. So keen were government to use Laden La that he was able to demand promotion to Superintendent as a condition of acceptance, although there were no vacancies at that rank, and a special position had to be created for him.<sup>[45]</sup>

Laden La reached Lhasa in September 1923 and established a 200-man police force. He also established close ties with Tsarong and occupied a central role in subsequent events, the exact nature of which remains unresolved. In May 1924, a fight between police and soldiers ended with Tsarong punishing two soldiers by mutilation, as a result of which one died. Mutilation had been forbidden by the Dalai Lama, and Tsarong's monastic and aristocratic opponents sought to use this incident to engineer his dismissal. Tsarong's supporters, including Laden La, sought to preserve his position.<sup>[46]</sup>

Laden La became involved in what was apparently a half-formed plot to transfer secular power from the Dalai Lama to Tsarong Shape. Had it succeeded, Bailey, who was setting out for Lhasa at this time, could have arrived in Lhasa to be greeted by a new Tibetan Government headed by Tsarong. But the plot was not carried through, and the full implications of these events was not brought out by Bailey's reports at the time. It was several years before somewhat contradictory versions of the story emerged in private correspondence.

Bailey visited Lhasa between 16 July and 16 August 1924. There he spent much of his time in discussions with Tsarong. Bailey's report reveals that he asked Tsarong what would happen if the Dalai Lama died, perhaps a rather curious question given that he was apparently in good health. Tsarong replied that if the Government of India sent troops it would stop any trouble, but Bailey warned him that his government would not interfere in

Tibet's internal affairs. Bailey also advised Tsarong to deposit money in India in case he had to flee into exile.[47]

Bailey's departure from Lhasa was the signal for a series of events which greatly reduced British prestige in Tibet. The struggle between the 'conservative' and 'modernising' tendencies in Tibetan society culminated in defeat for those favouring modernisation. Laden La left Lhasa on 9 October 1924 and the police force lost all power. Tsarong conveniently left Tibet on a pilgrimage to India around the same time, and was removed from his post as Army Commander on his return. In Tsarong's absence his young military supporters were down-graded, and a number of other events in this period (such as the closure of the Gyantse school), illustrated the decline in the British position. In the late 1920s there were indications that the Dalai Lama was again turning to China or Russia for support, as the concluding years of Bailey's term in Sikkim saw Anglo-Tibetan relations at a low ebb.[48]

The decline in Anglo-Tibetan relations at this time has been blamed on a number of causes. Ira Klein has emphasised the wider decline in British power in the East at this time. Other observers have blamed the British failure to supply Tibet with further weaponry, or to obtain Chinese agreement to the Simla Convention. But, as the leading studies of this period have all dismissed any suggestion of British involvement in a plot to depose the Dalai Lama, the events involving Laden La have not been seen as significantly affecting Anglo-Tibetan relations, although that would have gone a long way towards explaining the British decline.[49]

Richardson does not refer to the incident at all, but, in connection with Chinese accusations of British support for 'militaristic lay officials who wanted to substitute some form of civil government for the Lama hierarchy' in the 1930s (allegations which may reflect their belated awareness of earlier events), he states that 'to suggest that the British Government would assist such a group-if it existed-[sic]...is...inept'.[50]

Lamb, while noting rumours of a conspiracy between Laden La and Tsarong Shape, is content to note that there is 'not a vestige of evidence' for this in the India Office Library records. Goldstein, surveying these events, writes that 'Ladenla[sic] was an Indian official, and it would have been unreasonable to assume he acted without orders or at least official encouragement'; but footnotes this statement with the contradictory remark that 'This is, however, precisely what happened.'[51]

There is no doubt as to Laden La's involvement, although details of his role took some time to emerge. The Gyantse *Khenchung*, apparently at the Dalai Lama's behest, informed Norbhu Dhondup in 1926 that Laden La had been involved in a plot against the Dalai Lama, allegations which Gyantse school-teacher Frank Ludlow accepted as true. Then when Bailey was on leave in 1927, the *Khenchung* gave Trade Agent Williamson (who

was acting as Political Officer Sikkim during Bailey's absence), a full account of the incident. The Government of India also accepted that Laden La was involved, judging from the National Archives of India restricted file on this matter titled 'Indiscretion of Laden La in associating with Tibetan officers attempting to overthrow the Dalai Lama.'[52]

The Government of India's treatment of Laden La after the incident is instructive. Far from censuring him, they promoted him to Trade Agent in Yatung, but the posting was cancelled after the Dalai Lama, who now deeply mistrusted Lade La, wrote to Norbhu Dhondup objecting to the appointment as 'he [Laden La] is not altogether a steady and straight-forward man and it is not known how he would serve to maintain Anglo-Tibetan amity.'[53]

When Laden La left Lhasa, ostensibly suffering from a nervous breakdown, he took six months' leave, and then resumed his post, continuing to be regarded as a valuable Agent, sent to Lhasa 'on special duty' whenever the need arose. Bailey strongly supported Laden La. He originally argued that the *Khenchung's* account was 'inconceivable', and when he finally advised his government that Laden La had indeed 'certainly committed a serious indiscretion' stated that he hoped no action would be taken against him: none was.[54]

Has previous scholarship been correct in rejecting any British involvement in this plot? Bailey was one of the outstanding intelligence agents of his time. An illustration of this is that his disguise in Tashkent had been so good that he was hired by the *Cheka* (the forerunner of the KGB) to find the British agent (Bailey himself), they knew was in the area. There must be considerable doubt that such an officer would be ignorant of the activities of his own key agent in a crucial post.[55]

Circumstantial evidence points to a 'plot'; we cannot necessarily expect empirical evidence. An experienced intelligence operator such as Bailey would naturally conceal evidence of a failed coup attempt if he could. The reporting of events in Tibet was largely controlled by the Political Officer Sikkim, and Bailey apparently took full advantage of his power to restrict government's knowledge of the matter.

Viewed from the perspective we obtain from knowledge of the cadre mentality, the events of this period can be seen to follow a logical sequence which provides a convincing hypothesis to explain the events of the time and the subsequent decline in Anglo-Tibetan relations. Bailey had apparently come to the conclusion that the only way to modernise Tibet to the extent where it would provide a secure northern border for India was by establishing a secular government in Tibet under Tsarong Shape's leadership. Bailey was seriously concerned about the possibility of Bolshevism in Tibet, and the traditional Tibetan leadership cannot have seemed likely to be capable of resisting determined Russian infiltration.[56]



Pereira's reports must have been a significant influence on Bailey; it is clear from the way in which Bailey arranged permission for him to travel freely in areas normally closed to travellers that he had an important role. MacDonald, who was not then in Bailey's confidence, makes the unusual comment on Pereira's travels that, 'Whether his last journey was inspired by motives other than exploration and the desire to be the first European to reach Lhasa from the Chinese side I do not know, nor did he tell me.'[57]

In sending Laden La to encourage Tsarong, Bailey had an agent whose actions he could disown officially if they failed, while rewarding him later for his efforts. There is of course, the possibility that Laden La acted on his own initiative, in the tradition his 'forward' thinking superiors had inculcated in him. But Laden La was not officially attached to the Political Department at this time, and had he been involved in a foreign conspiracy without significant support from higher British officers it is hard to believe he could have escaped dismissal from government service.

O'Connor, then in Kathmandu, may also have been involved in this plan. Bailey was in close touch with him at that time, and hopes for Tsarong's leadership echo O'Connor's earlier plans for the Panchen Lama. Bailey's plan, like O'Connor's, was a typically 'forward' manoeuvre, aimed at tying Tibet more closely to British India and excluding Russian influence, while also serving to place Bailey in the position Bell had obtained, of being a close friend and advisor to a Tibetan ruler.

Bailey knew he could not expect his government to approve the overthrow of the Tibetan Government, but that if it succeeded, with British involvement concealed, they would accept it. Under Tsarong, modernisation on the British model could then proceed, with British 'advisors' ensuring Russian influence was excluded. The subsequent attitude of the Dalai Lama may also be consistent with the existence of a plot. At first he would have had no real proof of British involvement, but he may gradually have come to suspect its full extent. Certainly he later distanced himself from the British, and withdrew his support for British-sponsored modernisation, exploring alternative avenues of support for his regime along lines less liable to arouse monastic opposition or to create a secular alternative to his rule.

Bailey's plan, if such it was, failed for two reasons, both of which also applied to O'Connor's earlier plans for the Panchen Lama. Firstly the policy and financial restrictions imposed by government meant Bailey was unable to offer real support to the 'modernising' faction in the form of military assistance, which would have been decisive. Secondly, Tsarong, like the Panchen Lama, was apparently unwilling to take the decisive step of declaring his claim for power. While this failure by the Panchen Lama has been blamed on the weakness of his character, no such accusation can be leveled against Tsarong. Rather it

appears that his loyalty to the Dalai Lama was too strong for him to turn against his benefactor, and Tsarong knew that even if the Dalai Lama died he lacked sufficient support to take over Tibet without British military assistance. Tsarong consequently chose to go on a pilgrimage to India rather than challenge for power.[58]

The events of this period gave the Tibet cadre greater understanding of the Tibetans. They did not make the mistake again of allying with a faction of Tibetan society at the expense of others. As Richardson later wrote

descriptions of this or that official...as "pro-British", "pro-Chinese"..  
[are]..too facile. The only thing the Tibetans have been "pro" is the  
preservation of their Religious State.[59]

Support for the Tibetan army was to be finally abandoned as a realistic option after a damning report by Brigadier-General Neame, after his visit to Lhasa in 1936. He concluded that

the Tibetans...are absolutely unmilitary, all their thoughts and energies are  
devoted to their religious life. The Tibetan Government have absolutely no  
idea of military organisation, administration or training ....The troops are  
untrained, unreliable and unpopular.[60]

#### **SECTION 4.5: - SEEKING NEW MEANS OF INFLUENCE**

After the decline in relations with Tibet in the 1920s, an atmosphere of suspicion persisted when Weir visited Lhasa in 1930; Tsarong, who was still an influential figure in Lhasa, prudently kept his distance. However, Weir had a budget of 15,000 rupees for presents to Tibetan officials, an increase of 5,000 rupees from the allowance for the Bailey Mission. He diplomatically avoided raising several controversial issues (such as the Dalai Lama's recent contacts with China), and worked steadily at improving relations. He was assisted socially by the presence of his wife, and in discussions with the *Kashag* by his government's agreement to allow Tibet supplies of cheap silver. Weir was also careful, in the manner of Bell, to follow Tibetan etiquette.[61]

By the time Weir visited Lhasa again in 1932, Tibetan and Chinese forces had again clashed on the eastern border, and Tibet was now anxious to obtain British support. There were signs that they were reviving the stalled process of modernisation and there was an

optimistic tone to the cadre's reports in this period. The more considered and sympathetic approach of Weir, and his successor Williamson, appeared to revive good relations with Lhasa's ruling elite.[62]

The Dalai Lama's death in December 1933 meant that relations with the Tibetan leadership required a new focus. This took some time to emerge. The British realised that 'the time has gone by when the maintenance of British interests in regard to Tibet depended mainly on contacts with a few individuals and pre-eminently with one'.[63]

In Lhasa, amidst an on-going struggle for power and influence, a young incarnate lama from Reting was appointed Regent. The Reting Regent appeared to view the British favourably, and invited Williamson to visit him, but British influence in Tibet at this crucial juncture was weakened when (as will be seen in Chapter Five) Williamson died in Lhasa.

When Basil Gould took over in Sikkim, a new era in Anglo-Tibetan relations began. He had firm support from Indian Foreign Secretary Olaf Caroe for a more actively interventionist policy in response to the establishment of a Chinese Mission in Lhasa, and an able assistant in Hugh Richardson, who quickly progressed from Trade Agent Gyantse to Head of Mission Lhasa. He also promoted the experienced Norbhu Dhondup to the reactivated Yatung Agency, and Norbhu also headed the Lhasa Mission in Richardson's absence.

The focus of British efforts in Tibet was now on Lhasa, where a body of men experienced in Tibetan affairs had unrestricted access to all levels of Tibetan society. The Gyantse Agency was reduced to little more than a staging post for Lhasa, and the Agents there had little significant input in policy.[64] Only Captain Saker of the later Gyantse Agents showed signs of being suitable for promotion to the higher cadre posts.

With the establishment of the Lhasa Mission the cultivation of contacts among the Tibetan leadership proceeded unhindered. Richardson developed new contacts with Tibet's monastic power structure, and with religious functionaries, such as the State Oracle, who had an influential place in Tibetan society. Richardson proved an expert at those aspects of his duty 'which are not exactly work, although they are apt to consume a good deal of energy and patience', and as a result of these contacts he and Gould developed a greater understanding of Tibetan society than any officers since Bell and Macdonald.[65]

The purpose of establishing good relations with 'Ruling Chiefs' was of course to persuade them to act in accordance with British aims. Meanwhile China's agents sought Tibetan support for Chinese aims. Both sides sought to exclude the other's influence (an aim which did not coincide with their status as World War Two allies), and thus there was a constant battle for ascendancy in Lhasa between the British and Chinese representatives.

The British and Chinese in Lhasa did co-operate in 1942 to persuade the Regent to allow

the Trans-Tibet Transport system to be established, but the normal state of relations between them was described by Robert Ford. He later recalled that when he reached Lhasa towards the end of the war, he

was shocked at the mutual mistrust and hostility between British and Chinese...I had thought of as gallant allies....I could hardly believe we had been waging a cold war with them in Lhasa all the time.[66]

Although the cadre succeeded in gaining the friendship of many Tibetans, who did seek and follow British advice,[67] in the face of the Chinese threat a more powerful weapon was needed in the struggle for influence.

The British had always followed the local custom of presenting gifts when visiting important Tibetans. The offering of gifts to a host, or social superior, was part of Tibetan tradition. This gift-giving was highly ritualised, objects retained gift status, being received and then passed on. The British quickly adapted to this system, offering gifts to their supporters. White was so generous in giving modern weapons to various Tibetan officials that he was censured for failing to consider the potential threat these weapons offered to the British.[68]

After the Younghusband Mission a street-song in Lhasa recorded that:

At first they speak of "Foes of our True Faith";  
And next the cry is "Foreign Devildom";  
But when they see the foreign money bags,  
We hear of "Honourable Englishmen".[69]

Charles Bell, finding his efforts to persuade his government to supply arms to Tibet were unsuccessful, took 30,000 rupees with him to Lhasa to present to various influential Tibetans.[70] The extent to which Bell's generosity assisted his success is difficult to gauge; Bell naturally downplayed this aspect in his reports, but under Gould direct financial payment to influential individuals became an increasingly important aspect of the cadre's efforts to influence the Tibetans.

Charles Bell's influence is clearly apparent in many of Gould's policies at this time. Gould, who had been away from Tibet for more than twenty years when he was posted to Gangtok, went to considerable trouble to correspond with Bell without the knowledge of the government by routing this correspondence through one of Macdonald's daughters. Bell had recognised the possibilities of buying support; in 1914 he described how arms

sales 'will give us a good hold over the Government of Tibet'.[71]

The Chinese had also traditionally made cash payments to Tibetan monasteries as part of their religious policies (although the political implications were clear), but these cash payments or benefits to individuals, whether by the Chinese or the British, appear to have been outside the traditional ethical limits of this system of exchange.

The arrival of the Chinese Mission in Lhasa in 1934 brought a new urgency to the cadre's efforts to cultivate supporters. There was an increasing emphasis on paying influential elements of Tibetan society in return for their support. This policy was implicit rather than articulated, and, lacking financial support from their government, the cadre had to create their own source of funds 'to keep the Tibetans happy'.[72]

In 1936-37, Gould gave cash payments to Lhasa monasteries and 'certain of the officials'. By the 1940s, Lhasa Mission reports detail regular payments to Tibetan officials and institutions. These proved effective, at least in the short term. Sherriff found his reception at Sera monastery was 'markedly friendly' after he had given the Abbots 700 rupees. When the Drepung Abbots called on the British Mission for the first time in November 1942, Ludlow was in no doubt as to the reason for their visit, 'All this of course' he wrote, 'is due to the sum of money that has recently been placed at my disposal for distribution among monasteries'.[73]

The long term results were less certain. Richardson, in 1946, reported that 'Drepung is still aloof' and that 'the monasteries...have always been comparatively inaccessible to social contacts and impervious to the small contacts that are possible'. But the Mission Reports of 1947 indicate that 'Kogbo Khamtsen' college was their 'protecting college' at Drepung, while at Sera two colleges claimed the privilege, and both were given 'a special present'.[74]

It was clearly stated that the continuance of these gifts 'depends on the maintenance of a friendly attitude on the part of the Tibetan Government', and payments were withheld when this was in doubt. After the English school, established in Lhasa in 1944, was closed by conservative elements of the Tibetan Government, Gould vetoed Sherriff's plan to donate 20,000 rupees to the monasteries at the annual *Monlam* festival.[75]

In the absence of any other effective policy weapon, payments to individual Tibetans became the central pillar of the cadre's policy towards Tibet. This was never officially articulated, and has passed largely unnoticed by historians. The policy was essentially reactive, following the Chinese use of funds in much greater amounts for the same purpose, but its great weakness was that it brought no benefit to Tibet as a whole. Individuals profited, but the Tibetan state remained starved of funds. It also acted to the detriment of Tibet's moral climate, as will be seen. As Richardson later observed 'A good

deal of money flowed into Tibet during the war years, but it fell into individual hands and did not do any good to the country.'[76]

The use of British payments to the Tibetans is placed in a different perspective by the fact that the Chinese made similar, and larger payments; British sources record the Chinese giving the Lhasa monasteries 80,000 rupees in December 1943. But in the later war years the British were able to supply items like kerosene and sugar which neither Chinese nor Tibetans could obtain. They also offered customs exemptions on goods imported through India, a significant saving for Lhasa aristocrats, whose lifestyle relied on imports from China and India.[77]

In the 1940s, cadre officers also proved more adept at selecting gifts which would appeal to the young Dalai Lama. While Chinese representatives gave him traditional gifts of carpets and silks, the British gave toys such as a pedal-car, picture books, and a bicycle, which naturally found greater favour with the boy, who was 'always excited and happy' when he heard that British officials were coming to visit him.[78]

Arthur Hopkinson found a means to finance increased payments following Lambert's 1944 proposal to augment contributions to Tibetan monasteries. He formed a syndicate for the procurement of cotton cloth in Bombay and sold it under licence to Tibetans in Kalimpong. Licences to procure cloth under this system were then allocated to Tibetans 'on account of...[their]...supposed position or supposed political usefulness past or future'.[79]

The licences were transferable, which meant that the recipients could immediately sell them to established traders at a considerable profit. Richardson was 'constantly being besieged by people who wanted a quota'. He recalls that 'Hopkinson also quite unofficially took a proportion of the profits somehow...and established a Tibetan "cess" fund...and then we used that "cess" fund for keeping the Tibetans happy'. Apparently the only time this fund was referred to in official records was when it ended in 1947, with the balance of the 'cess' fund, 11,398 rupees, being deposited with the Tibetan Government in order that an annual payment of one *trangka* per monk could be made from the interest.[80]

Hopkinson's explanation of the purpose of the quota system policy was that

through the system of cloth procurement...we have deliberately set out to demonstrate to the Tibetans the economic and commercial advantages of the connection with India; in order that, when changes should come, the economic and commercial bonds should hold firm.[81]

Although the British were withdrawing from government in India, the aims of Hopkinson's policy were fundamentally consistent with the aims of Curzon and

Younghusband - to draw Tibet into the Indian sphere. But, in this report, Hopkinson introduced a note of moral caution. He observed that 'The Trans-Tibet Transport system (which we imposed on [an] at first unwilling Tibet at the instance of China)... created a get-rich-quick atmosphere that tended to debauch and demoralise Tibetans'.[82]

This was not the only reference to a decline in the moral climate of Tibet at that time. It may have been typical of the Tibetan system that in the absence of a ruling Dalai Lama there was a decline in the spiritual emphasis in society, but this was greatly accentuated by British and Chinese rivalry. The two Regents in the 1933-48 period were themselves open to bribery, and as Richardson reported in the 1940s 'govt.[sic] here is rather uncouth...most of them heavily involved in trade...under pressure of Chinese bribery'. British sources describing the colourful social life of the Tibetan aristocracy in the 1933-48 period can be read as a discourse on spiritual decline and aristocratic decadence which offers a great contrast to the expected image of a theocratic society. The British certainly contributed to this decline through their policy of profiting individuals, as did the Chinese, to the ultimate benefit of the Chinese Communists.[83]

A decline was also apparent among the British. In 1946-47, the Chinese Communist threat had yet to emerge fully, and the cadre were primarily concerned to train their Indian successors for the usual struggle for influence *vis-à-vis* the Chinese in Lhasa. But it was now obvious that there was little future for the imperial presence in the East, and, while Richardson was young and energetic, older officers who had not had leave during the war were 'worn out'. Gould had remained at his post for too long, and suffered a mental and physical decline. Hopkinson wrote that 'Everything seems to held together by a bootlace, and all the people I should normally rely on are either going potty or taking to drink or opium or [are] otherwise incapacitated.'[84]

## CONCLUSIONS

The British cadre officers were not given official instructions on their duties and aims in Tibet. They were free to define their own role, a freedom they considered appropriate; as Bell stated, 'We should not allow the administration of our Agencies in Tibet to become too rigid, too bureaucratic.'[85]

The cadre created a role based on models such as Sandeman, with his 'forward' policies in Baluchistan, and their 'founding fathers' Curzon and Younghusband. Following Political Department instructions and traditions, priority was given to cultivating the friendship of Tibet's rulers, in order to gain their support. The search for supporters

continued throughout the 1904-47 period, as deeper levels of authority were identified and befriended by cadre officers, who were also aware of the need to identify and maintain alternative supporters in case established allies proved unsuitable to British interests. The British accordingly kept contact with the Panchen Lama after establishing close ties with the Dalai Lama.

The identification of suitable supporters implied related judgments about the traditional society, how it was constituted and over what area its authority extended. Thus in the period in which O'Connor cultivated the Panchen Lama's support, cadre definitions of Tibetan territory and 'traditional' authority differed from those in the period in which the Dalai Lama's support was cultivated.

After potentially supportive elements of local society were identified, they, or the interests they represented, were offered inducements for their support. In India, titles, salutes and other symbols of power were bestowed on British allies. Outside India, recognition of a state's independent status, and diplomatic, financial and military support for that status, were the ultimate British gift, and implied personal rewards for British allies in the new state. Thus the cadre offered the Dalai Lama support for Tibetan aspirations to independence from China. While their government prevented them from offering any significant practical support, the cadre were usually able to provide the Tibetans with just enough supplies of weapons and diplomatic assistance in their struggle with China to retain the support of significant elements of the Dalai Lama's Government.

There was a tension in British India between the tendency to intervene in the affairs of states to protect British interests, and the desire to protect the traditional ruling and social structures of states, the collapse of which might lead to further problems requiring British intervention. Both of these tendencies ultimately depended on co-operation from local power elites; thus it is generally held that 'British policies were all in a sense variations on the theme of control through collaboration.' [86]

Non-intervention in their internal affairs was one reward offered to co-operative Indian Princes. Intervention was in any case, as Copland has shown in regard to the western Indian states, overwhelmingly in support of the existing rulers, whom the British saw as 'natural' leaders, whose rule was most able to ensure social stability. Intervention within India's external frontiers actually became increasingly common as a result of the imperial process of administrative centralisation, and the growth of structures across India. [87] However, intervention became increasingly rare in the areas outside India's external frontiers.

We may apply to the Tibet cadre Fieldhouse's conclusion that



It was an almost invariable rule that those Europeans sent to take control of new colonies felt that their own reputations and careers would be enhanced by success in expanding the effective authority of their parent state.[88]

But while that was how they felt, the conclusions which Fieldhouse and others have reached concerning the 19th century - that the frontiersmen generated formal imperialism when 'collaboration' between the colonial power and the local elites collapsed - cannot be sustained in regard to Tibet in the 20th century.

The cadre did not live in an era when they could rely on government intervention to attain their aims. They had to rely on their cultivation of local allies to ensure that Tibet followed their 'advice'. This policy failed in the 1905-10 and 1923-24 periods and the cadre did then attempt to promote policies directly aimed at expanding British authority. But they were unable to impose these policies in the face of Delhi's reluctance, and Whitehall's refusal, to sanction any extension of British involvement in Tibet. Thus the predominant strategy of the Tibet cadre was Bell's policy of support for the Dalai Lama; although these occasions showed that, had they had government support, the cadre's role might have veered from 'advisor' to 'empire builder'.

Just as ruling structures of the Indian Princely States which had allied with the British survived almost intact when the imperial power withdrew in 1947, so too did much of the traditional Tibetan power structure. This supports the conclusion that policies of collaboration with traditional elites tended to prevent the political and social modernisation of indigenous societies, whose structures prevented progress.[89]

So closely did the cadre identify with Tibet's traditional rulers that a threat to that system was seen as a threat to the cadre's own position. Modernising elements in Tibetan society in the 1940s were generally regarded by the British as Chinese sympathisers, and Tibetan dissidents in India were deported back to Tibet. It was Tibetan conservatives who were now seen as patriotic opponents of the Chinese.[90] Modernisation was only encouraged to the extent that it could be undertaken without threatening the position of British supporters.

Direct financial payment to individuals was not a normal policy of the Government of India, although official subsidies were paid to ruling chiefs on the North-West Frontier and in the Persian Gulf. But the Tibet cadre were able to generate their own funds through the sale of cloth quotas, and during the 1935-46 period, gifts of cash, or privileges of great cash value, became the principal reward to British supporters. Yet there was doubt as to value of this policy. As one British observer noted 'If there's one thing you can't do it is bribe a Tibetan, you can give them as much gold and silver as you like, but they will look at you [as if to say] "You can't buy me".'[91]

This view is supported by the lack of evidence for these gifts actually influencing the Tibetans to change their policies in line with British interests. For example, they continued to object to British Indian control of Tawang. But it would appear that the policy was continued due to the absence of any effective alternative, although it may be that it was successful in assuring the flow of information from Tibet, the importance of which is largely implicit, rather than articulated, in the sources.

The policy of direct cash payments to Tibetan institutions and individuals was a symbol of the cadre's impotence. Far from being the 'motor of imperial expansion' that Yapp describes Political agents as being in the early part of the 19th century, the frontiersmen in mid 20th century Tibet were reduced to acting as a rather ineffectual brake on the imperial 'retreat to the centre'. As Yapp notes, the Political's ability to initiate policy decreased steadily in the late 19th century, as improved communications enabled government to increase its control over the periphery.[92]

By the 1930s, any possibility of British rule being extended into Tibet had ended, and the cadre were unable to obtain any significant support for their plans to strengthen Tibet. Despite their best efforts, Tibet was abandoned by Whitehall. 19th century models thus cannot be applied to India's north-east frontier after Curzon's departure, for the imperial high tide had passed.

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## FOOTNOTES

[1] Ewing (1980, pp.7).

[2] Singh (1988a, p.266).

[3] If formal instructions were issued to the Gyantse and Yatung Agents these do not appear to have survived.

[4] McKay (1992a, pp.399-419). This is not, however, the view of Hugh Richardson, who stated that 'I was bought up to say what I think. I was never a diplomat'; Interview with Mr H.Richardson, November 1990. The cadre saw themselves as frontier officers of the Government of India.

[5] IOLR L/P&S/11/235-2906, Legislative question by S.C.Ghose, 2 February 1925; Girouard (1981, pp.226-27); McKay (1992a, p.413). In law, the Gyantse and Gartok Agencies were established under Article 2 of the 1904 Anglo-Tibetan Convention, which referred to 'the British Agent appointed to watch over British trade'. This followed a similar definition by which the Yatung Agency was created in Article 1 of the Anglo-Chinese Agreement of 1893.

[6] NAI FD, 1906 External B March 19-31, file note by Viceroy Amphill, 5 November 1904;

[7] NAI FD, 1906 External B March 19-31, file note by 'K.L.G.', 2 November 1904, file note by Younghusband, 4 November 1904; IOLR L/P&S/7/186-886, India to Secretary of State, 26 April 1906;

[8] 'The distinction between a trade or political officer was not mutually exclusive after all', IOLR MSS Eur D510/14, Vol. XXXV1, Curzon to Hamilton, 4 June 1903.

[9] Macdonald (1991, p.53).

[10] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E February 1398-1445, Reports by Louis Dane, 21 May 1904, & 13 June 1904; file note by Viceroy Amphill, 11 June 1904. Sir John Ardagh, Director of Military Intelligence 1896-1901, supported the extension of the Indian border to the Kuenlun range; (Lamb 1989, p.356).

[11] McKay (1992a, p.411).

[12] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E February 1398-1445, Government of the Punjab to T.J.Chand, 9 December 1904.

[13] IOLR MSS Eur F157-166, Bailey to his parents, 5 February 1907, & 13 February 1907; Morgan (1973, p.58).

[14] For example, see Younghusband (1985, pp.10-12).

[15] Potter (1986, pp.59-60). NAI FD, 1907 External A September 82-91, O'Connor to India, 24 February 1907; government generally accepted the principle that 'officers stationed at such outposts must frequently act on their own initiative'. In practice the principle was often ignored; see NAI FD, 1909 Establishment B May 198-200, file note by 'K.M.', 9 April 1909.; also see Wurgaft (1983, p.35); Ewing (1980, p.200).

[16] McKay (1992a, pp.399-400 & 417-19); NAI FD, 1913 Secret E May 261-502, file note by 'JWE', 10 February 1913. Intelligence gathering was not of course, a one-way-street. The Tibetans used agents to monitor events in India, and maintained an indiscreet watch on the British in Tibet. Visitors to Lhasa were provided with 'guides' who reported their charge's actions to the

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Dalai Lama; Interview with Mrs J.M.Jehu, March 1993.

[17] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E December 349-353, file note by R.E.Holland, 6 September 1905; FD, 1910 Establishment B October 139-142, Macdonald to India, 14 May 1910, various file notes.

[18] NAI FD, 1906 External B August 180-181; White to India, 25 July 1906; also see FD, 1908 Establishment B December 165-195, Bell's Secret Service Accounts 1907-1908; Fleming (1984, p.84).

[19] IOLR L/P&S/11/47, A.Tsering to S.Hart (D.C.Darjeeling), 6 May 1913; NAI FD, 1913 Secret E April 364-401, Bell to India, 20 August 1912; Berry (1995, pp.102-03, 121, 136, 153) reveals, however, that the Japanese escaped.

[20] NAI FD, 1912 Secret E January 65-92, detailing Bailey's payment, is classified as it contains a map. However the 'Index for Foreign Department Proceedings for the Year 1912' lists this file in two entries, one of which is obviously a misprint, giving the amount involved as 1,000 and 10,000 rupees respectively; re Kingdom-Ward, see NAI FD, Index 1914 External November 90-93 Part B.

[21] Richardson (1974, p.120); Mainprice papers, diary entry of 16 June 1944; also see NAI FD, 1909 Establishment B February 57-58, file note by M.Wood, 25 January 1909, which notes Secret Service expenditure records will be dispensed with; EAD, Index 1945 File No 118 (2) C.A. contains 'Reports on Tibet from a Secret Agent'. IOLR L/P&S/12/4193-1946, India to Gould, 18 February 1937, indicates that, after 1937, Secret Service expenditure was hidden in 'other expenses'. Also see Ford, (1990, pp.212-13).

[22] NAI FD, Index 1936, lists a classified file No 434-X Secret, containing 'Arrangements for intelligence on the NE Frontier' that may detail this reorganisation.

[23] Griffiths (1971, pp.342-352); Lha Tsering inherited Lambert's post in August 1947; NAI EAD, Index 1944 File No.188 C.A.; Interview with Namgyal Tsering, February 1994.

[24] NAI EAD, Index 1944, File No 592 C.A. Secret, Lambert to Sir Denys Pilditch (Director Intelligence Bureau), 18 September 1944.

[25] IOLR L/P&S/12/1261, U.K. High Commission Delhi to E.P.Donaldson, Commonwealth Relations Office, 5 September 1947. Lamb implies that Frank Kingdom-Ward, the botanist, may have been an agent of Whitehall's; Lamb (1989, fn's 917, 929, 933, pp.436-437).

[26] 'Manual of Instruction for Political Officers', by S.H.Butler, 1909, contained within IOLR L/P&S/7/237-526.

[27] Williamson (1987, p.104).

[28] Battye papers, unpublished report dated 19 August 1935.

[29] Rule by Regent had become the norm during the 19th century; see Lamb (1989, fn 278 p.171); Burman (1977).

[30] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-8573, Weir report, 18 November 1930; L/P&S/7/183-168, O'Connor to White, 23 November 1905.

[31] NAI FD, 1906 Secret E March 45-46, file note by R.E.Holland, 5 December 1905.

[32] NAI FD, 1906 Secret E March 228-245, file notes by Dane, 2 December 1905, & 30 December 1905; FD, 1906 Secret E March 154-191, India to Secretary of State, 23 January 1906, file note by Dane, 12 January 1906.

[33] Lamb (1966, pp.134-37); Lamb sees this plan as having originated with Curzon, with White heavily involved. [Lamb's reference, PEF 1908/22, No 1226, O'Connor to India, 3 February 1907, is no longer used by the India Office Library].

- [34] Richardson (1985, p.15); Lamb (1966, pp.134-37); McKay (1992a, p.402).
- [35] Bell (1987, p.145).
- [36] NAI FD, Secret E September 1-27, Bell to India, 18 June 1913; IOLR L/P&S/7/203-1258, India to Secretary of State, 24 July 1907; L/P&S/12/4197-3864, Lhasa Mission Report by B.Gould, 30 April 1937.
- [37] Bell (1987, p.381).
- [38] For examples of Bell's private advice, see Bell (1992, pp.184-85, 189). The Dalai Lama also corresponded until his death with Agvan Dorziev and the Japanese scholar Tokan Tada. Re the Princely States, see Copland (1978, p.276).
- [39] RGS papers, Everest papers, EE 1/20/13, Bailey to Younghusband, 4 December 1921.
- [40] McGovern (1924, p.39); For a somewhat inadequate biography of Bailey, see Swinson (1971).
- [41] Regarding Tsarong's career, see Spence (1991).
- [42] IOLR MSS Eur F157-238, Pereira to Bailey, 26 November 1922, & 13 December 1922. Pereira's journey is described in Younghusband (1925).
- [43] IOLR L/P&S/11/235-2906, Government of Tibet to Bailey, 29 October 1922.
- [44] See footnote eight, above.
- [45] NAI Home Department, 1923 File No. 42(V) Part B, various correspondence.
- [46] NAI Home Department, 1923 File No 42(V) Part B, Chief Secretary Government of Bengal to India, 31 August 1923. The fullest account of these events is in Goldstein (1989, pp.121-136).
- [47] IOLR MSS Eur F157-214, Bailey's Lhasa diary, 12 August 1924.
- [48] IOLR L/P&S/10/1088, press communique of 14 October 1924; also see Lamb (1989, pp.163-70, 178-80).
- [49] Klein (1971a); also see Singh (1988a, p.94).
- [50] Richardson (1984, pp.128-32, 137-38).
- [51] Goldstein (1989, pp.133-34); Lamb (1989, pp.162, fn.317 p.175).
- [52] IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Norbhu Dhondup to Bailey, 28 August 1927, & 30 August 1927; MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entry, 19 September 1926; NAI FD, Index 1924-27 File No 38(2)-X.
- [53] IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Dalai Lama to Norbhu Dhondup, cited in Norbhu Dhondup to Bailey, 7 October 1924.
- [54] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a 97, Laden La to Bell, 5 September 1925; L/P&S/10/1088; Bailey to India, 31 July 1927 and various correspondence; MSS Eur F157-240, Dalai Lama to Norbhu Dhondup, 7 October 1924.
- [55] IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Norbhu Dhondup to Bailey, 1 September 1927, Norbhu informs Bailey that he had told the Dalai Lama 'that Government of India does not know [about the 'plot'] as Political Officer Sikkim has not reported on account of no proper news'[sic]. Re Bailey in Russian Central Asia, see Bailey (1946); and the popular account by Hopkirk (1984).
- [56] Lamb (1989, pp.147-48, 152-53); also see FO 371 10291/4178 (1924), Bailey report entitled 'Soviet Activity in Tibet, Bailey to India, 2 September 1924.
- [57] MacDonald (1991, p.303).
- [58] Regarding the Panchen Lama's character, see Lamb (1966, pp.18-19).

- [59] Richardson (1984, p.129).
- [60] IOLR L/P&S/12/4193, Gould Mission Diary appendix, 31 August 1936.
- [61] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-8573, Weir Report of 18 November 1930; L/P&S/10/113-2725, Weir to India, 7 March 1929.
- [62] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-1922, Weir Report, 1 March 1933.
- [63] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-1175, Gould Report on Williamson Mission, 18 February 1936.
- [64] Mainprice papers, diary entry, 15-19 October 1943.
- [65] IOLR L/P&S/12/4178-2137, Gould to Caroe, 1 March 1940.
- [66] Ford (1990, p.215);
- [67] This statement reflects the use of British sources, supported by interviews with locals. Bell however, recorded his assistant Palhese's's comment that 'the reason why...people liked Mr Macdonald so much, was that he was friendly, hospitable...and humble-minded...The young sahibs of the Political Department, who come as B.T.A.'s are not like that'; British Museum Bell collection, Tibet Notebook 1934, Volume 1.
- [68] NAI FD, 1906 External B July 236-247, India to White, 12 July 1906.
- [69] Bell (1992, p.70). Street songs were a recognised outlet for popular political opinion in Tibetan society; Goldstein (1989) gives a number of examples.
- [70] IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entry, 3 June 1924.
- [71] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5d8, 'Notes on our future policy in Tibet and on the North Eastern Frontier generally', by Bell, for Foreign Secretary McMahon, c1914; MSS Eur F80 5a127, Gould to Bell, 23 March 1936.
- [72] Interview with H.Richardson, November 1990.
- [73] IOLR L/P&S/12/4193, Gould Mission Diary, 30 March 1937; L/P&S/12/4201, Lhasa Mission Reports, weeks ending 11 July 1943 & 8 November 1942.
- [74] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-6072, Report on 1946 Mission to Lhasa by H.Richardson; L/P&S/12/4202, Lhasa Mission Report, week ending 30 March 1947. This Drepung college is difficult to identify; see Goldstein (1989, p.30).
- [75] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-8573, Weir Report, 18 November 1930; L/P&S/12/4216-982, Gould to Sherriff, 21 January 1945. For details of the English school in Lhasa, see IOLR L/P&S/12/4201, Lhasa Mission Reports 1942-45, various entries; also see Dhondup (1986, pp.155-62)
- [76] Richardson (1951, p.114).
- [77] IOLR L/P&S/12/4201-410, Lhasa Mission Report, week ending 19 December 1943; MSS Eur D998-17, Hopkinson's Lhasa diary/letters, 25 November 1945.
- [78] Interview with H.H. the Dalai Lama, March 1994.
- [79] IOLR MSS Eur D 998-39, 'Report on Tibet August 1945 -August 1948', by A.J.Hopkinson.
- [80] IOLR L/P&S/12/4202-6154, Lhasa Mission Weekly report, week ending 23 February 1947; Interview with H.Richardson, November 1990. 'Cess' has two dictionary meanings; 'tax' or 'rate' and, appropriately given the results noted next, 'bad to' or 'may evil befall'.
- [81] IOLR MSS Eur D998-39, 'Report on Tibet August 1945 -August 1948', by A.J.Hopkinson.
- [82] *Ibid.*

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[83] IOLR MSS Eur F157-259, Richardson to Bailey, 18 July [1945?]; Re bribery of Regents see L/P&S/12/4197-6072, Lhasa Mission Report of 1946, by H.Richardson; Lamb (1989, p.310); Kimura (1990, p.172); Goldstein (1989, pp.364, 375, 448-49).

[84] Interview with Mrs E.Hopkinson, April 1993; IOLR MSS Eur D998-18, Hopkinson to Mrs Hopkinson, 19 May 1945. This series of letters sympathetically record Gould's decline.

[85] Bell (1992, p.259).

[86] Robb (1992, p.9); also see Fieldhouse (1984, p.19).

[87] Copland (1982, pp.305-309); Robb (1987, pp.138-29); also see Ashton (1982, p.1X).

[88] Fieldhouse (1981, p.23); also see Mommsen (1980, pp.104-05).

[89] Copland (1982, p.313); Albert (1983, p.18); Mommsen *ibid* (p.111).

[90] IOLR MSS Eur D998-18, Hopkinson to Mrs Hopkinson, 30 June 1946; L/P&S/12/4197-5896, Gould to India, 24 July 1939 (which refers to 'those patriotic and conservative elements' who were anti-China); NAI EAD, Index 1946 File No 1 (53) N.E.F.

[91] Interview with Mrs J.Jehu, March 1993.

[92] Yapp (1980, pp.580, 588-89); Ewing (1980, p.7); also see Copland (1978, p.295)

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 'WE COULD RUN THE WHOLE SHOW':

#### PROMOTING POLICY: THE LHASA MISSION

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#### INTRODUCTION

Although stationing a British representative in Lhasa was a primary goal of Curzon's Tibetan policy, Whitehall refused to sanction this on grounds of cost and security. After the Younghusband Mission left Lhasa, cadre officers were prevented by their own government from visiting the Tibetan capital, but they considered that if the cadre was to have any real influence in Tibet they needed access to Lhasa. The frequency with which the cadre raised the issue of access to Lhasa, and the emphasis they placed on it, indicates that they considered this the most important problem they faced.

In this chapter, I will examine how the cadre succeeded in establishing a permanent position in Lhasa, in order to demonstrate how they made successful use of the limited means at their disposal to promote a change in policy. I have also briefly examined two contrasting issues which demonstrate why the issue of representation in Lhasa remained a priority, while other issues were neglected, or abandoned after a period of emphasis.

The various models of imperial expansion, proposed by Fieldhouse, Robinson and Gallagher and so on, have not been applied in regard to Tibet. Yet the cadre's promotion of access to Lhasa was a 'forward' policy, which created the potential for drawing Tibet into the British Empire. Efforts to establish representation in Lhasa may therefore be considered within the wider framework of imperial motives.

We have seen in the previous chapter that the cadre created a role which developed the policies initiated by Curzon and Younghusband. The issues which they identified as important were those left unresolved by, or arising from, the Younghusband Mission. The goals which the early cadre officers identified were passed on to their successors, and later cadre officers continued the effort to obtain access to, or preferably representation in, Lhasa: this became the main priority of the 'men on the spot'. Their role in this issue can be



followed through three stages: (1) attempts to gain access to Lhasa in the period 1904-1920, (2) regular missions to Lhasa during the period 1921-1936, and, (3) the permanent British Mission in Lhasa 1937-47, and ensuring its continuance.

### **SECTION 5.1: - CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO SIMILAR ISSUES**

Before dealing with our main theme of representation in Lhasa, it is instructive to consider briefly two other issues, arms supplies to Tibet and improvements in Tibet's roads, which demonstrate contrasting approaches to policy formation by the cadre.

If Tibet was to act as 'buffer state', it required a well trained and well equipped army. The cadre sought to ensure this by arranging weapons and training for the Tibetan army. After rifles supplied by the Government of India in 1914 enabled the Tibetans to defeat Chinese forces in fighting along the Eastern Tibetan border in 1917-18, arms supplies to Tibet became a major issue.[1]

This issue was originally seen by the cadre as one in which they could obtain concrete assistance for Tibet, and improve Anglo-Tibetan ties while enhancing the ultimate goal of security for India's northern border. Thus they promoted arms sales to Tibet at every opportunity.[2] But it became increasingly apparent that there was no realistic prospect of the Tibetan army ever becoming a strong enough force to resist foreign intervention. While arms sales continued into the 1940s, the increased knowledge of Tibet gained by the cadre resulted in a change of policy; after Neame's report in 1936 they ceased to promote the prospect of Tibet's army being made a significant force.[3]

One potentially significant issue which the cadre downplayed, was the question of road-building. Historically, Tibet was isolated from India by the Himalayas, which provided a barrier to large scale trans-border traffic. British attempts to establish regular trade and communications with Tibet, and to encourage its gradual modernisation through the introduction of imported technology and expertise, required improving roads to, and within, Tibet.

Under Article Five of the 1904 Anglo-Tibetan Convention, the Tibetans were to maintain roads leading to the trade marts.[4] But they saw little benefit in this, fearing that improved access would hasten the introduction of foreign ideas, threatening the traditional fabric of Tibetan society. They also quoted a proverb describing the British as the 'road-builders of Tibet', with the implication that when the British had built these roads, others would use them to Tibet's detriment.[5]

The cadre tried to encourage the Tibetans to improve their roads, but with little success.

While the Tibetans made occasional repairs on the two main passes from India to Yatung, the Nathu La and the Jelep La, no repairs to the trade route from Yatung to Gyantse were undertaken after minor repairs in 1933-34.[6]

Although their reports regularly noted Tibet's lack of effort in this direction, the cadre, after some initial enthusiasm in the early years, downplayed the roads issue. There were three reasons for this. Firstly, having personal experience of the route, they realised the immensity of the undertaking required to render Himalayan roads suitable for modern traffic. Road-building would have involved the Government of India in considerable expense, and the cadre were well aware they had little chance of obtaining the necessary funding.[7]

Secondly, this issue was closely connected with trade, a field in which the cadre had little expertise, or even interest. It was not one where prestige was obviously involved, and there was little to be gained from making it an issue. Thirdly, we must consider the cadre's sympathy for the Tibetan desire for isolation, and their awareness of the risks to the fabric of Tibetan society (and hence ultimately the security of the Indian border, which might in any case be better served by a lack of roads) in attempting to hurry the modernisation of Tibet.

Consequently, while the road-building issue was of importance to the Yatung and Gartok Agents, who were more concerned with trade, and who could count on the support of local traders who saw the financial advantages of road improvement, wider considerations meant that the issue was a low priority for the senior cadre officers.[8]

In western Tibet, where roads in the modern sense were non-existent, the Trade Agents there had occasion to resort to dynamite to effect a passage up to the Tibetan border. This led to the bizarre suggestion that

the cheapest and most effective way of improving the route in Tibet itself is to authorize the Trade Agent to buy a good drill and to take with him a small supply of dynamite each year...No political negotiations would be necessary...and ...I cannot see that anything but good would ensue.[9]

This suggestion by a provincial official may be seen as symbolising the frustrations of those lesser officials who promoted Tibetan policies that did not coincide with those emphasised by the Political Officers.

The questions of arms supplies and road-building demonstrate that there was a prioritisation of issues by the cadre, which was liable to change over time. Aims such as road-building, which were not seen as realistic, were put aside. The cadre's increasing

understanding of Tibetan society meant that issues such as arms supplies also came to be seen as less important, and were not therefore emphasised by the cadre to the same extent, while other matters (such as the control of travellers, as we have seen) became of higher priority. This is consistent with, and a part of, the finding that the cadre largely defined their own role in Tibet.

## **SECTION 5.2: - THE PROBLEM OF LOCATION**

Curzon's desire to establish relations with Tibet was based on two obvious concerns: trade, and the security of India in the face of a perceived Russian threat. The latter was of primary importance. Trade issues provided a cause which could be emphasised for public consumption, but there is no doubt that within the Government of India, Russia's intentions were the greatest cause of concern. To exclude Russian influence in Tibet, Curzon and Younghusband agreed that 'the personal influence of a British officer at the capital..[provided]..the best means of preventing serious trouble arising on the frontier'.[10]

The belief that a British representative in Lhasa would be able to ensure that the Tibetans would exclude Russian influence meant that representation in Lhasa became the principal policy promoted by the Tibet cadre; it was 'the one point necessary'.[11]

As there was no attempt to persuade the Tibetans to station a representative in India (an obvious compromise), it is clear that such an agent was not perceived merely as a channel of communications between Delhi and Lhasa. This issue can therefore, be seen to involve wider aims on the part of the 'forward school'. These aims were expressed by Younghusband after he arrived in Lhasa. He found that

the Chinese know nothing of what goes on here and are completely out of touch. Nor do the Tibetans obey a single word they say. If only we were going to keep a Resident here, we could run the whole show.[12]

Younghusband attempted to circumvent Whitehall's ban on a British agent being stationed in the Tibetan capital by making the separate agreement which allowed the Gyantse Trade Agent

to visit Lhasa, when it is necessary, to consult with high Chinese and Tibetan officials on such matters of importance as he has found impossible

to settle at Gyantse by correspondence or by personal conference with the Tibetan agent.[13]

Whitehall however, repudiated this special agreement, and O'Connor's first official act on taking up the post of Trade Agent Gyantse was to inform the Tibetan Government of this. The Government of India was thus left with its principal representative in Tibet stationed in Gyantse and forbidden to visit the Tibetan capital. To make matters worse, the cadre soon realised that all three trade marts were in unsuitable locations. First-hand experience showed that in terms of both trade and politics, Shigatse was a much more important town than Gyantse, Phari than Yatung, and Taklakot than Gartok. The priority given to Lhasa meant that Trade Agencies had been established without sufficient thought for their most suitable location, and, once established under the 1904 Convention, political conditions within Tibet and changes in British policy in the post-Curzon period meant that there was little prospect of relocating them.[14]

The decline in the British position in Tibet in the years following the Younghusband Mission was a natural consequence of new Whitehall policies, which aimed at withdrawing from involvement in Tibet. Whitehall under Secretary of State John Morley saw the security of India's northern frontier as best guaranteed by Chinese paramountcy there. The turning of the tide of British expansion in the Himalayas left the 'men on the spot' in a difficult position as Morley hoped to reverse 'Curzonism' by withdrawing British officials from Tibet entirely.[15]

The Tibet cadre, however, took a very different view from that of Whitehall. They saw the desired solution to the Tibetan problem in Curzonian terms, in that any potential threat to the security of India emanating from the Tibetan border was seen as best solved by extending British influence over Tibet, to the exclusion of the influence of any other foreign power, Asian or European. In attempting to overcome the problem of location, and gain influence in Tibet, the cadre were thus placed in the awkward position of promoting a policy at odds with that of their Home Government.

Initially, under the Viceroyalty of the Earl of Minto [1905-10], the cadre had little support at the highest levels of the Government of India, but circumstances changed after the arrival of Charles Hardinge (Baron Hardinge of Penshurst) as Viceroy. The cadre gained increasing support from Delhi as the Chinese came to be perceived as almost as great a threat to the security of India's northern border as the Russians were.

Hardinge had previously served in the British Legation in Teheran, as Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office with responsibility for Central Asia, and as Ambassador to Russia. These posts had made him personally aware of Russian encroachment on what the British

saw as their imperial interests. While Hardinge, unlike Curzon, does not appear to have formulated 'general analyses of policy', he was a key figure in the 1907 Anglo-Russian accord, by which Britain and Russia agreed to acknowledge China's suzerain power in Tibet, and to refrain from sending representatives to Lhasa. Yet Hardinge was determined to 'defend British imperial interests against Russian encroachments'. Thus he had supported the Younghusband Mission, and by 1913, he was convinced of the 'supreme importance..[of being]..represented at Lhasa' in view of the spread of Russian influence.[16]

### **SECTION 5.3: - 1904-1920; GAINING ACCESS TO LHASA**

I have previously examined the Political Officers' attempts to gain access to Lhasa during the period 1910-20, when, after a change of policy by Whitehall, their efforts culminated in Charles Bell being permitted to take up a long-standing invitation from the Dalai Lama to visit Lhasa.[17]

The genesis of this invitation lay in the assistance given to the Dalai Lama by David Macdonald at Yatung in 1910. Macdonald had been specifically instructed that while he could shelter the Dalai Lama in the Trade Agency, he was to maintain neutrality in the Chinese-Tibetan conflict. But as the Tibetan leader fled south from the pursuing Chinese forces, Macdonald not only offered the Dalai Lama and his followers sanctuary in the Trade Agency, but deployed the Agency escort to protect him.[18]

Macdonald's interpretation of his orders attracted no censure from government. There can be little doubt that his actions were tacitly approved of by his immediate superior, the Political Officer Charles Bell, who was soon to benefit from the goodwill gained by Macdonald's action. Bell later described MacDonal'd's assistance to the Dalai Lama as being 'perhaps the chief reason why the British name stands high in Tibet.'[19]

During the Dalai Lama's period of exile, Bell succeeded in cultivating the personal friendship of the Tibetan leader and a number of his court followers. In practice, Bell was able to give the Tibetans very little concrete assistance, for Whitehall, and even many in the Government of India, considered the Dalai Lama was no longer an important political force. The Secretary of State, Lord Morley, for example, described the Dalai Lama as 'a pestilent animal... [who] should be left to stew in his own juice'.[20]

Even when the Dalai Lama returned to rule Tibet in 1912, Whitehall objected to any gestures of support being given to him. Bell and the Tibet cadre, however, offered what support they could. Bell instructed Basil Gould to escort the Dalai Lama as he passed

Gyantse, and Macdonald played host to the Dalai Lama in Yatung for five days. Macdonald naturally gained great prestige from this with the local Tibetan community.[21]

Soon after the Dalai Lama returned to Lhasa, there was a new initiative by the Government of India to overcome Whitehall's objection to a British officer visiting Lhasa. Following a Tibetan request for an officer to arrange the evacuation of the defeated Chinese forces from Lhasa to India, they despatched Laden La to Lhasa .

After ordering Laden La to Gyantse on 24 May 1912, Viceroy Hardinge, apparently waited a week before informing the Secretary of State that Laden La had been sent to Gyantse with orders to prepare to visit Lhasa. Given the slower communications and pace of government at the time, it appears that by waiting until Laden La had reached Gyantse, and then despatching the telegram to London on a Friday, the Government of India intended to present Laden La's arrival in Lhasa to Whitehall as a *fait accompli*. On Tuesday June 4th, a telegram was sent ordering Laden La to Lhasa. He received the telegram at 9am on June 5th and departed later that day, accompanied by Norbhu Dhondup. But while the weekend's delay slowed their reaction, Whitehall eventually halted Laden La on June 9th, 40 miles from Lhasa, following a 'clear the line' telegram ordering them to return to Gyantse.[22]

Whitehall continued to oppose every suggestion of a Lhasa mission. Bell received numerous invitations from the Dalai Lama, all of which he was forced to decline, while efforts after the 1913-14 Simla Conference to send a European China Consular Officer to China via Lhasa were also vetoed, as was a similar proposal by the British Legation in Peking in 1917.[23]

Despite these vetoes, there were a number of changes taking place in the factors preventing a British Mission to Lhasa. Bell's influence at the Simla Convention can be clearly seen in Article Eight of the final agreement between the Governments of India and Tibet. This clause, allowing the Gyantse Trade Agent to visit Lhasa, was virtually identical to the agreement Younghusband had obtained, but Whitehall had repudiated. in 1904.[24] Although this clause appeared to contravene the 1907 Anglo-Russian treaty, the subsequent repudiation of its international treaties by the new Russian revolutionary government made the 1907 agreement a dead letter.

The two principal British officers on the Tibetan frontier, Bell and Macdonald, were growing in prestige and experience, both with the Tibetans and their own government. Their personal relations with the Tibetans prospered, and their expertise in all things Tibetan enabled them to speak on questions of policy with growing authority. Their arguments in favour of representation in Lhasa became the obvious alternative to turn to in the search for new approaches to the Tibetan question.[25]

In 1919, the cadre's flow of information was interrupted by the death of the main sources of information on events at Lhasa, the Tibetan Prime Minister, Lonchen Shatra, and the half-brother of the Maharajah of Sikkim, Lhase Kusho. This deprived the British of Lhasa news at an important time, as a Chinese Mission, nominally from the Kansu Provincial Government, reached Lhasa that year, suggesting the possibility of direct Chinese-Tibetan negotiations without British involvement. Whitehall now began to turn to the alternative policy long advocated by the 'men on the spot'. The British Legation at Peking were also reconsidering their policy of opposition to a British mission to Lhasa, and the powerful Sinophile lobby in the British Foreign Office began to accept the need for alternative approaches.[26]

Finally, and perhaps conclusively, Lord Curzon became British Foreign Secretary in 1919. As Viceroy of India his Tibet policy had been aimed at establishing British representation in Lhasa. Fifteen years later Curzon was now in a position to achieve his original aim, and he had the perfect representative in Charles Bell, who provided a personal link to his own period of involvement on this frontier.

The fact that the 1914 Agreement specified the Gyantse Trade Agent's right to visit Lhasa, rather than that of the Political Officer in Sikkim, appears to have been quietly overlooked in the planning for a Lhasa Mission. While the then Gyantse Agent, David Macdonald, was certainly well qualified to deal with the Dalai Lama, Bell's superior status made him the obvious choice; he had been recalled in January 1920, after eighteen months' retirement, with just such a mission in view.

During the summer of 1920 Bell had repeatedly requested Whitehall's permission to visit Lhasa, but he seems to have had some last minute doubts about the advisability of the visit in view of the lack of tangible support he was permitted to offer the Tibetans. However after consultation with Macdonald, who had no such doubts, Bell lost his doubts, and, in October 1920, while on his annual inspection of Gyantse, Bell was ordered to proceed to Lhasa.[27]

#### **SECTION 5.4: - THE EFFECTS OF THE BELL MISSION**

The Bell Mission to Lhasa in 1920-21 marked a major turning point in the history of the British presence in Tibet. It had the effect of opening the Tibetan capital to regular visits by British officials. Norbhu Dhondup and Laden La subsequently made regular visits to the Tibetan capital, and at least one representative of the Government of India visited Lhasa annually.[28] Ultimately, the Bell Mission paved the way for permanent representation in

Lhasa, thus fulfilling the original intention behind Curzon's Tibet policy.[29]

For Bell personally, the 1920-21 Mission was the culmination of his career. He had worked for more than ten years to persuade his political masters in London and Delhi that he should be allowed to visit Lhasa. Once there he had to struggle against the caution of the Government of India which sought to shorten his visit, as well as against opposition from monastic elements within Tibet.[30]

Bell stayed in Lhasa from November 1920 until October 1921, being joined briefly by David Macdonald, his staunch supporter and assistant.[31] When Bell finally left, content that he had achieved his aims, he retired a second, and final time, and began writing the then definitive works on Tibetan civilisation. Before his departure however, he submitted a report which was accepted by Delhi and Whitehall as the basis for future policy in Tibet. In this report Bell made a number of proposals which were all later adopted in some form. He recommended that if a Lhasa Mission was established, it should be under the control of the Indian Political Department, and that the Yatung Agency then be abolished in all but name, with the Gyantse Agency greatly reduced. He also recommended that Europeans (although not shooting parties or missionaries) be allowed to visit Gyantse.[32]

Bell's major finding in this report was that Britain should not establish a permanent position in Lhasa - unless the Chinese first established a mission of their own. Until that time only temporary missions, such as his own, should be sent. Bell argued that Lhasa's isolation, and the danger from 'unruly monks', made a permanent mission inappropriate. But the Politicals maintained at least one post, at Kashgar, which was far more inaccessible from India than Lhasa, and Kashgar and many other positions (particularly on the North-West Frontier) had similar, if not greater, security problems.

The Kashgar Consulate was usually staffed by the Indian Political Department. In the 1920s, telegrams took between 11 and 19 days from Delhi to Kashgar, compared with one to two days to Gyantse, while the journey from Gilgit to Kashgar took up to 30 days, more than twice the time taken from Gangtok to Gyantse. An indication of its security problem was that in 1934 the Consulate-General's wife was wounded by a stray bullet in local fighting, and in 1936 there was an apparent attempt to assassinate the Consul.[33]

Bell's real motives for advancing this Lhasa policy emerge in his first book *Tibet Past and Present*, published three years after his retirement. His time in Lhasa had brought home to him the extent to which the Tibetans desired to protect their religion by maintaining their isolation. Recalling the goodwill gained by Younghusband's withdrawal from Lhasa, Bell argued that this would be lost if a British official was stationed in Lhasa permanently. In addition, this would raise the prospect of China demanding the right to station a representative in Lhasa, with all the attendant risks to Tibetan security that would entail.



Finally, definitively, Bell quotes the Dalai Lama as saying

If an Amban must come, I wish to have a British Representative also in Lhasa. But, until an Amban comes, it is sufficient that a British representative should visit Lhasa occasionally, as necessity arises.[34]

Thus we can see that in this important area, Bell's identification of British interests was identical to the Dalai Lama's wishes for his country. Bell clearly followed the Politicals' Manual of Instructions, which stated that Political officers should 'assume an identity of interest between the Imperial Government and the Durbar'.[35]

### **SECTION 5.5: - THE USE OF INTERMEDIARIES**

Although a precedent had been established for British missions to Lhasa, future missions by British Political Officers still generated a great deal of discussion in government. But local employees could now visit Lhasa freely, and the Government of India did not, apparently, seek Whitehall's prior approval for these visits.

The two principal intermediaries used on missions to Lhasa were Laden La and Norbhu Dhondup. Laden La, as we have seen in the previous chapter, lost the trust of the Tibetans after his actions in 1923-24, and although he was sent to Lhasa again in 1930 by Colonel Weir, the Tibetans remained suspicious of him. He was detained at Chushul ferry and told 'no useful purpose could be served' by his visiting Lhasa. Laden La appealed to Tsarong Shape, who intervened on his behalf in Lhasa, and after two days he was allowed to proceed.[36]

Laden La claimed that his 1930 mission was a success, a claim apparently accepted by his superiors, for he accompanied Colonel Weir to Lhasa later that year and again in 1932.[37] Other sources however, suggest Laden La was still mistrusted by the Tibetans and that he achieved little in Lhasa. Apart from Norbhu Dhondup, whose critiques of Laden La in his letters to Bailey could have been based on personal differences and professional jealousies,[38] there were also regular complaints about Laden La from the now retired David Macdonald.

MacDonald considered that both Laden La and Norbhu Dhondup were responsible for the downturn in Anglo-Tibetan relations, stating that they were working for their own ends, and giving political information to the Tibetans. In addition, Macdonald alleged that Tsarong had been demoted from *Shape* to *Dzasa* rank due to the assistance he had given

Laden La in getting to Lhasa in 1930. MacDonald's negative view of Norbhu Dhondup was supported by Mr Rosemeyer, the telegraph officer who supervised the Gangtok to Lhasa line, (and himself an Anglo-Indian). He informed Bell that Norbhu was 'not a patch on your former Chief Clerk A-chuk Tse-ring[sic], who was both shrewd and clever'.[39]

But the presence of other foreign agents at Lhasa meant that an intermediaries' career was not without its dangers, Norbhu's life was, he reported, threatened on several occasions by Russian or Chinese agents; in response, he swore 'I...shall not die before I murder at least two, as I have my rifles and pistols...always loaded'.[40]

The extent to which the Sikkim Political Officers relied on the information obtained by these two intermediaries is difficult to assess. Their visits had the advantage that they could be arranged at short notice, while missions by Political Officers involved considerable preparation, and permission from Whitehall. The two men were thus of great value to the British, despite their shortcomings, and considerable reliance was placed upon their knowledge of the culture and people of Tibet. The Political Officers were aware of the difficult position these men held, but exercised their own judgment in assessing the worth of the reports they produced.[41]

#### **SECTION 5.6: - 1921-36: POLITICAL OFFICERS' LHASA MISSIONS**

Although the Sikkim Political Officers could now despatch local intermediaries to Lhasa, they saw their own access to the Tibetan capital as of paramount importance, both as a barometer of the state of Anglo-Tibetan relations, and as a matter of prestige.[42] After Bell's Mission, there were five visits to Lhasa by the Political Officer Sikkim before the establishment of a permanent mission there. Bailey visited Lhasa in 1924, Weir in 1930 and 1932, and Williamson in 1933 and 1935.

When a Political Officer wanted to visit Lhasa, he faced the problem of persuading three governments, London, Delhi, and Lhasa, that such a visit was necessary. After the Bell Mission, Delhi's support was virtually automatic, but examining how the agreement of Lhasa and Whitehall was obtained provides a clear picture of the cadre's command of internal politics, and of their wider manoeuvrings towards achieving the ultimate goal of permanent representation in Lhasa

Before a Political Officer could visit Lhasa he had to receive an invitation from the Tibetans. These were not always issued as 'spontaneously' as Delhi's reports to the India Office suggested.[43] First Laden La or Norbhu Dhondup were sent to Lhasa with verbal instructions to suggest to the Dalai Lama that he invite the Political Officer to visit Lhasa.

Obviously they would also indicate that such an invitation would be accepted. Thus neither side risked the 'loss of face' that would follow an official refusal of the invitation.

Although Bell had been forced to decline a number of invitations to Lhasa prior to 1920, no invitation was subsequently declined by the British. Once, however, the Dalai Lama failed to respond to the British hints. In 1929, Weir's attempts to obtain an invitation through Norbhu Dhondup met with the request that his visit be postponed to avoid complications with China. Although the Dalai Lama wrote to Weir explaining 'it is not at all an attempt to slight you...I would request you not to get disappointed by misunderstanding things', the refusal was taken by the British as a rebuff, and a sign that the Tibetan government had become less partial to them.[44]

The simplest example of the procedure the Political Officers went through to visit Lhasa concerns the 1933 mission. When Williamson wrote to inform the Dalai Lama that he had taken over from Weir as Political Officer Sikkim, the Dalai Lama replied with an invitation for Williamson to visit Lhasa. However, as Williamson had already discussed the matter informally with his government, some degree of pre-arrangement seems likely.[45]

Williamson assembled official arguments in favour of his being permitted to take up the invitation. He stated that, if Weir had remained as Political Officer Sikkim, a visit would not have been necessary, but he (Williamson) had not met the Dalai Lama, and 'it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of personal contact', and therefore he should accept the invitation.[46]

The Government of India forwarded Williamson's claims, recommending to the Secretary of State that he be allowed to visit Lhasa. They enhanced Williamson's arguments by claiming that in Lhasa he could restrain Tibet from aggressive activity in the eastern borderlands. After the Foreign Office advised the India Office that they had no objections, the Secretary of State approved the mission.[47]

Only the Dalai Lama had the unquestioned power to issue an invitation to Lhasa. After his death, the Regent wrote privately to Williamson suggesting he telegraph the Tibetan Government, asking if it was convenient to visit Lhasa. The Regent did not 'feel sufficiently powerful to invite me in more definite terms on his own responsibility' but he advised Williamson that if the request was received he could arrange its acceptance.[48]

Getting an invitation from Lhasa was generally easier than ensuring Whitehall's approval for such missions. Hence the Political Officers sought to marshal every possible argument in their favour. The most popular argument was simply the benefit of personal contact, but, in addition to the perennial prospect of mediating between China and Tibet, and between the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, there were many others. Bailey's purpose was said to be the exclusion of foreign influences, Japanese, Indian nationalist, and Bolshevik.[49]

When there was no immediate response from Whitehall to Bailey's request, in an obvious attempt to speed a favourable response, Bailey reported that the Tibetans were anxious for a reply, and that the Tibetan Prime Minister was reported to be in 'very poor health'. [50]

In 1930, Weir used the argument that, as there had not been a British officer in Lhasa since 1924, the Tibetans would soon be able to refuse any further missions on the grounds that relations could obviously proceed without them. He then articulated the cadre's understanding of the Younghusband Mission as having been a means to gain access to Lhasa. According to Weir, if the British kept away from close contact with the Tibetans, 'the entire value of the Tibet Mission of 1904 will be nullified'. For good measure he suggested that the 13th Dalai Lama might soon die, and it was necessary to meet potential new leaders. [51]

If the Political Officer was reticent in suggesting a Lhasa Mission, the initiative could come from the Government of India. In September 1934, the Indian Foreign Secretary, H.A.F. Metcalfe, asked Williamson in Gangtok for a report on the Tibetan question. Metcalfe was concerned that Britain's commercial interests in China meant that they would

have great difficulty in persuading His Majesty's Government to take a strong line with the Chinese Government over the Tibetan question, unless we can produce much more cogent arguments than...hitherto... The maintenance of the Government of India's influence at Lhasa in some form is essential, and it would seem necessary to attempt to convince His Majesty's Government of this fact by all the arguments we can muster. [52]

Williamson duly filed a report recommending that he be permitted to visit Lhasa to counter Chinese moves there. [53]

There were now pressing reasons for a new stage in relations with Tibet. The death of the 13th Dalai Lama on 17 December 1933 was followed by the arrival of a 'condolence mission' from the Nanking Government in April 1934. When the main body of the mission departed, they left behind the nucleus of a permanent mission, including a radio operator with a transmitter. (Thus the Chinese were freed from reliance on the Government of India's telegraph system, where their communications were routinely monitored.) While Bell's 1921 report was not directly quoted, the British response was just as Bell had recommended; if China stationed a permanent representative in Lhasa, India should follow suit.

In 1935, Williamson's main task was thus to ascertain whether the Chinese Mission was indeed to be a permanent one, and if so, whether the Tibetans would accept a permanent

British representative as a counter to the Chinese move. On the receipt of this information Delhi and Whitehall were to consider the question of a permanent mission.[54]

British plans to counter the Chinese Mission then suffered an unexpected setback. Frederick Williamson had never enjoyed the best of health in Tibet. On his first posting to Gyantse in 1926 he was suffering from a serious fever, and he did not commence duty for six weeks. On this 1935 mission, Williamson set out against medical advice, and again fell ill en route to Gyantse. His condition continued to decline, but although he was advised to leave Lhasa as early as September, he refused on the grounds that 'duty required his presence', and he died in Lhasa from chronic uraemia on 17 November 1935. The accompanying Gyantse Trade Agent, Captain Keith Battye, 'kept his head' and took over the leadership of the mission. He escorted Williamson's widow back to India after Williamson had been buried in Gyantse.[55]

Williamson's death not only delayed a response to the Chinese presence in Lhasa; the British feared it had damaged their prestige with the Tibetans. This fear may have been unfounded; the Tibetans apparently blamed his death on a more esoteric cause, considering it due to his photographing powerful images of deities at a shrine in Lhasa.[56]

The British Government gave as little publicity as possible to these missions to Lhasa, in order to avoid international complications; but Williamson's death gained unwelcome attention, with questions raised in the British parliament. In February 1936, Communist M.P. Mr Gallacher, asked what Williamson had been doing in Lhasa, and whether the Government of India was intending to appoint a permanent representative there. The British Government played down the visit as a routine one, and blithely denied that it was considering a permanent representative in Lhasa.[57] But the denial was some way from the truth, for the appointment was now being actively considered.

#### **SECTION 5.7: - GOULD'S ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT MISSION**

The final report on the Williamson Mission concluded that although the attitude of the *Kashag* to a permanent British Mission in Lhasa was one of 'distaste', they would give the question of a British representative 'favourable consideration' if they were forced to accept a Chinese representative.[58] In 1936, with the Chinese 'condolence mission' now firmly established as China's representation in Lhasa, Williamson's successor, Basil Gould, began to plan his response following the guidelines Bell had established.

Each succeeding Political Officer's arguments for a Lhasa mission built on the arguments raised successfully by his predecessors. Thus in 1936 Gould was able to muster a number

of arguments in favour of his visiting Lhasa. In April, Whitehall was informed that the primary purpose of the intended mission was to arrange for the Panchen Lama's return to Tibet from exile in China. Whitehall approved, subject to an invitation, to obtain which Norbhu Dhondup was duly sent to Lhasa in June. After the invitation was received the mission was approved, and preparations were made on a far more elaborate scale than for previous missions.[59]

The subsequent news that the Tibetans considered British mediation in the Panchen Lama affair would be unwanted interference in Tibetan internal affairs, appeared to remove the basis for Gould's mission. But the Government of India advised Whitehall that 'After discussion with Gould, we are satisfied that the invitation to visit Lhasa must be accepted in spite of this...refusal to accept our intervention.' Whitehall accepted the need for Gould's mission to 'explore the general situation in Tibet', but Gould was to be instructed to 'be cautious in sounding Tibetan Government regarding permanent representation.'[60]

Gould duly arrived in Lhasa on 24 August 1936, with six British officers, the largest contingent since the Younghusband mission. Gould intended his mission to become permanent, and sought to bolster the party's popularity and prestige by calling David Macdonald out of retirement to act as their Tibetan language instructor; but in the event illness prevented MacDonal from making the journey.[61]

Once he had arrived in Lhasa, Gould had little difficulty in finding arguments for the cadre remaining there. The Panchen Lama was threatening to return to Tibet with a Chinese military escort, and Gould claimed that his presence was strengthening the resolve of the Tibetan Government to resist the Chinese force. In October 1936, Gould proposed that if the Panchen Lama did return with the escort, he should negotiate for a permanent British representative in Lhasa.[62]

The Government of India reported to Whitehall that Gould was making progress towards securing permission for another Everest expedition, an achievement valued by London, and that while Gould had to return to his duties in Sikkim, Norbhu and Richardson could both remain in Lhasa. While noting the financial cost of their remaining was 13,000 rupees a month, Delhi argued that 'The real solution for our difficulties would...appear to be some kind of permanent representation at Lhasa'. Norbhu Dhondup's unofficial efforts to gain Tibetan agreement to this at the time may have been unsuccessful, to judge from Gould's statement that 'the time is not suitable' for discussing this with the Tibetans. Whitehall however agreed to the mission's extension, although it cautiously preferred that Norbhu remain in Lhasa, rather than the British officer.[63]

With this permission granted, Gould set out to create an impression of permanence around his mission. Gould's understanding of the importance of symbolic gestures is

revealed in his use of the mission football team's regular matches as one means of appearing 'permanent'. [64]

Gould further delayed his departure from Lhasa on the grounds that it would be a 'grave discourtesy' to leave before the Tibetan New Year celebrations, but he finally departed on 17 February 1937. Norbhu Dhondup needed dental treatment in Calcutta, and so Richardson remained in Lhasa until Norbhu was fit to return. When Gould departed he simply informed the Kashag that Richardson would remain to discuss matters outstanding. [65]

The exact status of the Lhasa post was never defined, nor was it covered by any agreement. No official notification of any intention to create a permanent position was given, then or later, to the Tibetan Government - or to Whitehall. The post of Head of British Mission Lhasa always remained under the command of the Political Officer Sikkim. The Mission remained in Lhasa until August 1947, when it became the Indian Mission, although Hugh Richardson continued to command the post until 1950. Theoretically it remained temporary, but the officers there were determined not to depart, at least while the Chinese remained in Lhasa. The Tibetans never asked the British Mission to leave, and made the most of it as a channel of contact with the outside world. [66]

Gould had thus achieved his primary aim by following the policy espoused by his former superior, Charles Bell, and 'brought about de facto permanent representation...at Lhasa under the name of a "temporary" Mission'. [67] Gould took the realistic view that the 'prime need is to admit to ourselves that our aims are not ALTRUISTIC' [Gould's emphasis]. British interests were best served by a 'friendly and sufficiently strong and independent Tibet' Thus he had

concentrated on one main objective viz. the establishment of our mission at Lhasa. Round this one distinct forward move [my emphasis] I have endeavoured to throw a purdah of conservatism and of help in such matters as trade and medical work. [68]

There is little doubt that Gould's 'guru', Charles Bell, approved of his former pupil's sentiments and actions. [69]

## SECTION 5.8: - 1937-47; MAINTAINING A PRESENCE AT LHASA

As the Lhasa Mission remained theoretically temporary, Gould was called upon annually to justify its continuance. The death of the Panchen Lama in December 1937 struck at much of the supposed basis of the British presence in Lhasa, and Gould was asked by his government (presumably pre-empting Whitehall's enquiry), if there was now 'any reason why the Lhasa Mission should not be withdrawn entirely as soon as possible?'[70]

Gould duly responded with arguments, old and new. Citing Norbhu Dhondup's pessimistic views of the consequences of withdrawal, he argued that Norbhu's presence had prevented the Chinese from establishing a stronger presence in Lhasa. The rising threat from Japan was also cited, while financial concerns were addressed by Gould's claim that the costs of maintaining the post (now 50,000Rs. a month) could be met by savings in the Postal Department. He also pointed out that it might prove difficult to gain permission to return to Lhasa if the mission was withdrawn, and that withdrawal would mean the loss of influence and reliable information. Gould even raised the prospect of a British withdrawal being used as a bargaining chip if China agreed to negotiations over the status of Tibet, a prospect Whitehall always hoped might eventuate. Gould recommended that the British remain until an unspecified time when 'we are able to estimate the present intentions of the Chinese and also of the Japanese.' Gould's arguments were accepted, with the post sanctioned until September 1938.[71]

In August 1938, Gould sought further extension of the position, citing all the usual reasons, adding that the British should be present at the forthcoming installation of the new Dalai Lama. Sanction was duly given for the Lhasa Mission to continue for another year.[72]

Gould subsequently suggested that a Residency be built in Lhasa, capable of conveying both British prestige and 'the impression of stability and permanence which it would be politic to convey.' He added the rather bizarre suggestion, presumably for Whitehall's consumption, that with such a Residency there to symbolise the British presence, an actual representative would not be needed. But Whitehall would only sanction a new Residency if the Tibetans could be persuaded to pay for it.[73]

Gould was not alone in stressing the need to maintain the Lhasa Mission. There was a concerted effort by the various cadre officers to publicise its value. The reports of Richardson and Norbhu in Lhasa, and the Trade Agent in Gyantse, frequently referred to the advantages of having a representative in the Tibetan capital. But Gyantse itself now became little more than a staging post for the Lhasa Mission. Now when important news came from Lhasa the Gyantse Agents found they could inform the local Tibetan officials



before they had heard it through their own sources.[74]

After the 1930s, Gould continued an annual repetition of the arguments for the Lhasa Mission's continuance, but these requests, and consequent sanctions, became increasingly routine. Gould had succeeded in his 'major preoccupation' (and that of his predecessors), by establishing a permanent representative in Lhasa.[75] During World War Two the Allies needed to consult the Tibetan Government on a number of war related issues, which brought home to Whitehall the advantages of a representative in Lhasa, and the closure of the post ceased to be a consideration.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we have observed how the early cadre officers, following the 'forward' policies initiated by Curzon and Younghusband, identified representation in Lhasa as essential to fulfilling their primary aims despite the policies of their Home Government, which sought to withdraw from further involvement in Tibet. They identified this aim as one which was achievable, unlike improved roads, and it was a policy that survived continued contact with the Tibetans, unlike the emphasis on arms supplies. To achieve this aim, the cadre found themselves forced to play what Lamb has called 'the great game of bureaucratic survival and self-promotion'.[76]

That Bell was finally permitted to visit Lhasa was partly due to events in China, and the Chinese refusal to compromise over Simla, but it was also due to the prestige and expertise that Bell had acquired in his fifteen years on the frontier. This experience increasingly enabled him to function well both inside and outside the 'system'. He also benefited a great deal from the support and advice of David MacDonald.

Bell's great achievement was to translate Curzon's turn-of-the-century policies into contemporary idioms by adding the knowledge he had gained of Tibet from his friendship with the Dalai Lama. to produce policies which suited the interests of both British India and Tibet. such as those concerning the restriction of European travellers' access to Tibet. noted in Chapter Two.

Bell identified a confluence of British and Tibetan interests in one particular area. The Tibetans sought to exclude foreign influence from Tibet and maintain internal autonomy. The interests of British India demanded that foreign influence be excluded from Tibet, while her internal autonomy was the best guarantee of strength and stability there. Thus Bell sought to guarantee Tibet's continuing independence and safeguard her isolation, while ensuring that the British had access to Lhasa in order to influence Tibet's future; with

the British replacing China as Tibet's 'patron'.

Clive Christie has argued that after the Montagu Declaration of 1917, Bell saw Indian independence as inevitable, sooner, rather than later, and that he came to see Tibet's future in an accommodation with China, and, consequently, ceased to stress the need for a permanent representative in Lhasa.[77]

Christie did not have access to papers indicating that Bell relied a great deal at this time on the advice of David Macdonald. In consequence, he has, I believe, underestimated Bell's understanding and manipulation of internal politics as a means of achieving his long-term aims. Bell did not abandon his 'forward' aims as Christie suggests. Rather he made more and more compromises to achieve his primary aim of access to Lhasa. This can be most clearly seen in the issue of arms supplies. In April 1920 Bell had argued that sending a representative to Lhasa without the right to offer arms supplies would render the mission pointless. But when it became apparent the Foreign Office would not agree to these arms sales, Bell, after consulting Macdonald, who recommended the visit go ahead, dropped this demand but went ahead with the mission.[78]

Bell's conditions should, therefore, be seen as 'bargaining chips' which could be sacrificed to the ultimate aim, just as Dane's proposal to extend the Indian border to the Kuenlun mountains was really aimed at gaining approval for a Trade Agency at Gartok. This method of obtaining their principal demands was a typical cadre ploy. The Political Officers inflated their requests for personnel and presents required on visits to Lhasa, knowing that these would be reduced by government. Naturally this is not specified in official documentation, but the search for funds was not only carried out through official channels. For example, when Weir visited Simla for instructions prior to his visit to Lhasa in 1930 he was invited to stay with the Indian Foreign Secretary. For Weir this was 'a chance of saturating him so much with Tibet that I might be able to squeeze a little more money out of Foreign for presents'.[79]

As Lamb notes, the Morley-Minto years had taught the cadre that they needed to be 'somewhat devious' to advance their aims.[80] Thus they couched their appeals for support in often exaggerated terms of threats to the security of India, concealed their true motives for all manner of actions, and often avoided consulting, or even deliberately misled, Whitehall. We cannot, therefore, necessarily accept any particular statement by Bell as indicating his true beliefs and aims, without seeing it in the context of his long term goals.

Once he had achieved the right of access to Lhasa, Bell did not abandon plans for a permanent representative there. Rather, on visiting Lhasa he realised that the interests of Britain and Tibet were reconcilable; a permanent British presence was neither wanted by the Tibetans, nor needed by the British, unless and until Chinese representation occurred.[81]

The policy established by Bell shows his ability to isolate realistic policy goals which were consistent with Tibetan aims. He sought to protect the interests of British India without committing India to protecting Tibet's independence from China by military means. It appears that he reluctantly accepted that China must eventually play a role in Tibet, although even this could be made to serve British interests if it did lead to a British presence in Lhasa.[82] But Bell sought to postpone that eventuality, in the hope that Tibet would develop to the point where it could exist as a strong, independent nation.

An apparent weakness of Bell's policy was that it produced a solution to the representation in Lhasa problem which was based on a reactive policy. But this reveals Bell's understanding of policy formation. British policy towards Tibet after 1905 was essentially reactive in nature. Bell was only permitted to visit Lhasa following the Kansu Mission and the collapse of hoped for talks with China, and a British Lhasa Mission was only permitted after the establishment of a permanent Chinese Mission there.

Bell had come to realise that anything resembling a 'forward' move on the Tibetan frontier would only be permitted by Whitehall as a defensive counter to Chinese (or other foreign) 'forward' moves in the region, real or imagined. Malcolm Yapp has shown in his study of 19th century British Indian strategy, that the idea of a 'foreign threat' to India was commonly used by British frontiersmen as a means of obtaining an additional allocation of resources to their region by relating their problems to wider questions of imperial strategy. Bell and his successors used this method, but it succeeded in this period only after specific, and verifiable, moves by foreign powers, such as the Kansu Mission.[83]

An alternative interpretation of this process is that Whitehall only permitted 'forward' moves on the Tibetan frontier when the flow of information was disrupted. In this perspective, the Younghusband Mission was sanctioned when Tibet refused to respond to British efforts to establish communications with Lhasa. the Bell Mission when the principal British informants in Lhasa had died, and the Lhasa Mission was established when the British lost the ability to monitor Chinese communications from Tibet. Maintaining the flow of information may well have been central to British reaction to events on the Tibetan frontier.

Implicit in the cadre's aim of representation in Lhasa was the potential for transforming a sphere of influence into a British protectorate.[84] This did not occur for two reasons; (1) economic restrictions on the Government of India, and, (2) Whitehall's application of policies based on a global perception. We may conclude therefore, that the cadre's Lhasa policies are further evidence that models of imperialism which emphasise the role of the 'man on the spot' in exploiting local crisis to persuade the central government to expand the empire, cannot be applied to Tibet after 1905.

In this region, the 'frontiersmen' could, as we have seen, influence policy in the long-term by emphasising a realistic goal. By pursuing consistent lines of policy (such as the need for access to Lhasa) over a period of time, they created alternative policies which were adopted when existing ones failed.[85] But the cadre succeeded in achieving access to Lhasa through internal political manoeuvres and the building up of a body of argument, not by creating 'external incidents', or exploiting 'local crises'.

## FOOTNOTES

[1] Lamb (1989, p.58); for an account of this fighting, see Teichman (1922). During the 1920s and '30s, Tibetan officers were trained by the Escort Commander in Gyantse, and at military college in Quetta, while there were periodic supplies of arms and ammunition for the Tibetan army; see Lamb (1989, pp.19, 121, 222).

[2] An apparently contemporary, unsigned/dated margin note on the Gyantse Annual Report 1919-1920 (IOLR L/P&S/10/ 218-4442), comments that the arms question 'turns up in every report or comment that we get about Tibet.'

[3] IOLR L/P&S/12/4193, Gould Mission Diary 1936, Appendix, by General Neame; also see Lamb (1989, pp.273-75).

[4] This issue is complicated by the fact that Article 7 of the 1914 'Simla Convention' provided for the renegotiation of this, and other, articles of the 1904 Convention, but such negotiations were never held.

[5] British Museum Bell Collection, Notebook No.1, p.22, entry dated 11 February 1913. The Tibetan attitude may also have been affected by their belief that earth spirits would be upset by the disturbances involved in road-building.

[6] IOLR L/P&S/12/4166, Gyantse Annual Reports, 1934-35 -1946-47 inclusive.

[7] For example, IOLR L/P&S/12/4163, p.452 (96), India to Government of the Punjab, 12 June 1931, agreed that while the Namgia-Shipki road needed improvement, financial restrictions meant that this could not be carried out.

[8] 'Tibetan traders...have now realised the advantage of a proper road'; IOLR L/P&S/12/4166-3385, Yatung Annual Report, 1942-43.

[9] IOLR L/P&S/12/4163, Report No 10, by G. Worsley, Superintendent, Punjab Hill States (p.544), c1930.

[10] Younghusband (1985, p.14).

[11] IOLR MSS Eur F112/82, Curzon papers, Younghusband to Curzon, 10 August 1910.

[12] French (1994, p.243), quoting Younghusband to his wife, IOLR MSS Eur F197/177.

[13] Younghusband (1985, p.300).

[14] O'Connor (1931, p.78); McKay (1992a, pp.401, 416).

[15] IOLR L/P&S/7/210-182, Secretary of State to Viceroy, 31 January 1908; 'Curzonism' was Morley's term for Curzon's 'forward' policies; Lamb (1966, p.63).

[16] Busch (1980, pp.39, 43, 67, 91, 112-26, and *passim*); Klein (1971a, p.103) quoting Hardinge papers, Hardinge to Lord Crewe, 14 December 1913.

[17] McKay (1992b).

[18] MacDonald (1991, pp.65-73). The implications of this action for the safety of the Trade Agent is discussed in McKay (1992b, p.122).

[19] Bell (1992, p.111).

[20] Lamb (1966, p.212), quoting Morley to Minto, 30 June 1910, IOLR D573/5, Morley papers.

[21] McKay (1992b, p.128); MacDonald (1991, pp.93-96).

[22] McKay *ibid* (pp.127-28).

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[23] McKay *ibid* (pp.129-31); Lamb (1989, pp.43-44).

[24] Article 8 of the Convention between Great Britain, China and Tibet signed at Simla in 1914, stated that 'The British Agent who resides at Gyantse may visit Lhasa with his escort whenever it is necessary to consult with the Tibetan Government regarding matters arising out of the Convention of September 7, 1904, between Great Britain and Tibet, which it has been found impossible to settle at Gyantse by correspondence or otherwise.' The full text of the Convention is reprinted in Richardson (1984, pp.283-90). Bell 'was free to follow my own ideas' in negotiating the new Trade regulations which were attached to this Convention; Bell (1987, p.231).

[25] McKay (1992b, pp.129, 133).

[26] IOLR L/P&S/10/218-1253, Yatung News Report No.1, 1919; L/P&S/10/218-2944, Gyantse Annual Report, 1918-19. For more detail on the views of Peking and Whitehall, see Lamb (1989, p.39, 52-53, 73, 75, & 97); also see McKay (1992b, pp.130-33).

[27] MacDonald papers, Bell to MacDonald, 16 April 1920, MacDonald to Bell, 24 April 1920.

[28] 1931 may be an exception to this, but it seems probable that Norbhu Dhondup visited Lhasa that year.

[29] Bell was not however, the first British officer to visit Lhasa since 1904; his visit was preceded by that of a telegraph engineer, J.Fairley, who visited Lhasa more than a month before Bell, while surveying a telegraph line to Lhasa; for details see Cooper (1986b, pp.12-13). No Europeans had visited Lhasa between the departure of the Younghusband Mission in 1904 and 1920. In the years 1920 to 1935, a total of 21 British officials (including three family members) visited Lhasa, many of them on more than one occasion; for example the telegraph officer, W.P.Rosemeyer, made seven visits between 1922 and 1934.

[30] This period is described in Bell (1987, pp.258-384) & (1924b).

[31] He was also accompanied by a Medical Officer, as were all Political Officers on subsequent visits. In Bell's case his principal M.O. was Lieutenant-Colonel R.S.Kennedy, who had acted as Trade Agent in Gyantse in 1909 while Medical Officer there.

[32] Bell's report to the Government of India, dated 9 May 1921, was included in Viceroy to Secretary of State, 16 May 1921, in IOLR L/P&S/10/1011-1286.

[33] For details, see Kashgar reports at the IOLR in L/P&S/12-2383 & 2384; also see Everest-Phillips (1991).

[34] Bell (1992, pp.71-72, 194-95 & 250). The authority of this quotation may be perhaps be questioned, but can be accepted as consistent with the Dalai Lama's apparent aim of independence, preferably with isolation, but, if necessary, by balancing China and British India.

[35] IOLR L/P&S/7/237-526, 'Introduction to the Manual of Instructions to Officers of the Political Department of the Government of India', by S.H.Butler, 15 June 1909.

[36] Laden La may not have been reported this to the Government of India. The incident is reported in IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a92, Macdonald to Bell, 8 July 1930, & IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a93, 'Private letter from Kalimpong to Macdonald', 9 September 1930, forwarded to Bell by Macdonald, 24 October 1930.

[37] IOLR MSS Eur F157-236, Laden La to Bailey, 18 September 1930; IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a 97, Laden La to Bell, 18 September 1930.

[38] For example, see IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Norbhu Dhondup to Bailey, 2 October 1931.

[39] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a92 & 5a 93, various letters 1930, M Macdonald to Bell; IOLR MSS Eur

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F80 5a 105, Rosemeyer to Bell, 26 May 1934.

[40] IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Norbhu Dhondup to Bailey, 12 August 1925; also see IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a130, Norbhu Dhondup to Bell, 17 August 1937, reporting how Chinese officers drew their guns on him when he reported the fall of Nanking.

[41] Interview with R.Ford, March 1993.

[42] For example, see IOLR L/P&S/12/4166-3129, Gyantse Annual Report 1930-31, various comments.

[43] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-898; this file contains a list of Political Officers' visits to Lhasa which [falsely] indicates that they were all 'spontaneous' invitations, although it admits that the Government of India were prepared to solicit an invitation in Bailey's case.

[44] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-5738, cover note by J.Walton, 7 September 1929; Dalai Lama to Weir, 20 July 1929; also see IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-5170, Weir to India, 22 July 1929.

[45] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-1981, Williamson to India, 16 March 1933.

[46] *Ibid.*

[47] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-2146, India to Secretary of State, 13 March 1933; IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-2734 Foreign Office to India Office, 11 May 1933, and draft telegram, Secretary of State to Viceroy, 13 May 1933.

[48] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-2573, India to Secretary of State, 11 April 1935.

[49] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-1402, India to Under-Secretary of State, 6 March 1924.

[50] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-2345, Bailey to India, 23 April 1924.

[51] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-2725, Weir to India, 7 March 1929.

[52] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-6262, India to Williamson, 17 September 1934.

[53] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-898, Williamson to India, 20 January 1935.

[54] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-4682, India to Under-Secretary of State, 28 June 1935; also see Williamson (1987, pp.208-09).

[55] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-1175, Lhasa mission report by Captain Battye, 18 November 1935, cover note by Gould; L/P&S/12/4175-2509, Williamson medical case report; Williamson (1987, pp.186-87); Battye papers, various diary entries.

[56] Mariani (1952, p.97). Fosco Maraini travelled to Lhasa with Tucci in 1948; his source was an ex-British employee.

[57] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-885, Parliamentary question of 6 February 1936.

[58] IOLR L/P&S/12/4175-1175, Lhasa Mission Report by Captain Battye, 29 December 1935.

[59] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-5041, various correspondence.

[60] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-5304, India to Secretary of State, 22 July 1936 & Secretary of State to India, 30 July 1936.

[61] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-5041, various correspondence.

[62] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-7301, India to Secretary of State, 10 October 1936, repeating Gould from Lhasa, 7 October 1936.

[63] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-8904, India to Secretary of State, 12 December 1936, and draft reply.

[64] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-3864, Lhasa Mission Report by Basil Gould, 30 April 1937; also see

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McKay (1994, pp.378-381).

[65] Richardson (1984, pp.147-48); IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-514, India to Secretary of State, 22 January 1937. Sergeant Dagg, a Radio Officer, also remained in Lhasa for a short time before being relieved by Reginald Fox, who remained the Mission Radio Officer until 1950.

[66] Interview with H.Richardson, November 1990; Richardson (1984, pp.147-48).

[67] IOLR MSS Eur F157-259, Richardson to Bailey, 30 March 1957.

[68] IOLR L/P&S/12/4206-4830, Gould to India, 23 September 1944.

[69] Caroe (1960, p.9), describes Bell as Gould's 'guru'.

[70] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-8380, India to Gould, 9 December 1937.

[71] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-8380, Gould to India, 23 December 1937, copying Norbhu Dhondup to Gould, 18 December 1937, & India to Gould, 11 March 1938.

[72] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-6859, Gould to India, 8 August 1938.

[73] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-2781, Gould to India, 22 February 1939, & India to Gould, 25 April 1939.

[74] IOLR L/P&S/12/4166-3792, Gyantse Annual Report 1937-38; IOLR L/P&S/12/4166-3654, Gyantse Annual Report 1938-39; IOLR L/P&S/12/4165-7795, various Lhasa Mission reports.

[75] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-3864, Cover note by H.A.F.Rumbold, 26 June 1937.

[76] Lamb (1966, p.102).

[77] Christie (1977, p.54 & passim).

[78] Christie (1976, p.500); Lamb (1989, p.111); Macdonald papers, Bell to Macdonald, 16 April 1920 & Macdonald to Bell, 24 April 1920; I have quoted sections of these letters in McKay (1992b).

[79] Weir papers, Weir to Weir snr., 17 June 1930.

[80] Lamb (1966, p.124).

[81] Lamb emphasises that Bell was also concerned to avoid the danger of a British representative becoming involved with any particular faction in Lhasa; Lamb (1989, p.123).

[82] Richardson noted that the Chinese Mission provided an excuse for the British presence in Lhasa; IOLR L/P&S/12/4165-7795, Gould to India, 24 October 1939, enclosing Richardson's Lhasa Mission Report for October 1938 to October 1939.

[83] Yapp (1980, esp. pp.10-15).

[84] Regarding this potential process, see Curzon (1907, pp.42 & 47); also see Lamb (1989, pp.117, 277).

[85] McKay (1992b, pp.122, 129, 133).



## CHAPTER SIX

### 'WE WANT A UNITED TIBET':

#### CONSTRUCTING TIBET: POLICY AND IMAGE

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#### INTRODUCTION

As the cadre were the first modern Europeans to reside in Tibet, they had a unique opportunity to increase European knowledge of the region. This body of knowledge was, prior to the Younghusband Mission, greatly restricted, particularly in regard to details of Tibet's political structures.

The cadre became the primary interpreters of Tibet to the outside world, and the information they obtained and propagated became the basis for much of our modern knowledge of Tibet. But the image which they produced strongly reflects the character and policy aims of these individuals, and the interests and perspectives of the imperial power and its allies within the Lhasa ruling class as they attempted to transform Tibet into a modern nation-state. As the image was advantageous to both power groups, they cooperated in presenting and preserving it. By controlling access to both Tibet, and the body of knowledge built up, the cadre and their Tibetan allies tried to prevent the emergence of opposing images.

That the British sought to produce an image of Tibet was originally implicit in the search for contact and meaning. After Younghusband it became explicit, with the cadre specifically stating that they sought to propagate ideas and images for a political purpose. These ideas and images became part of a battle to establish a view of the country on the international stage, and were an important weapon in the cadre's attempts to transform Tibet into an entity associated with India. Thus Gould stated that 'One of our main political aims..[was].. showing that Tibet had its own art etc and that in some ways...Tibet is more closely allied to India than to China'.[1]

The cadre's part in the creation of an image of Tibet is a significant issue because, although there is also a 'mystical' image of Tibet, the image resulting from the British

perception was, and still is, the dominant one held in political and academic circles. This image was an important legacy of the British presence in Tibet, and continues to shape the European response to Tibet's status today.

In this chapter we will examine the concept of 'Tibet' and 'Tibetan' as it existed before the encounter with the British, and describe how the imperial power engaged in a complex process of defining what was 'Tibetan', and what was 'non-Tibetan' as they attempted to transform Tibet into what would have been, in effect, a modern nation-state according to the European understanding of the term. Policies and image-creation were part of the same political process, and we will examine how this process raised questions as to whether concepts of Tibetan identity could survive the transition to modern statehood. In the following chapter we will demonstrate the means by which this image of Tibet was produced, controlled, and 'sold'.

### **SECTION 6.1: - TIBETAN IDENTITY IN THE PRE-BRITISH PERIOD**

In seeking ties with Lhasa's ruling elite, the British were implicitly identifying Lhasa as the administrative and political centre of a Tibetan state. But Tibet was not then a nation-state in the European definition. The model of the nation-state was a relatively recent European phenomenon, which may be defined as consisting of a territorial entity, within defined borders, in which a single government was sovereign. Citizens of a nation-state were assumed to be predominantly from a single ethnic group, Germans, Greeks, and so on, or composed of ethnic groups, such as English, Irish, Scots and Welsh, sharing certain aims and assumptions and coming together as a nation-state for mutual benefit.[2]

This European assumption that peoples of a nation-state shared common interests and perceptions meant that in identifying a nation, its peoples were defined as characterised by certain shared qualities. The definition of these qualities created categories of 'insider' and 'outsider' which were applied in defining the nation. (As will be seen, the Tibetans understood these 'insider/outsider' concepts primarily in a religious sense.) Thus certain distinct aspects of culture, geography, language and so on, were identified as definitive qualities of 'Tibet' and 'Tibetanness'. When these definitions had been made, conformity to them became the measure of whether something was Tibetan or non-Tibetan. 'Tibetans' for example, were defined by the British as wearing Tibetan clothing. If they adopted European clothing, this was regarded as diminishing their Tibetan identity.[3]

Officers such as Bell and Gould, who wrote Tibetan dictionaries, helped define the Tibetan language in European understanding, just as the British defined the Tibetan border

with India. They imposed a linguistic standard which complemented other contemporary definitions, of Tibet's territory, leadership and so on, which were required if Tibet was to be within European definitions of a modern nation state. The Tibetans' separate language was, and is, an important part of their claim to a separate identity, and hence separate state, from the Chinese. Thus the cadre's language studies helped to bring out Tibet's separate status; enhancing the political aims of the British and their Tibetan allies.

The effect of this classification of identity was to impose conformity to European definitions as a pre-condition for acceptance of elements as 'Tibetan'. The power of definition was appropriated by European authority. For example, Tibetans were seen by the British as reliant on astrological calculations as to the most auspicious date on which to carry out significant activities. Yet when the Dalai Lama was to visit Calcutta, Bell noted that 'not until I reminded them of the necessity of doing so did the Dalai Lama and party remember to enquire as to auspicious dates'.[4]

As a result of the European definition of Tibet, the required characteristics of Tibetan identity were fixed in (or beyond) time. Thus a British travel writer in the 1930s observed that 'once trains or motors have been introduced... Tibet...will be Tibet no longer'. The effect has lasted; a Tibetan historian today, long-resident in Britain, observes that a friend 'can't get used to the idea of a Tibetan driving a car'.[5]

These characteristics were not constructed without basis. That Tibetans were a distinct ethnic group, more akin to Mongols than to Chinese or Indians, was undisputed; the Chinese defined them as one of the five races forming the Chinese nation. As an ethnic group, Tibetans were clearly distinct from their neighbours. They maintained a unique social system, free of the religiously-sanctioned divisions of Hindu India, with aspects such as fraternal polyandry, which were absent from Han Chinese society. Similarly, Tibetan language and landscape, art, architecture, dress, and diet, as well as their economic and gender relations, were all clearly distinguished from those of neighbouring cultures. These socio-cultural elements of Tibetan identity can be traced back to the earliest recorded periods of Tibetan history around the 7th century AD., and some are clearly earlier.[6]

What was imposed by European classification was a definition which failed to allow for variations such as those occurring in the regions of cultural interface on the periphery of the defined culture. What the British defined as Tibetan was the 'core culture', that of the centre, as represented by their contact with, and allies in, central Tibet. For example, the British expressed their understanding of Tibetan religion in terms which privileged the *Gelugpa* sect, which predominated in Lhasa and Shigatse, at the expense of sects such as the *Bon*, whose realms of authority lay in the Tibetan periphery. To the cadre, the area centred on Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse was 'Tibet proper, the seat of the Dalai Lama and

his Government'.[7]

Since 1947, it has become increasingly clear that, historically, Tibet included a variety of political and administrative formations, and that a single central administration did not consistently maintain authority there.[8] Tibetan territory included enclaves under the jurisdiction of Bhutan and Sikkim, and, at various times in its history, power centres such as Shigatse conducted dealings with foreign powers without reference to Lhasa.[9]

The principalities which made up Eastern Tibet were particularly reluctant to allow Lhasa to exercise secular authority in their domain, and Lhasa was often, in the Eastern Tibetan perspective, a remote and largely nominal authority. Even the religious authority of Lhasa vested in the leading *Gelugpa* sect was not necessarily accepted in these areas, where the prevailing sectarian orientation was towards the *Nyingma* or *Bon* sects.[10]

The established models of the traditional Tibetan state formation are those hierarchal structures culminating in the office of the Dalai Lama, as propounded by historians such as Hugh Richardson. But Geoffrey Samuel has lately proposed a new model of Tibet's power structure in the pre-British period. He describes it in terms of a 'galactic polity', a 'structure based on a center, and regional administrations that replicated the structure of the center'. The administrations within this system may fluctuate in prominence, and the primary central power focus may shift from one centre to another without significantly changing the overall identity of the system. Samuel's model appears to provide a more realistic, and less Lhasa-centric explanation of the pre-British Tibetan power structure, capable of incorporating extra-territorial elements such as foreign enclaves, and it may be extended into both religious and secular power centres, which were not always synonymous, and are difficult to represent hierarchically, even at a fixed point in time.[11]

Just as Tibet was not a modern nation-state in the sense of having a centralised administration controlled by a single government, it also failed to satisfy the demand that a modern nation-state should have fixed borders. The geographers, Davis and Prescott, have presented evidence suggesting that the concept of boundaries was almost universal in traditional societies (among which, in this sense, we may include Tibet), but that formal delimitation of these borders was not necessarily made unless they became subject to dispute. The case of Tibet's borders would appear to support this conclusion.[12]

Historically, the principal external threat to Tibet had come from China, and the Sino-Tibetan border was defined in a Treaty between Tibet and China as early as 821-22AD. Disputes in western Tibet led to the fixing of the Tibetan border with Ladakh in 1683, and the Tibet-Nepal border was also clearly established, as can be seen from the 1856 Treaty which followed war between Tibet and Nepal.[13] But as there had been no major disputes with India, or with Tibet's northern neighbours, neither the Indo-Tibetan border nor

Tibet's borders with Mongolia and Sinkiang had been formally defined by the 20th century, although in each case their location was apparently clearly understood by both parties.

British definitions of 'Tibetan' privileged certain aspects of culture and nation in line with the European understanding of the necessary components of a state and a people. Thus geographical boundaries were created, as the European definition of a state required fixed boundaries. Peoples within that boundary were defined as Tibetan, and assumed to share the characteristics of the core culture (although the cadre recognised that the drawing of India's borders had left 'Tibetan' peoples within India).

The peoples of the Tibetan region did share socio-cultural values which contributed to a strong sense of collective identity, and this persisted despite changing institutional loyalties.[14] The key element of this sense of collective identity was the Tibetan Buddhist faith, which was an integral part of their social and political systems. The Tibetans described their own identity by the term *nang pa*, meaning a Buddhist, or an 'insider'. Non-Buddhists, even those of Tibetan race such as the minority Muslim community, were termed '*phyi pa*' or 'outsiders'.[15] The indigenous construction of Tibetan identity was, therefore, primarily religious, and it was this religious orientation which gave a fundamental historical unity to the Tibetan community, particularly in the face of outside threats to their religion, when this unity largely submerged regional and factional divisions within their society.

The Tibetan conception of themselves as a political entity was of Tibet as a religious territory, the ideal home of Buddhism. As the primary focus of the Tibetan peoples' sense of identity was their religion, it was the claim to religious authority which legitimised Lhasa's rule, for the Tibetans at least. Thus the Tibetan Government described Tibet in such terms as 'a purely religious country' and 'dedicated to the well-being of humanity...the religious land of Tibet'. They demonstrated that this was not purely rhetoric by such actions as banning, on moral grounds, the export of live animals for slaughter in India.[16]

Studies examining Tibetan national identity are in their infancy, but, in a recent groundbreaking paper, George Dreyfus concluded that the Tibetans' definition of themselves in relation to Buddhism dates to the period from the 12th to the 14th centuries. There was then a deliberate effort by Tibet's rulers to establish a sense of Buddhist heritage in the country, which was aimed at recreating the strong, united Tibetan empire of the 7th to 8th centuries. The 'invention of tradition' in this period attributed the period of Tibetan greatness, which remained in their collective memory, to the Buddhist kings of the empire period.[17]

Dreyfus's paper is an attempt to resolve the paradoxes inherent in those works which

have portrayed nationalism as a modern construct.[18] Dreyfus recognises that while loyalty to a nation-state may be modern, loyalty to a national community is clearly an older phenomenon. He takes from Eric Hobsbawm the term 'proto-nationalism', to describe the Tibetan sense of historical continuity, whereby 'certain memories act as a focus for the formation of a sense of community', a community in which loyalties were to local, regional, ethnic and religious entities, rather than to the 'nation'. [19]

The Tibet which the British encountered was, therefore, a more decentralised polity than was immediately apparent from contact with central Tibet. It was made up of distinct communities of fluctuating importance, with a sense of shared identity based on socio-cultural ties, of which the most important was religious. But the Tibetans were largely devoid of loyalty to the super-personal entities of European statehood.[20] If Tibet was to serve as an effective 'buffer state' for British India, it was necessary to develop the political and administrative structures within Tibet, thereby encouraging the processes which created a 'nation'.

## **SECTION 6.2: - KNOWLEDGE: THE CADRE'S PERSPECTIVE**

Cadre officers passed through a process of training and selection which produced individuals with a particular character and perspective. This perception was naturally liable to change with time, and there were also wide variations in the way individual officers viewed Tibet. For example, when the Gyantse Trade Agency opened, O'Connor hired a local religious practitioner, who 'kindly expelled all the devils and spirits from the new stables', in a ceremony O'Connor found 'very interesting'. In contrast, Sherriff thought Tibetan religious rites were 'dreadful examples of the backwardness of Tibet..[a]..waste of money'. [21] Despite these variations, however, the cadre's background and training gave them a collective view which included belief in the superiority of European systems of knowledge, which gave priority to empirical evidence, and, implicitly, supported the superiority of European cultural and political systems.

Cadre officers were interested in Tibet; they sought to learn as much as they could about the country and its people because it attracted them. If it did not, they did not continue to serve there. But there was an overlap between political and personal motives for the cadre's information-gathering. When officers such as Bailey collected and classified specimens of Tibetan flora and fauna, or climbed unknown peaks, they considered this as a personal (although often profitable) pastime. Yet there was a wider significance to their actions, in that the collection of scientific data in this era had significant implications for national

prestige. The discoveries of individuals were seen by nations as 'an important source of national pride'. They also, while adding to the body of European knowledge, helped to define states such as Tibet, by establishing a distinct landscape, with distinct flora and fauna associated with the country. In addition, for the Tibet cadre officers, these discoveries assisted in building personal prestige within the system. Bailey, for example, was widely renowned as the discoverer of the Blue Poppy.[22]

There was another factor involved in this process, what was considered, in the ethos of the time, as a higher purpose. The gathering of positivist knowledge was seen as having a moral function, in enabling 'higher' (European) civilisation to 'know' the world. Increasing the body of knowledge was considered to be part of the 'civilising mission' of the imperial nations. The cadre's 'founding father', Lord Curzon, was in no doubt that this was part of the wider function of an Indian official. 'It is', he proclaimed, 'equally our duty to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce and describe, to copy and decipher, and to cherish and conserve.'[23]

The collection of knowledge by Europeans, however, involved its conversion into ordered systems in English-language forms, which were considered to be based on scientifically verifiable data. The resulting categories were privileged by the authority of European positivist science above the 'unscientific' knowledge of local sources, which had originally been perceived largely as 'aged metaphysics and infantile legends'.[24]

Local informants did provide specialist data regarded as authentic by the British, but the European ordering of knowledge in distinct categories of specialist information was imposed on this data. Thus the British in Tibet chose to emphasise knowledge obtained from their Lhasa allies (rather than, for example, knowledge obtained from the Eastern Tibet region), and the fact that they could quote Tibetans in support of this knowledge strengthened its authority in the positivist understanding.

The effect of that categorisation of particular local knowledge was to confirm the European understanding of 'Tibetans' as a race sharing particular perceptions, and to institutionalise European systems of knowledge as 'true'. Local knowledge was subordinated by this European appropriation of the power to classify and define elements of the local culture. The imperial systems of knowledge then acted as sources of power, for identifying local elites, defining 'insider' and 'outsider' elements of a society, or determining 'natural' frontiers.[25]

The knowledge of Tibet which the cadre developed was, therefore, part of a wider European movement to collate information and classify it within certain established parameters, and the cadre's collection and presentation of information was affected by this European perspective on the purpose and use of knowledge.

### SECTION 6.3: - CREATING AN IMAGE

In the period leading up to the Younghusband Mission, and in accounts of the Mission, British descriptions of Tibet and its people were predominantly negative. Percival Landon, the London *Times* correspondent officially attached to the Younghusband Mission, described the Tibetans as a 'stunted and dirty little people', a comment typical of the time. British troops had recently fought Tibet, and contemporary descriptions of Tibetans were typical of the discourse of war. Frontier officers who were later to write laudatory descriptions of the Tibetans commonly described them in such pejorative terms. Even Bell was associated with a report which described Tibetans as 'untruthful and faithless, deceitful and insincere', and Tibetan Buddhism as having become 'a disastrous parasitic disease'.<sup>[26]</sup>

The Younghusband Mission created an increased demand for information concerning Tibet, not only by the government, but also by the British public, a demand which was filled by a number of works concerning the mission. These works, by officers or journalists accompanying Younghusband, produced a great deal of information concerning Tibet, which was presented in a form designed to legitimise British actions. Thus the Tibetan Government and the religious system surrounding it were presented in a negative light, the use of modern weapons by trained troops against primitively-armed irregular forces was justified, and so on.<sup>[27]</sup>

The initial British concern in Tibet was to gather information of strategic value, a concern which was never entirely absent. The earliest studies by Bell, O'Connor and their contemporaries, were internal government reports concerned with transport routes into Tibet and other information with an obvious military value. These reports firstly built up knowledge within the system, meaning that Secretariat officials, such as Foreign Secretary Dane, acquired an expertise in Tibetan matters based on the knowledge gathered by the cadre.

In 1909-11, the publication of books by White and Younghusband, and Bailey's 'Blackwoods' article, signaled the replacement of the discourse of war by a more sympathetic approach, which became pronounced in the later works of Bell and Macdonald.<sup>[28]</sup> Tibet was no longer portrayed as hostile; indeed in Bailey's article it was simply an exotic location for *shikar*. As will be seen, Bell and MacDonal explained Tibet and its culture in sympathetic and comparative terms designed to portray it as 'familiar', and in later years Richardson and Tucci adopted a more scholarly approach, which assumed the reader's understanding of this transformation.

Comparing two descriptions of the 13th Dalai Lama's early period of rule, both by cadre



officers whom the Tibetans remember as sympathetic to them, clearly demonstrates the change in approach. In 1905, O'Connor described how the young Dalai Lama had acted

in accordance with the dictates of his own untrammelled will. No person or party of the State dared for a moment to oppose him. His brief rule was signalised by numerous proscriptions, banishments, imprisonings and torturings. Neither life nor property was safe for a moment...[29]

Forty years later, Charles Bell described how the Tibetan leader in that period had had

a strong will....His courage and energy were inexhaustible; he recoiled from nothing..[By].. skill, tinged with humour...he surmounted the obstacles....He was young and strong, and he worked continuously.[30]

This change in perspective was initially due to the cessation of hostilities with Tibet, and became pronounced in the new era of Anglo-Tibetan relations which followed Bell's establishment of friendship with the Dalai Lama. It became apparent to the cadre that, historically, the Dalai Lama was the only leader acceptable to all factions of Tibetan society. While there may have been opposition to the application of the Dalai Lama's policies, his personal status was apparently unchallenged, and there is a remarkable lack of evidence of opposition to the system itself. This made the 13th Dalai Lama the ideal figure for the British to befriend; by influencing him, they influenced Tibet.[31]

The cadre thus turned to the Dalai Lama as the 'natural' leader of Tibet. In return for following Bell's 'advice', the Dalai Lama received British support for his regime. Apart from the material aspect of support - arms supplies, the provision of European technical expertise, and so on - this took the form of the production of an image of Tibet which was designed to serve the interests of the British, and their allies in Tibet.

British interests, from the perspective of the Tibet cadre, required that Tibet be a strong, unified state, capable of excluding foreign influence, and that it follow the 'advice' of a British representative in Lhasa. While the cadre's policies, such as establishing a representative in Lhasa, were aimed at creating this ideal Tibet, they also attempted at the same time to create an image of Tibet which matched the ideal. Thus the image of Tibet which the cadre constructed portrayed the ideal Tibet which their policies were designed to create. While Whitehall refused to recognise Tibet as an independent state, the cadre sought to make Tibetan independence a *fait accompli*.

#### SECTION 6.4: - 'LOCATING' TIBET

The cadre's efforts to create a Tibetan nation-state may be seen to follow the precedent of British influence upon the creation of Indian identity and nationhood. In a recent paper, Peter Robb demonstrates how the process by which the British gradually expanded sovereignty over India contributed to the creation of Indian national structures (those aspects of centralised authority such as government, law, and boundaries), and the development of new processes (those aspects of society with a shared consciousness of unified or related identity, such as traditions, values, and belief systems).[32]

Through establishing India's boundaries and claiming sovereignty within them, and by taking responsibility for the welfare of the peoples therein, the British helped to create India as a single, defined entity, peopled by 'Indians'. They then devised strategies of 'improvement' designed to appeal to various social groups in order to persuade them to support, and identify with, the new state.[33]

The Tibet cadre similarly contributed to the development of a Tibetan state, and a sense of identification and loyalty to that state, by their development of, and support for, Tibetan structures and processes. As Tibet lacked many of the preconditions of statehood, the British had to influence the Tibetans to create or develop the structures which made up a state in the European model, and encourage the growth of the processes which would establish a Tibetan identity in the modern understanding, as will be seen. Again they did this by strategies designed to appeal to local allies, although imperial concerns remained paramount to the British.

We have seen that defined borders were the fundamental indicator of a state in the European model, whereas pre-modern states 'were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another'.[34] The primary political requisite of the Tibetan border for the British was to secure India against foreign invasion. This concern with security meant that the Government of India sought a border serving her interests, rather than a border based on mutual agreement between neighbouring states. The British therefore imposed a border, which included elements which were to bring continual problems between India, and its northern neighbour, whether Tibet or China.[35]

The political boundaries imposed by the British, which defined India as a geographical state, were drawn as lines of defence, not to define India along racial, linguistic or religious lines. The state of India was created by these borders; the borders were not marking off a pre-existing 'India'. [36]

The parallel effect of this creation of India on Tibet, was to define it as outside India. This

was symbolised administratively by the posting of Foreign Department Politicals, rather than ICS administrators, to represent the Government of India's interests there. This did not immediately preclude attempts by frontiersmen in Tibet, and elsewhere, to expand these frontiers, but, with time, the boundaries acquired a definitive character despite the absence of formal demarcation in some areas.

In fixing boundaries of defence for India, the British twice attempted to define areas of Tibetan territory as 'Indian'. As we have seen, Younghusband tried to make the Chumbi Valley part of India, but Whitehall prevented this, in a significant step towards imposing central control over frontier policy. In the previous century such measures as Younghusband's were almost invariably the prelude for the extension of the frontiers of the British Empire, but now Whitehall had called a halt to expansion, and the frontiersmen were forced to accept Whitehall's authority. Instead of being absorbed into India, and subjected to a process of 'Indianisation', the British defined the Chumbi as Tibetan, and encouraged Lhasa to exert its authority there.[37]

The cadre did not, however, abandon their efforts to secure a border which served India's strategic interests by securing possible invasion routes from, or to, Tibet. Having failed to gain control of the Chumbi, they turned their attention to Tawang, which, as Lamb states, Bell sought to bring inside India 'as a potential replacement for the Chumbi Valley...as a British outpost on the Tibetan plateau: from thence would radiate British political, cultural and economic influence'.[38]

Bell used the Simla Convention to annex Tawang and several smaller areas. In addition to the Convention itself, negotiated between Britain, China and Tibet, there were two separate agreements made then between the British and the Tibetans. These were formalised through an exchange of notes, which were attached to the Convention. One note placed the British Trade Agencies on a firmer footing, the other made Tawang part of India.[39] Tawang was unquestionably part of Tibet prior to 1914, and accepted as such by both Bell and the Government of India. But as Bell advised his government, the Simla Convention meant 'the cession by Tibet to us of the Tawang district....Also...other tracts of Tibetan territory on...the north-east frontier'.[40]

There is no record of how Bell, the guiding hand in MacMahon's Simla negotiations, persuaded Lonchen Shatra, the Tibetan Chief Minister and representative at the Simla Convention, to agree to cede Tawang. Certainly it was not with the Dalai Lama's approval. As Bell himself described, the Tibetan leader publicly demonstrated his dissatisfaction with the results of his Minister's negotiations by summoning Lonchen Shatra for an interview at 6 a.m. and then making him wait until 5 p.m. for the audience.[41] But it appears that, in this instance, the dictates of the cadre's primary purpose, ensuring the security of India,

meant their allies' claims, however well-founded, were disregarded.

Lonchen Shatra may simply have been naive. The newly independent Tibetan Government were grateful to Bell and his government for sheltering them during their exile, and were concerned with the threat from China, not India. Bell's notes record his plan to absorb Tawang into India, while avoiding direct payment, which would 'make us a party to interference with the integrity of Tibet'. Bell suggested that money should be given later, 'for some supposedly unconnected purpose'. In the event, a different currency was used. A month after Tibet signed the Treaty, and ceded Tawang, the Government of India supplied it with five thousand rifles and half a million rounds of ammunition.[42]

An incidental consequence of the annexation of Tawang may have been Drepung monasteries's opposition to the British; Tawang monastery paid annual tribute to Loseling College of Drepung, which ceased when the British took over. Loseling was at the centre of opposition to Bell's Lhasa visit.[43]

It is doubtful that Whitehall understood the significance of the annexation, or even knew that Tibetan territory had been taken; within a month of the conclusion of the Simla Conference, Britain was at war with Germany, and events on the periphery of empire were given little attention. But the consequences were far-reaching. The loss of Tawang was never accepted by the Tibetans and, as Tibet legally could cede territory only if it was a sovereign state, which China did not accept, the Chinese also refused to recognise its loss. Tawang was to be an important issue in the 1962 Indo-China war.[44]

The British role in defining the Tibetan frontier was obscured until it was brought out by the works of Alastair Lamb. Officers such as Bell and MacDonald made no mention of Tawang in their memoirs; Richardson refers to the situation there as having aroused 'some resentment from the Tibetan Government' but he does not mention its former status.[45]

The British preferred to refer to Tibet's 'natural' or 'traditional' borders, concepts which reinforced the image of Tibet as a state with clearly defined, rather than constructed, frontiers. But the attempted annexation of the Chumbi Valley, the successful commandeering of Tawang, and O'Connor's plan to divide Tibet, are all evidence that the British did not originally perceive Tibet as a single, geographically defined state. Rather they sought to create a Tibet which served the interests of the Government of India. Thus Tibet's southern borders were created, not determined.

## **SECTION 6.5: - DEVELOPING NATIONALISM**

Although they had defined Tibet geographically, the cadre were well aware that,

While...there is a definite area within which Tibetan culture and religious ideas are predominant, this area does not necessarily coincide with the effective limits of Chinese and Tibetan administration at any particular time.[46]

As part of their effort to transform Tibet into a modern nation-state, the British therefore encouraged the Tibetan Government to undertake the processes of asserting sovereignty and state responsibility for its citizens.

Lhasa was encouraged to demonstrate its authority over Tibet's outlying areas. For example, Bell gave the Dalai Lama 'constant advice' that he should improve the quality of his administration in Eastern Tibet in order to prevent the local people from favouring Chinese administration. This, Bell stated in an implicit acknowledgement of Tibet's previous lack of unity, would mean that 'eastern Tibetans add their wide territories to the rule of Lhasa and work for a united Tibet'.[47]

Unity was regarded by the British as an essential element of a strong state. It had been one of the advantages which O'Connor had seen in creating a state in southern Tibet centred around the Panchen Lama. After the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet in 1912, however, Bell was concerned to ensure that future cadre officers should, in their dealings with the Panchen Lama, avoid 'encouraging... any aspirations towards independence of Lhasa'. Bell clearly stated that 'We want a united Tibet'; abetting the Dalai Lama to centralise his administration was one means towards this. [48]

While encouraging the development of national structures, the cadre simultaneously sought to reinforce the processes which linked 'Tibet' and 'Tibetans', and to create a sense of nationalism there. They pursued a variety of schemes which, as Gould clearly stated, were aimed at 'developing the...national consciousness of Tibet'.[49]

One example of this was the stimulus given by Ludlow's school, and the Gould Mission, to the creation of a Tibetan football team. Ludlow's school team adopted 'Tibetan colours' of yellow and maroon. Gould's Mission created a 'Tibetan' team, which played, under British auspices, against other defined races in Lhasa; the Nepalese, the British, the Ladakhis and so on. Similarly, Ludlow and his successors encouraged Tibetan pupils at British schools to wear their national dress, and Ludlow chose to give photos of the Dalai Lama as school prizes, rather than cash. Other policy initiatives, such as donations to

monasteries, were designed to give 'the right background to the ideas we seek to propagate'.[50]

There is insufficient evidence to judge the extent to which the British contributed to the Tibetans' adoption of many external symbols of nationality, such as stamps, currency and a flag, but certainly the Tibetans' choice of the tune 'God Save the King' as their national anthem suggests British influence! There were few areas where the cadre could not see (or claim to see) means of developing Tibetan nationalism. Gould, for example, claimed that: 'There are distinct signs that the grant of free transit [for Tibetan goods on Indian railways] tends to foster amongst Tibetans the development of a feeling of nationality.'[51]

The cadre intended these policies to strengthen Tibet, and the position of British allies there, and policies such as supporting the concentration of power in the hands of the Dalai Lama and his administration were designed to appeal to these allies. But this upset the delicate power-balance in Tibet, and without active British intervention there, which was not a realistic option, British allies were unable to complete the processes initiated by the British.

Ultimately, the British were largely unsuccessful in their efforts to foster Tibetan nationalism. The American journalist, Archie Steele, who visited Lhasa in 1944, observed 'few stirrings of nationalism as yet in Buddhist Tibet'.[52] Richardson, asked in 1951 whether Tibet's monks were loyal to their religion or their government, answered that the monks were

madly loyal to their religion and to the Dalai Lama, but [that] they are not very fond of the executive....It is religion and the head of the religion that commands their loyalty.[53]

Thus it appears that British efforts to foster Tibetan nationalism had had little effect, and that the Tibetans continued to regard themselves as a religious, rather than a nation, state. But the British had built on Tibetan proto-nationalism, and established many of the necessary foundations for the development of nationalism. It appears that, even though the structures of Tibet were destroyed or radically altered by the Chinese invasion, the necessary processes had been started, and that Tibetan nationalism then took its current powerful form in response to the assertion of Chinese imperial control of Tibet.[54] That situation has parallels with the emergence of Indian nationalism in response to the British imperial presence.

## SECTION 6.6: - MODERNISATION

As Tibet increasingly came into contact with the outside world, it inevitably faced pressures to modernise its institutions. As the Chinese were themselves modernising on the European model, British and Chinese efforts to modernise Tibet emphasised the same means and objectives. The only question was which country would control the process. Modernisation became part of the cadre's attempts to establish a strong Tibetan identity and locate it in the modern world.

A number of factors are involved in the process of a state's transition from pre-modern to modern, and there is no precise definition of 'modernisation'. I use the term in the sense defined by Stephen Becker in regard to Russian Central Asia. Becker defines four areas in which the transformation of structures and processes takes place. There is an intellectual acceptance of secular and rational ideas, an economic revolution as a result of the adoption of 'post-Newtonian scientific technology', a social transformation involving the growth of literacy, social mobility, and the formation of a new professional class, and a political change towards centralised administration, increased social activity by government, and an increase in public participation in political activity. To this might be added the adoption of symbols of modernity, such as flags, stamps, and national organisations.[55]

Bell used his friendship with the Dalai Lama to ensure that the British guided Tibet's modernisation. During the period 1913-21, he encouraged the Dalai Lama to bring Tibetan structures and processes in line with European models of modern states. Foreign experts were brought to Tibet to assist the development of communications and modern mining techniques; Tibet's military forces were reorganised, and plans were made for the introduction of western-style education. The Dalai Lama was encouraged to reform the economic basis of the country in order to develop the financial resources necessary for modernisation in the absence of foreign financial aid, which Bell could not offer.

These developments were all features of modern states; they also, as Bell recognised, functioned as aspects of imperial power, making the Tibetans 'economically and militarily dependent on us to just that extent that is desirable'.[56] Aspects such as the introduction of western education were designed to ensure that 'the future administrators of Tibet...gain their ideas...from England rather than...any other country'.[57]

Modernisation was to have far-reaching consequences for Tibet. The process raised questions of social values, and threatened to produce rivalries and passions outside accepted and acceptable channels. The required breakdown of existing social structures, and the streamlining of power sources, began to threaten Tibet's fragile national unity, and

even the secular position of the Dalai Lama himself. The growth of military power, and social changes, were particularly threatening to the monastic power structure. Bell was made personally aware of these problems during his visit to Lhasa in 1920-21, when his own safety was threatened by monastic elements opposed to modernisation policies.[58]

These threats to Tibetan social stability, not least the events surrounding Lhasa in 1923-24, caused the Dalai Lama to abandon the modernisation process in the mid-1920s. Modernisation continued, but at a more gradual pace, and on a piecemeal basis largely outside government control. The cadre became more cautious in promoting changes in Tibet. Only aspects likely to be of obvious and immediate value, such as radio communications and modern medical aid, were now introduced. The result was that at the time of the Chinese invasion Tibetan society had not undergone rapid changes. The cadre had failed to create Tibet as a modern state in the European definition. This sequence of events appears to support W.J.Mommsen's conclusion, that colonial policies of support for established local elites 'often had a decisive effect in preventing the political and social modernization of the indigenous societies'.[59]

The traditional Tibetan power structure under the Dalai Lama was an extremely conservative force, strongly resistant to change.[60] By allying themselves with this elite, the British did aid its survival. They helped prevent the emergence of any alternative ruling structures, and, by acquiescing in Tibet's rejection of modernisation, which might have broken down the traditional structures which were preventing change, they allowed the system to continue largely unaltered. The cadre, in the absence of any significant support from their government for policies which would have produced change, continued to support their local allies, and to regard any elements opposing these allies as being motivated by pro-Chinese (republican or communist) sympathies, with possible Russian connections always considered.[61]

## **SECTION 6.7: - IMAGES, CORE AND SECONDARY.**

The image of Tibet which the British created was multi-faceted, with secondary images (those which support, or have other purposes), around a 'core' image (that which 'gathers and organizes imagery').[62] The core image was the political one; Tibet becoming a modern nation-state, united under a single government sovereign within its borders, and existing as a friendly neighbour to British India.

This core image was most clearly articulated by Bell, who wove the key ingredients together. Thus he described how 'Modern Tibet... rejects the Chinese suzerainty and



claims the status of an independent nation', a nation in which 'national sentiment...is now a growing force'. The Dalai Lama was 'determined to free Tibet as far as possible from Chinese rule.' In this he had the support of the 'the majority of the Tibetan race..[who]..see in him...the only means of attaining their goal.' In support of this, Bell quoted a Tibetan noble as stating that 'All [Tibetans] like his [the Dalai Lama's] having supreme power'. The attitude to Britain of this 'self-governing country', was 'one of cordial friendship' and the Dalai Lama was quoted as saying that as British and Tibetans were 'both religious peoples', they could 'live in amity together', whereas the Chinese were not religious, and were thus incompatible with the Tibetans. Tibet would, Bell predicted, 'at length secure[s] recognition of the integrity and autonomy of her territory'.[63]

The core image which Bell articulated was the basis for the British construction of an image of Tibet. Later cadre officers followed his definitions and assumed their readers' familiarity with his works. For example, Spencer-Chapman suggested that readers might compare an illustration in his book with the same scene in an earlier work of Bell's, and Hopkinson could state in 1950 that 'I do not wish to waste your time by repeating facts of ancient history with which you are already familiar from books and articles, such as Sir Charles Bell's'.[64]

The cadre constantly reinforced this core image. Thus typically we read in these works that the 'Dalai Lama is, of course, absolute ruler in all things spiritual as well as temporal.' Cadre officers describe their 'friendly personal discussion[s]' with Tibetan officials, and state that 'Ever since 1912 the Tibetans have, in fact, been unquestionably independent'.[65]

Around this core image were secondary images, designed to reinforce the core image. These could consist of aspects of the core image which were inconsistent with European understanding being presented in positive forms; for example, the Dalai Lama's supreme authority, extreme, and certainly undemocratic by British standards, was defended; 'Naturally there will always be some who from jealousy or other motives criticize one who has the strength of character to assume such autocratic power'.[66]

Other secondary images were subjective judgments whose authority rested on that of their author's empirical observation. Thus, the aristocrats surrounding the Dalai Lama had 'the distinguished bearing and perfect natural manners of an ancient and proud civilization'. Further down the social scale were the 'common people', 'extraordinarily friendly...always cheery', who 'unwashed as they may be... are always laughing'. Certainly, as Richardson notes, with little exaggeration, visitors of different nationalities 'all agree in describing the Tibetans as kind, gentle, honest, open and cheerful': this was one of the attractions of

service there. But this portrayal of Tibet in positive and sympathetic terms also served cadre interests by creating the impression of Tibet as a worthy ally.[67]

There were few aspects of the British knowledge of Tibet which could not be used as supporting elements of the core image they sought to project. Evidence of Chinese misrule, or contempt for Tibet, such as their *Ambans'* failure to learn Tibetan, bolstered Tibet's claim to independence, or contrasted unfavourably with British assistance, and respect for Tibetan culture. Descriptions of the Dalai Lama and his court brought out the well-ordered nature of the society, and the validity of his traditional authority. Phrases such 'The Tibetans believe...'[68] enhanced the image of Tibetans as a unified people.

By emphasising the validity of Tibetan institutions, and the cultural unity of its people, the cadre presented Tibet as a viable and friendly neighbouring state to India, with a historical culture which was of particular value. As we have seen, the cadre were keen to support travellers such as Tucci, who brought out these aspects of Tibet's historical culture. This judgment of Tibetan culture as being of value went beyond the definition of Tibetans by their culture, and clearly implied the possession of qualities which were of 'rare value to the rich diversity of the world'.[69] Tibet was promoted as possessing qualities which the West had lost, as will be seen in Section 6.10.

The reliance on a particular class of allies within Tibet, the Lhasa ruling elite, meant that the British constructed this image in line with the perspective of that elite; it was a Lhasa-centric image, which reflected a delicate balance between the requirements of the British and their Lhasa allies. The British understanding of states as defined by their centre, and their alliance with elements of the Lhasa ruling class, meant that the Lhasa perspective was privileged, and regional perspectives (including those of British observers such as W.H.King referred to in Chapter Two) were submerged.

This perspective was by no means a distortion, but regional and sectarian differences may have been subsumed by this image of unity under the unquestioned religious and secular authority of the Dalai Lama. The information obtained from the Lhasa ruling class did not, for example, articulate the interests of Eastern Tibetan principalities which sometimes aspired to closer ties with China. The need to define Tibetan structures in terms of European political formations may have prevented a fuller understanding of Tibet's power structures, relations with its neighbours, and aspirations.

The image of Tibet created by the British became the dominant political image held in the West, and, as it reflected their perspective, it has been largely accepted as accurate by the Tibetan Government-in-exile. Those aspects in which scholarship might question its accuracy are those where alternative voices are revealed, albeit without emphasis, in the available British sources. Thus questions should be asked concerning the social harmony,

and sense of national and religious identity, of various communities outside Tibet's central provinces of U and Tsang, and of groups such as the *Ragyaba*, disposers of the dead, whose status virtually equated to India's 'untouchables'.

Such work as has been done in this area does not, however, suggest it is liable to lead to any major revisions of the received image of Tibet beyond a more balanced view of the aspirations of marginalised groups in Tibetan society. Tibet does appear to have been a relatively homogeneous society, with little opposition to the Dalai Lama's rule, and, as the British image reflects the perspective of the Dalai Lama's Government, it is a close reflection of the self-image of the Lhasa Tibetan ruling class, which remains the dominant Tibetan voice today.[70]

### **SECTION 6.8: - THE MYSTICAL IMAGE**

The principal competition to the image of Tibet produced by the cadre was, and is, the 'mystical' image, Tibet as a sacred land in which the paranormal was commonplace. This image has co-existed with a political image since the earliest European encounters with the region.[71] The mystic image was created by a different process from that of the political image, a process which has recently been examined in a seminal study by Peter Bishop. Bishop examines the writings of European travellers in and around Tibet during the period 1773-1959 to show how these works influenced the development of the idea of Tibet as a sacred site, ultimately producing an image, or series of images, which separated the concept of Tibet as a sacred site from that of Tibet as a geographical place.[72]

Although Bishop is not concerned with the historical antecedents of this 'sacred Tibet', he might be criticised for neglecting the historical basis for the European construct. Himalayan Tibet, in particular the Mount Kailas-Lake Manasarovar region, has held sacred associations for Indian religions since the pre-Christian era. There are references to the Himalayas in the earliest known Indian text, the *Rg Veda*, and by the period of 'Classical Hinduism' (c600 BC to c200AD) the Kailas-Manasarovar region was firmly located in the sacred geography of the sub-continent.[73] In addition to numerous references to the Himalayas as sacred sites in both of the classical Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, we have the *Skanda Purana* text which asserts that 'As the dew is dried up by the morning sun, so are the sins of men blotted out at the sight of the Himalayas'.[74] Tibet's image as a sacred land in the Indian imagination therefore predates the encounter with the West.

European mystical discourse on Tibet was aimed at other Europeans, and was expressed

in the language of myth, not reality. Hence it contrasted with the more prosaic views of those in regular contact with the Tibetans. But as the cadre also appealed to a European audience they were forced to confront this alternative image, and they found it could serve as a useful secondary image with which to promote the idea of Tibet as a separate state. The two images were separate, and my concern is not with the construction or content of this mystical image, but the means by which the cadre dealt with it demonstrates their ability to use images for a political purpose.

The mystical image was part of the attraction of service in Tibet. Younghusband in particular understood Lhasa as having a wider, symbolic significance, and underwent powerful spiritual experiences there which led him to pursue this path at the expense of his career in government service. Significantly, this in no way damaged his prestige within the Tibet cadre, and the last British Political Officer Sikkim, Arthur Hopkinson, also retired to a spiritual life (albeit in more conventional form as an Anglican clergyman). Tibetan religion was of genuine interest to most cadre officers, and while, as Mark Cocker has observed, the Younghusband Mission failed to confirm 'the mystic image of Tibet in some empirically verifiable form', it remained part of the allure of service there.[75]

The cadre found that this pre-existing image could serve British interests and reach a wider audience than their own. There was no inherent conflict between the two images. It was not a political issue in the sense that neither the Chinese, nor the Russians, sought political benefit by emphasising Tibet's mystical aura. The mystic image reinforced Tibet's separate identity, and was a positive moral image, both factors which the cadre sought to emphasise; it could, therefore, assist British aims. Consequently, as long as travellers avoided referring to political matters, and maintained British prestige, the cadre had no particular objection to the Tibetan journeys of those sincerely interested in Tibet's spiritual culture.[76] They took a benign view of even the most eccentric of these visitors if they steered clear of political matters, but sought to exclude even renowned scholars whom they considered politically unreliable.[77]

Alexandra David-Neel trod a fine line here. While the British objected to her ignoring their frontier travel regulations, and commenting on the British policy of excluding travellers from Tibet, her works were immensely popular, and enhanced Tibet's separate identity, thus furthering British Indian interests. There was also a personal factor in that David-Neel studied Tibetan mysticism while generally remaining within the Western academic tradition, a synthesis the cadre could admire. By presenting herself as a pro-British European with a similar class background and attitudes to the cadre's own, she gained their acceptance as a harmless, even admirable, traveller from within the tradition of aristocratic European 'eccentrics'. [78]

Thus mysticism added to the attraction of Tibet, and the mystical image was implicitly encouraged by the cadre through their writings. While these inherently contradicted many aspects of the mystical image through positivist analysis, and because the authors had not observed any scientifically inexplicable events there, these works simultaneously enhanced the image by their use of metaphors and symbols of remote space, isolation, and timelessness. For example, the introduction to Younghusband's account of his mission to Lhasa describes Tibet as 'a mysterious, secluded country in the remote hinterland of the Himalayas'.<sup>[79]</sup> That they did not observe any scientifically inexplicable events was even a matter of regret to the British in Tibet. Spencer-Chapman, Secretary on the Gould Mission to Lhasa in 1936-37, observed that the Tibetans 'may believe implicitly in various psychic phenomena' but that 'I was never fortunate enough to witness these myself'.<sup>[80]</sup>

There were limits to the cadre's endorsement of Tibetan mysticism. In practice the cadre were reluctant to accept incidents which the Tibetans regarded as miraculous. MacDonald described seeing the corpse of a Chumbi Valley monastery oracle, only for the 'corpse' to revive four days later. 'I suppose' wrote MacDonald 'this must have been a case of suspended animation, for no other explanation would fit the circumstances.' On the other hand, Bell, in an unpublished manuscript, observed without comment that the Gangtok Residency had ghosts. There was an 'apparition of an old women, also a boy and girl' which were harmless, but there was also a ghost described as having 'the body of a red mule and the head of tiger'. Bell wrote that 'whenever one of my police orderlies saw it he fired a shot at it immediately'.<sup>[81]</sup>

It appears that such tales partly reflected a sense of Tibet's distinctive 'Otherness'. Photographs in the officers' books must also have reinforced this sense. For however familiarising the text, there was little or nothing familiar in the photographs, and much that was strange to the European mind, such as frozen waterfalls and 'A Priest..[with]..cup made from a skull, and drum made from two skulls'. This latter image of 'Otherness' proved a particularly strong one; Bell, MacDonald, and Spencer-Chapman all included a similar illustration.<sup>[82]</sup> Ultimately the cadre were content to support the mystical image because of its political value in demonstrating that Tibet had a valuable, unique culture, and a distinct identity.

## **SECTION 6.9: - 'FAMILIAR' OR 'OTHER'**

The need to present Tibet as both a worthy ally of the British and a separate and distinct entity from China meant that the image which the British constructed contained elements in

which Tibet was rendered as 'Other'. It also had elements in which it was portrayed as 'familiar'. This paradox was never fully resolved. As Peter Bishop states, 'Tibet...always sustained an independent Otherness', it was 'imbued with a mixture of both the romance of the unknown and the defence of the known.'[83]

Despite their partial endorsement of Tibet's 'strangeness', the cadre did attempt to define and describe Tibet in terms which would transform it from 'Other' to 'familiar' in the European consciousness. This was part of a wider effort aimed at enabling Europeans to 'know' and understand the world, but it also had distinct political implications. Tibet was not a British colony, but a buffer against Chinese and Russian intrusion into India. This meant that Tibet was not placed in opposition to British interests and was partly removed from colonial discourse. As an 'ally' of British India, Tibet had to be portrayed in a positive, 'familiar', light.

The works of officers such as Bell and MacDonald played an important part in bringing Tibet into the realm of the 'familiar'. One method they used was a common journalistic device, applying comparisons to translate Tibetan institutions and personalities into familiar images. Lhasa was compared with Rome, the Dalai Lama with the Pope, and Sera and Drepung monasteries with Oxford and Cambridge. Bell even translated Tibetan personal names in an effort to make them more 'familiar'; thus he refers to Tsarong (Shape) as 'Clear Eye'. [84]

Spencer-Chapman was a strong exponent of this technique. He noted, for example, that 'As Salisbury Cathedral towers above the city and plain at its feet, so the Potala completely dominates the vale of Lhasa.' He described how Nayapso la 'looks more like a Scottish loch every day except there is no heather on the hills', and, in common with many other observers, found that Tibetan Buddhist 'ritual and chanting recalls a Roman Catholic High Mass'. This effort to present aspects of Tibet in terms familiar to Europeans was made in the language of the dominant culture with which these authors identified, whether they were British or otherwise. Thus MacDonald described how, 'The climate of the Chumbi Valley is ideal, not unlike that of England', although at the time he wrote this he had never been to England! [85]

We have previously noted indications that the production of an image of Tibet was principally aimed at readers of the cadre's own social class, and that the earliest emphasis in the building up of a body of knowledge of Tibet was upon items likely to be of military or strategic value against foreign powers. [86] In that this knowledge was shaped by a hierarchal power relationship, as it was produced by the Government of India as a part of their concern with the security of India's northern border, it can be seen to have been produced as an element of colonial domination. Yet knowledge which was of military value

had restricted circulation. The image of Tibet 'produced' by the British (after the early period of conflict with Tibet) was predominantly a positive image. It reinforced, and to an extent created, Tibetan identity, and was thus useful as much to the Tibetan Government as to the Government of India.

Colonial discourses of control were designed to reinforce an image of the subject peoples as requiring, or even desiring, European rule, and were expressed in terms of 'Otherness'. While the cadre certainly promoted such images, particularly in the early years of the Tibetan encounter, once it had become apparent that Whitehall would not permit an extension of British Indian authority across the Tibetan frontier, there was a concerted effort to portray Tibet as a country whose people shared British aspirations towards freedom and independence.

The predominant mode of expression in British Tibetan discourse appears more akin to what Lionel Caplan, in discussing the image of the Gurkhas, has called 'a pastoral mode', than to that of 'Orientalism'. As Caplan notes, scholars such as Ronald Inden have argued that Orientalist writing on South Asia 'places exclusive stress on difference'. Caplan has shown the Gurkha as represented in the writings of British military officers, as 'having become an honorary European, assuming the latter's characteristics and sharing his attitudes to and distance from the Oriental "other".' The cadre attempted to portray Tibetans similarly as 'familiar'. [87]

The 'pastoral' mode, a term originally used by Kenneth Burke, describes a discourse in which subordinate peoples in the imperial process are represented in approving terms, enabling unequal relationships to be portrayed as characterised by 'immense courtesy, respect and affection'. While maintaining the dominant aspect of the relationship, this discourse is not primarily concerned with power, in the sense usually associated with 'Orientalism'. The subjects are not exoticised, rather the shared inherent qualities of both parties are emphasised, and the paternal relationship is portrayed as based on mutual respect. [88]

While this pastoral mode is, Caplan concludes, Orientalist in the sense that it is knowledge which speaks for others, and in that it 'functions as an element of (colonial or neo-colonial) domination', it is principally an attempt to bring the subjects into the 'familiar'. Caplan describes a discourse of 'self-reflection', produced by authors who were primarily ex-Gurkha officers, with 'a vested interest in the subject'. Their production of this perspective can be seen against the background of the authors' desire to protect their interests at a time of change, and was aimed primarily at the dominant class, 'whatever its effect on the subordinate classes'. [89] In the Tibetan context this is characterised by the writings of Bell and Macdonald.

Caplan's conclusion that the 'pastoral' mode represents an attempt to transform its subjects into the 'familiar' equates with that of Bishop, who uses terms which imply transformation of Tibet into a sacred place for the British, 'Such a fundamental reference point must belong ...to a culture, to its sense of itself, to its quest for meaning.'[90] Certainly the spiritual aspect was a crucial factor in transforming Tibet into a 'familiar' place; the mystic image itself was a great attraction. It was also so obviously a means by which Tibet could be presented in a positive light, that it was neither desirable nor possible to eliminate it entirely. Tibet's concern with religion demanded a positive response; the British were not unaffected by admiration for this priority. Thus the discourse was uniquely brought, by Tibet's spiritual ethos, into areas of meaning not normally associated with the definition of region, territory and state. Could a state define itself by religion, and exist with only a token military force?

That Caplan's conclusions may be applied in the Tibetan context becomes apparent in the later writings of officers such as Hopkinson, which contain soliloquies very far removed from 'Orientalism'. Thus Hopkinson described how the Tibetans 'value their independence as much as you or I do'.[91] As noted in more detail in the next section, Hopkinson questioned the value of the Anglo-Tibetan encounter. Observing its effects, he asked 'What benefit will it be to a man or a country if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?'[92]

This is very far removed from the discourse of control that is the basis of the Orientalist argument. It also goes beyond the perception of a dichotomy whereby the spiritual superiority of the 'East' meant a consequent inability to construct effective political structures. Hopkinson implied that Tibet's political structures were in some ways superior, and that this was because of their more spiritual basis. In this discourse, Tibet became not only 'familiar', but even superior.

The image of Tibet, however, was never brought fully into the realm of the 'familiar'. The need to emphasise Tibet's social and cultural differences with China meant that the British presented memorable images of Tibetan uniqueness, and these images, such as descriptions of 'sky burials' reinforced concepts of Tibet as 'Other'. The restrictions imposed by Whitehall meant the cadre failed to establish Tibet's precise identity and location, and, in addition, the attraction of the mystical image of Tibet meant that it retained a spiritual location outside geographical place.

The failure to establish Tibet as fully 'familiar' also reflected the fact that for most of the British who served there, Tibet retained at least some degree of 'Otherness'. Most British officers expected service in Tibet to be an encounter with the 'Other', and were content that it should be. While they created a discourse of the 'familiar', even those officers with the



greatest understanding confronted those aspects of Tibet, such as the Tibetan's disregard for western scientific 'truths', which while not necessarily significant, remained fundamentally incompatible with European knowledge and understanding.

#### **SECTION 6.10: - ISSUES OF MORALITY**

The process of defining Tibet as a nation, and transforming structures and processes there to create a Tibetan national identity, raised the issue of how, or if, the qualities defined as essential aspects of 'Tibet' and 'Tibetan' could be maintained when Tibet was modernised. Later cadre officers, such as Richardson and Hopkinson, saw in the social structure they encountered, a system with genuine merits, which deeply challenged their view of the value of their own society. They considered that modernisation was corrupting the Tibetan values they admired.

These values were not just those created by the processes which the British had initiated; they were those the British and their allies saw as inherent in Tibetan identity. The religious identity of Tibetan proto-nationalism implied and articulated the privileging of certain ethical and humanitarian qualities. For example, the 13th Dalai Lama, on his accession to power in 1895, proclaimed that the Tibetans' Buddhist character gave them such virtues as 'compassionate hospitality'.<sup>[93]</sup> These values were seen as threatened by the increasing Tibetan contact with Western culture.

Arthur Hopkinson, the last British Political Officer Sikkim, was particularly concerned that the encounter with modern culture had brought 'the worst aspects of capitalism' to Tibet.<sup>[94]</sup> In addition to his concern with the political implications of this issue, Hopkinson also began to question the accepted ideas of cultural values which underlay the imperial process. Noting 'the happiness, contentment, self-sufficiency, and liberty' of the Tibetans, he concluded that 'the modern world has more to learn from Tibet than to teach [it]'.<sup>[95]</sup>

Hopkinson realised that changes in Tibet had had consequences very different from those intended. Some of these results directly threatened British aims there. For example, when the cadre encouraged education in Tibet, they intended it to strengthen Tibetan identity. Gyantse school headmaster Frank Ludlow had been determined to ensure that pupils at his school 'adhere to their own customs, and wear their national dress'. While British-style schools in Tibet failed to survive conservative opposition, some Tibetans saw benefits in western education, and began sending their children to schools in India. But there they received ideas from schools 'founded on the underlying idea of [the] racial, religious or cultural superiority of the Vatican or Salt Lake City to the Potala'. Hopkinson considered

these schools 'set out, with the kindest of motives, ultimately to demoralise them...[and to teach them] to despise their own country'.[96]

Although the Tibet cadre generally tried to restrict foreigners travelling to Tibet to those of their own 'type', there were always imperial elements which believed that contact with Western civilisation was beneficial to Tibet. White had argued that 'the more Tibetans come into contact with Europeans the better', and in the late 1940s, Hopkinson noted how 'One important diplomatic lady in Delhi said to me "Of course I'm going [to Tibet]; it is good for them."' But, as Hopkinson concluded, 'The Tibetans take a different view.'[97]

Hopkinson's comments, on the eve of the British departure from Tibet, reflect his own values, as well as the characteristic identification of imperial officials with the peoples among whom they lived and worked. But his conclusion was a significant development, representing a view diametrically opposed to that of the prevailing ethos at the time of the foundation of the Trade Agencies. The British encounter with Tibet, begun in hostility, had ended in respect and even esteem for the 'Other' culture.

The cadre had been influenced by the concept of British imperial power as a 'civilising mission'. They had a genuine desire to see Tibet advance. In the 1920s, Ludlow (whose wages from the Tibetan Government did not cover his expenses there) personally paid the fees of Tibetan boys studying telegraphy in Kalimpong. After his departure, Williamson, and later Bailey, continued to meet these costs from their own pocket.[98]

Later cadre officers did not oppose change in Tibet *per se*, but, seeing the Tibetans as conservative and resistant to change, they deliberately 'adopted a conservative policy of making haste slowly'.[99] Through policies such as the exclusion of missionaries and other agents of change, the cadre sought to preserve the stability of Tibet, and through their opposition to the introduction of European dress and modes of thinking, they attempted to preserve the existing Tibetan identity. But the rapid changes resulting from Tibet's exposure to the modern world increasingly threatened this policy.

The cadre's concern partly reflects a similar attitude within Tibetan society. The alliance of interests between the cadre and their Tibetan supporters naturally meant that threats to one group were regarded with concern by the other.[100] But the British, unlike the Tibetans, were qualified by their familiarity with both societies to compare them, and judge the benefits of the encounter. Consequently they supported the status quo not only because of their political need to maintain a close association with Tibet's ruling class, but in order to preserve a society they admired. This factor should be considered in applying Mommsen's conclusion that alliances with local allies prevented the modernisation of pre-modern societies.[101]

Tibet was subject to the production of knowledge for purposes of political control, albeit

in India, as much as in Tibet. But the cadre's growing understanding of, and sympathy for, Tibet, lead to a discourse of self-reflection, in which Tibet could be seen as representing all that was best in society in general.[102] The official British encounter with Tibet led individuals personally involved in the encounter to question whether the 'Other' was not superior to the 'familiar'. Their enthusiasm was not for the mystical elements which attracted so many private travellers, but rather for the society which produced the personal characteristics of Tibetans which they admired.

In the wider sense, the cadre's development of admiration for Tibetan values is evidence for the influence of the indigenous society on the imperial power, which appears characteristic of encounters on the frontier, as will be seen in Chapter Eight. But it may also suggest that as the power of policy-making was removed from the 'men on the spot' by the increased control exercised by central government, the frontiersmen identified less closely with the goals of their government, and were increasingly drawn to question its policies and their results.

The concerns which the cadre felt over Tibet's moral status were not expressed publicly until after the British had left Tibet, because it did not support the image of Tibet which the British were trying to project, nor did it reflect well on British influence there. When a concern for morality did emerge into the public sphere, it was for a political purpose: a concern to gain the moral high ground *vis-à-vis* Communist China.

This was a deliberate strategy. After the Communists took power in China, Richardson was aware that 'It is merely a question of when the Communists choose to come....The only possible line I can recommend for the government to pursue is to arouse moral feelings for Tibet.' China's subsequent military invasion enabled the Tibetan Government-in-exile to appeal to morality and justice, a claim which it has never relinquished, and which has become the primary weapon of the Tibetan independence movement.[103]

Their sympathy for Tibetan aspirations left the cadre 'unspeakably sad' when it became obvious that Tibet was unlikely to be accepted as an independent nation-state in the post-war community of nations.[104] That this concern was genuine can be seen by the continuing efforts on behalf of the Tibetan cause today, by surviving officers such as Hugh Richardson and Radio Officer Robert Ford, both of whom remain active in the Tibetan cause.

## SECTION 6.11: - LACK OF DEFINITION: INDEPENDENCE AND IMAGE

The image of Tibet produced by the British left a number of aspects undefined, and the greatest divergence between the 'produced' image, and the Tibetan's self-image, is in the significant area of Tibet's political status. This divergence also provides the clearest example of the way in which the 'produced' image of Tibet failed, due to the political requirements of wider British policy, to reflect the views of the 'men on the spot'.

Today, the exiled Tibetan Government regard the image which the British created as being 'incomplete', particularly in the crucial area of Tibet's political status. The present Dalai Lama maintains that the British failure to represent Tibet as an independent nation was a historical distortion of Tibet's status, arising from the British preference for Chinese, rather than Russian influence in Tibet.[105]

The evidence suggests this is correct. Whitehall was prepared to accept Chinese control over of Tibet as a solution to the perceived threat from Russia. But while Tibet had been under Chinese rule in the past, this had been due to force of Chinese arms. Elements of Tibetan society had accomodated themselves to the Chinese, and the Tibetan leadership had accepted a nominal Chinese overlordship, but, historically, they had resisted any efforts by China to enforce administrative control.

The Tibetan Government had seen Tibet's relations with China in terms of a 'patron-priest' relationship, a concept based on a cosmological understanding of the Emperor of China as protector of the Buddhist faith, and of the Dalai Lama as the primary religious advisor to the Emperor. Thus the Tibetans maintained that this relationship ended with the overthrow of the last Emperor in 1911. The concept reflected the Tibetan view of themselves as a religious state, and had no legal status in the European sense.[106]

A full consideration of the issue of Tibetan independence is outside the scope of this work, but the view that Tibet was entitled to independence was held by most of the British officers who served there. It was Whitehall's refusal to recognise an independent Tibet which led to the image's being 'incomplete'. As Richardson recently stated, 'In all practical matters the Tibetans were independent...The British Government...sold the Tibetans down the river....I was profoundly ashamed of the government.'[107]

As precise definition of Tibet's political status was not essential to Anglo-Tibetan relations, it was generally left undefined, and related issues involving Tibet's status were also avoided when possible. Thus when India became aware of the 1913 Treaty between Tibet and Mongolia, which represented a statement by both countries that they considered each other independent, the Government of India concluded that 'it might be of advantage to HM.'s[sic] Government to be without authoritative information on this point'.[108]

Certain aspects of Tibet's undefined status suited India. Concern for frontier security meant that the Government of India did not want a Tibetan state which was 'a power of any significance in its own right'. They even considered the possibility that an independent Tibet, following its own foreign policy, might pose a threat to India. Delhi was thus 'by no means satisfied that it is in India's interests to have a well trained, well armed and highly organised army in Tibet'.[109]

However, by any practical definition, Tibet functioned as an independent state in the period 1913-1950. It bought (and sold) arms and ammunition directly from other neighbouring governments, and remained neutral in World War Two, a war in which China was deeply involved. It controlled its own territory, and adopted many of the symbols of modern statehood; it had its own currency, stamps, capital city and flag. Cadre officers dealt with its government on a day-to-day basis. They believed that 'Tibet is just as much entitled to her freedom as India'.[110] But wider political considerations required that this fact be concealed, and lip-service paid to Chinese suzerainty. The cadre therefore generally had to represent Tibetan aspirations for an independent identity and control of their own destiny, in terms of the euphemism 'internal autonomy under the lightest possible Chinese suzerainty'.[111]

The failure to establish an image of Tibet fully consistent with the Tibetan's self-image was, therefore, largely the result of Whitehall policy (which the Government of India followed), not of the failure of the 'man on the spot' to understand Tibet's status. As serving government officials, cadre officers ultimately had to follow orders, and clear statements of support for Tibetan independence were usually given only after an officer had retired, and was able to speak as an individual, rather than an official.

The deliberate distortion of an image was not the monopoly of European imperial powers. In the 19th century, the Chinese *Ambans* often filed false reports from Lhasa knowing that their central government was unlikely to question the accuracy of reports by their 'men on the spot'.[112] Official Tibetan correspondence was similarly liable to present a false picture. It was common practice to send a written communication, but to entrust the messenger with a verbal message amending the 'official' order.[113]

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## FOOTNOTES

- [1] IOLR L/P&S/12/4247, Gould to E.P.Donaldson (India Office), undated cFebruary 1946.
- [2] Anderson (1992, esp. pp.113-19); Dreyfus (1995, p.205); Robb (1994, pp.2-5); Smith (1986, esp. pp.134-36).
- [3] IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entries, 6 December 1923, & 1 February 1924.
- [4] NAI FD, 1910 Internal B May 1-22, Bell to India, 4 March 1912.
- [5] Byron (1933, p.188); Shakya (1992, p.15).
- [6] The leading works on these aspects of Tibetan culture are Stein (1972), and Snellgrove & Richardson (1968).
- [7] Bell (1992, p.12).
- [8] For example, see Cassinelli & Ekvall (1969); Ekvall (1960); Samuel (1994).
- [9] Regarding the Sikkimese and Bhutanese enclaves, see Bray (1995); Dutta-Ray (1984, p.42); Pranavananda (1949, pp.81-82).
- [10] For convenience, I treat the Bon faith as a sect of Buddhism, although the issue is a complex one; see for example, Tucci (1980, pp.213-48).
- [11] Samuel (1994, pp.20-22); Richardson (1984, p.19).
- [12] Davis & Prescott (1992, esp., pp.1-16).
- [13] These treaties are most accessible in Richardson (1984, pp.259-64).
- [14] Dreyfus (1994, p.210) Ekvall (1960)
- [15] Bray (1993, p.181); Tucci (1980, p.111).
- [16] Bernard (1939, p.120), quoting a telegram from the Kashag to himself; Goldstein (1989, p.542), quoting the Kashag to Chang-kai-chek in 1946. Battye papers, (unpublished) 'Note on the present condition of Trade between Tibet and other countries' by Captain Battye, 28 April 1936.
- [17] Dreyfus (1994); as Dreyfus notes, there are doubts over the extent to which these kings were Buddhist. Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983)
- [18] For example, Anderson (1992).
- [19] Dreyfus (1994, p.205).
- [20] This Tibetan sense of identity fits models of the ethnic identity of a typical pre-modern community, as defined by A.D.Smith in a recent study; Smith (1986, pp.22-30, 42).
- [21] NAI FD, 1905 Secret E March 341-368, Gyantse diary of 18 December 1904; IOLR L/P&S/12/4201-1863, Lhasa Mission report, week ending 19 March 1944.
- [22] Cocker (1994, pp.28-31). Cocker discusses Bailey's naturalist collections in the context of the imperial quest for knowledge.
- [23] Anderson (1992, fn.30, p.179) quoting a speech by Lord Curzon.
- [24] O'Connor (1988, p.60).
- [25] Works which I have found of particular value to the on-going debate over the European

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appropriation of knowledge are, Ahmad (1991); Cocker (1994); Cohn (1985, esp. p.283); and in particular, Ludden (1993).

[26] Landon (1988, p.107); NAI FD, 1910 External B April 12-13, Military Report on Tibet, by Captain V.E Gwyer; an attached file note states that this was compiled with Bell's assistance. The report is also in IOLR L/Mil/17/14/92.

[27] See for example, Chandler (1905); Landon (1988); Younghusband (1985).

[28] Bailey (1911); Younghusband (1910); White (1909).

[29] O'Connor (1988, pp.352).

[30] Bell (1987, pp.56, 65-66).

[31] Re the Dalai Lamas, see Bell ((1931); Richardson (1984); Rockhill (1910); Stein (1972); Tucci (1980).

[32] Robb (1994)

[33] *Ibid*, pp.2-4.

[34] Anderson (1992, p.19).

[35] For a valuable discussion of the process by which South Asia's traditional frontiers were transformed into boundaries, see Embree (1977, pp.255-80).

[36] Embree *ibid*); Robb (1994, esp. p.2).

[37] For example, the Chumbi was returned directly to the Tibetan Government in 1908, rather than to the Chinese authorities; IOLR L/P&S/7/210-602, Frontier Confidential Report, 14 February 1908.

[38] Lamb (1989, fn.21, p.24); also see Christie (1977, pp.52-53).

[39] Goldstein (1989, pp.75-76); Lamb (1966, pp.575-77); Lamb 1989 (pp.13-17).

[40] IOLR L/P&S/10/344-3609, Bell to India, 6 August 1914; also see MSS Eur F80 5d8, notes by Bell, 25 November 1913, & 1 December 1913.

[41] Bell (1987, p.232).

[42] IOLR L/P&S/11/81, India to Secretary of State, 25 March 1915; Lamb (1989, fn.29, p.25).

[43] Lamb *ibid* (p.138).

[44] The Tawang issue, and the wider issue of the validity of the MacMahon Line, has been subject to a considerable amount of analysis. A valuable summary may be found in Woodman (1969, pp.196-209). For a thorough examination of the question, see Lamb (1989, pp.12-21, 279-80, 401-476), who demonstrates how Sir Olaf Caroe, Indian Foreign Secretary in 1939-45, attempted to validate the Simla Convention by backdating its insertion into Aitchison's Treaties, an action first uncovered by Sir John Addis. The issue remains a sensitive one: the present Indian Government refuses access to all files classified as relating to Tibet and this frontier, dated after 31 December 1913.

[45] Richardson (1984, pp.149-50); Lamb (1989, pp.14-15, 278-80).

[46] IOLR L/P&S/12/4179, Report by B.J.Gould 'on the discovery, recognition and installation of the fourteenth Dalai Lama' dated May 1941, pp.1.

[47] Bell (1992, pp.142).

[48] *Ibid* p.259.

[49] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-3864, Lhasa Mission report by B.Gould, 30 April 1937.

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[50] McKay (1994, pp.376-77, 383); IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary entry, 1 February 1924; L/P&S/12/4605-3894, British Embassy, Chungking, to Ministry of Information, Far Eastern Section, 27 May 1942.

[51] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-3864, Lhasa Mission report by B.Gould, 30 April 1937.

[52] Baker & Steele (1994, p.59).

[53] Richardson (1951, p.122).

[54] Norbu (1987, pp.138-39); An anthropologist specialising in Tibet, Robert Ekvall (1960, p.375), writing shortly after the 1959 Chinese take-over, noted that 'Recent conversations with...the eldest brother of the Dalai Lama, have suggested that the Tibetans, for the first time (or with a new insistence), are asking themselves, "What does it mean to be a Tibetan?";'

[55] Becker (1968, p.345).

[56] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5e(c) 21, Bell to India, 21 February 1921. Re the process of modernisation in Tibet and its effects, see Cooper (1986b); Dhondup (1986); Goldstein (1989); Lamb (1989).

[57] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5d8, 'Notes on our future policy in Tibet and on the North Eastern Frontier generally, (apparently by Bell for MacMahon), undated [c1914].

[58] See Bell (1987, pp.308, 312, 329, 349, 354-55). Bell is, however, reticent as to the causes of this situation.

[59] Mommsen (1980, p.111).

[60] Major Battye expressed the British perception when he described Tibetans as 'the world's most conservative people who regard any change or innovation with suspicion and distrust'; Battye papers, 'Note on the present condition of Trade between Tibet and other countries' by Captain Battye, 28 April 1936.

[61] The monk-intellectual, Gedun Ch'omp'el (1895-1951), was one such indigenous critics of the existing system in Tibet. In the 1940s the British and Tibetan Governments co-operated in suppressing the activities of the 'Young Tibet Party' with which he was associated. While this group espoused a mixture of ideologies, and received Chinese funding, the British also noted that Ch'omp'el was in correspondence with the Russian Tibetologist, Nicholas Roerich, whose political affiliations were uncertain; see Goldstein (1989, pp.449-463); Bray (1994, p.77). Re Roerich, see Rupen (1979); IOLR MSS Eur F157-245, S.Gasalee (Foreign Office) to Bailey, 8 October 1929 and related correspondence.

[62] Bishop (1989, fn.120, p.269).

[63] Bell (1992, pp.5, 126, 139, 140, 213-14, 269).

[64] Hopkinson (1950, p.230); Richardson (1984, p.1); Spencer-Chapman (1992, pp.178-79).

[65] Hopkinson *ibid*; Richardson (1951, p.113), & (1984, p.156).

[66] Spencer-Chapman (1992, p.194).

[67] MacDonald (1991, p.57); Richardson (1984, p.10); Spencer-Chapman *ibid* (pp.52, 150).

[68] For example, 'The Tibetans believe that certain spiritual reward is gained even by merely gazing upon the persons of either of the two Grand Lamas.'; MacDonald (1991, p.182)

[69] Richardson (1984, p.243).

[70] Even Goldstein, for example, who is generally regarded by Tibetans as a critic of their society, concludes that the central government exercised authority 'over the whole country'; Goldstein



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(1989, p.6). For recent studies concerning Tibetan identity, see for example, Cech (1991); Dreyfus (1994); Samuel (1994).

[71] For example, Marco Polo's description of Tibet reports on both political authority and 'necromancy'; Marco Polo (1970, pp.236-240).

[72] Bishop (1989).

[73] While *Rg Veda* 1.32.1-15 may be interpreted as indicating a knowledge of the upper regions of the Indus, the first definite reference to the Himalayas (as *Himavant*) is in the final book of the *Rg Veda* (RV. X.121.4), often regarded as a later addition to the text. However by the 'classical' period, references to what is now Himalayan Tibet had acquired a clear spiritual association.

[74] *Skanda Purana*, [c200-c600AD.], quoted in Hedin (1909, p.199).

[75] Cocker (1994, p.230); Younghusband (1985, pp.317, 326-27).

[76] This was in sharp contrast to their attitude towards Christian missionaries, whose presence was strongly opposed due to the unrest (and hence political instability) which their presence was considered liable to arouse.

[77] IOLR MSS Eur D979, Ludlow diary, various entries, 13 June 1926 to 1 August 1926, describes one such eccentric. Sven Hedin was one famous traveller who, after World War One, was considered undesirable on political grounds; see IOLR MSS Eur F157-221, Arthur Hirtzel to Bailey, 15 November 1922.

[78] Sikkim State Archives, General 1916 (7)10/3/(XX11)/1916; David-Neel to Bell, 31 August 1916; here David-Neel describes herself as 'a loyal friend of England'.

[79] Younghusband (1985, p.2).

[80] Spencer-Chapman (1992, p.214).

[81] MacDonald (1991, p.201); IOLR MSS Eur F80 5h 2, unpublished manuscript by Bell entitled 'A Year in Lhasa', [apparently a draft autobiography, and unrelated to his (1924) article of that title], chapter three.

[82] See Bell (1992, pp.7, 36); MacDonald (1991, pp.58-59); Spencer-Chapman (1992, pp.48-49).

[83] Bishop (1989, pp.145, 148).

[84] For example, see Bell (1987, pp.135, 460).

[85] MacDonald (1991, p.54); Spencer-Chapman (1992, pp.63, 171, 210).

[86] For example, the absence of a foreign threat in western Tibet meant that knowledge of this area was not brought out by the cadre, until Tucci's work there brought out Tibet's historical ties with India.

[87] Caplan (1991, pp.571, quoting Inden {1986, p.402}, 593).

[88] *Ibid* (pp.573, 590-94).

[89] *Ibid* (p.594).

[90] Bishop (1989, p.108), [original emphasis].

[91] Hopkinson (1950, p.233).

[92] IOLR MSS Eur D998/39, Report on Tibet August 1945 -August 1948, by A.J.Hopkinson. Hopkinson's phrase derives from St. Matthew 16:26 and St Mark 8:36, King James Version.

[93] Tada (1965, pp.33-34). Whether this is true is not at issue, the point is the articulation of a

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religious ideal as the basis for the aspirations of the society, and the British acceptance that this was the basis of that society.

[94] IOLR MSS Eur D998-39, Report on Tibet August 1945 - August 1948, by A.J.Hopkinson.

[95] Hopkinson *ibid*; MSS D979, Ludlow diary entry, 1 February 1924.

[96] Hopkinson *ibid* .

[97] Hopkinson *ibid*; NAI FD, 1906 Secret E February 98-109, White to India, 31 October 1905.

[98] IOLR MSS Eur F157-241, Ludlow to Bailey, 3 November 1926.

[99] IOLR L/P&S/12/4223-6535, Hopkinson to India, 31 October 1945.

[100] This was a two-way process, the Tibetan ruling classes identified with British aspirations. For example, they feared Gandhi's influence and possible resulting instability in India; see IOLR L/P&S/10/218-2134, Yatung Annual Report, 1921-22.

[101] Mommsen (1980, p.111).

[102] Cocker (1994, pp.136-37), examines how travellers to Tibet also came to regard Tibet's unchanging conservatism as a virtue in a changing world, with Tibet seen as preserving elements needed by the rest of the world, an attitude which parallels that of the cadre, but which was usually expressed more clearly in travellers' discourse than government reports.

[103] IOLR MSS Eur F157-259, Richardson to Bailey, 5 December 1949.

[104] *Ibid*.

[105] Interview with H.H. the Dalai Lama, March 1994.

[106] For details of the Tibetan concept of the 'patron-priest relationship, see Richardson (1984, pp.40-41, 50, 103); Bell (1987, pp.400-01).

[107] Richardson (1994).

[108] IOLR L/P&S/11/46-723, anonymous file note, 22 May 1913.

[109] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-8092, India to Secretary of State, 12 December 1936; Lamb (1989, p.113).

[110] Bell (1987, p.56).

[111] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5e(c) 21, Bell to India, 21 February 1921.

[112] Bell (1992, p.139).

[113] *Ibid* p.87.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### 'NOTHING LEFT TO WHICH OBJECTION COULD BE TAKEN':

#### CONTROLLING INFORMATION.

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#### INTRODUCTION

The cadre's greatest influence on the image of Tibet came from their published writings; these reached the widest audience, and had the deepest influence on European thinking. Although the image they projected strongly reflected the Tibetan Government's understanding, it was primarily designed to reflect British interests. Thus it ignored the Tibetan perspective when necessary, just as British policies ignored the perspective of their Tibetan allies when necessary (for example, in regard to Tawang).

To ensure that its agent's writings reflected British interests, government censored them. Thus, the knowledge which the cadre gained from first-hand experience of Tibet passed through levels of selection and of censorship before being released, levels where the presentation of information was shaped by both the personal perspectives of the authors, and government's actual political needs.

In this chapter we will examine how knowledge was selected by the cadre, and how it was censored by government and its supporting structures, in order to present it in the form best serving British interests. In addition, we will examine how this process dealt with alternative images which existed, or might have been constructed.

#### SECTION 7.1: - USING INFORMATION: THE CADRE

The information which the cadre presented to their government was not only affected by the perspectives involved in gathering and selecting information, but also presented in a form which advanced the interests that the cadre sought to promote. This took the form of praise for fellow cadre officers - 'Mr MacDonald has as usual managed his work tactfully

and efficiently' - and even self-praise: 'by tact and influence I kept them in bounds'.[1]. More significantly it involved the presentation of information in a form designed to promote particular policies and actions by Delhi and Whitehall.

Cadre officers could, by stating opinion as 'truth', and using these 'truths' selectively, use their status as the government's experts 'on the spot' to advance particular policies. This was something central government was aware of, however, and they could often read the hidden codes of meaning in this discourse. Thus when Bell, arguing in favour of British annexation of the Chumbi Valley, claimed the support of the Chumbi people for this policy, a Secretariat official commented 'was there ever a pioneer of the forward policy who did not find the trans-border people dying to be annexed?'[2]

Before Bell established his alliance with the Dalai Lama, he used a similar approach in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade his government to take formal control of Tibet's foreign relations. He claimed that the Tibetans' character, 'though in many ways admirable is permeated by a vein of impracticability, which prevents them from coming to a final decision', and that this meant Tibet would not be capable of conducting its own foreign relations. That the Tibetan Government were 'naive' became an article of faith among the cadre, and, while this description was appropriate in some instances, after the British departed they admitted that, while the Tibetans 'played at being a very simple people..., they were shrewd diplomatic operators'.[3]

Bell's statements were an example of how knowledge could be both 'true', and 'useful'. Information could be true but of interest only to positivist science; other information could be true and politically useful. Bell's transparent attempt to promote the idea that the British should take over control of Tibet's foreign relations, as they had done with Bhutan, offered a justification of British rule or guidance by presenting the newly encountered culture as inferior; which has been shown to be a common imperial tactic.[4]

The knowledge accumulated by cadre officers took time to emerge into the public domain. and when it did, their character and training meant that government could to a large extent trust their judgment as to what to present to the public. An example of the way in which the cadre censored themselves can be seen in Mainprice's private papers. These reveal that he had grave doubts as to the wisdom of British Tibetan policies (as will be seen). But in the writing that he intended for publication, Mainprice did not mention these doubts. While the possibility exists that Mainprice had simply changed his opinion, this reticence was typical of a wider British Indian ethos, which ensured that other British officers accompanying the cadre were similarly discreet. General Neame's damning criticisms of the Tibetan army, previously noted, were not repeated in his published account of his journey, where his only explicit criticism was of 'poor marksmanship' by

one section of the troops.[5]

The promotion of a particular image for political purposes meant, as will be seen, that alternative 'voices' were censored or marginalised. Evidence which supported other political images of Tibet was refuted, explained away, or ignored. This was particularly the case with the opposing image promoted by the Chinese, which was of Tibet as an integral part of China.

## **SECTION 7.2: - USING INFORMATION: GOVERNMENT**

While government expected to be able to trust the judgement of its officers as to what information to present to the public, officials were required, by both civil and military regulations additional to the Official Secrets Act, to submit their writings for censorship. Some officers actively supported this system. For example the India Office noted that Macdonald was 'anxious that we should strike out anything that is considered objectionable'.[6] Other officers (and their publishers) were sometimes unaware of this requirement, and were censured if their writings contained information the government wished to restrict.

The Government of India even claimed the power to restrict its officers' private conversations. For example they did not wish to publicise the existence of goldfields in western Tibet, to avoid encouraging prospectors. Captain Rawling, who travelled through western Tibet at the conclusion of the Younghusband Mission, was instructed 'to avoid all reference in conversation to information...regarding the goldfields'.[7]

Arms supplies to Tibet from India were an issue of particular sensitivity, in that they could have been seen as implying recognition of Tibet as an independent state. Hence both Bell and Macdonald's references to these supplies were censored. Where Bell commented on Tibetan troops being 'armed with the new rifles', mention of the source of these rifles (the Government of India) was removed. Macdonald's claim in his manuscript that demands for payment for weapons were a factor in the Panchen Lama's flight was also censored. along with a large section of suggestions on future policy, including support for Tibetan independence. Macdonald was told that it was 'most important that nothing should be said which could tend to damage relations with Tibet or any other foreign power'.[8]

Whitehall was primarily concerned with avoiding any references to British actions or policies liable to arouse international opposition. This meant that they opposed any reference to British influence in Tibet; the image they wanted to portray was of British India having normal neighbourly relations with Tibet, the two countries respecting each other's

territorial integrity, and refraining from interference in each other's internal affairs.

The Government of India followed Whitehall's wishes in this matter, but their concern to use Tibet as a 'buffer-state', and to protect the security of their frontiers by separating India from China, meant that they were prepared to allow the cadre great latitude in their references to Tibet's status. They would even to allow them to support its independence, as long as they appeased Whitehall by not mentioning that they were trying to help the Tibetans achieve it.

The production of an image of Tibet was thus greatly affected by the need to appease other world powers. This concern for foreign reaction meant that the image of Tibet which the Government of India allowed to be promoted did not fully reflect the knowledge of the cadre. Most significantly it did not state unequivocally that Tibet was an independent state, which was to be of crucial importance to Tibet's future.

Government's attitude to works which had not been submitted for censorship was inconsistent. When White published *Sikkim and Bhutan*, he forwarded a copy to government to solicit sales. They considered White 'guilty of a grave act of insubordination and even impertinence' for remarks in his book which they saw as 'vindictive to the Government he served'. (For example, he wrote that 'It is neither a pleasant nor an easy task to have to deliberately deceive people who trusted you, as I had to do'.) Despite this, no action was taken against White. Somewhat surprisingly (given that White criticised the government's policy of withdrawing from involvement in Tibet in the post-Younghusband period, and admitted that the British had, in the case of Sikkim, 'deprived the weaker State of valuable territory'), Viceroy Minto concluded that 'The publication of a few home truths is not altogether disagreeable reading'.[9]

In practice, government could do little to prevent retired officers from writing what they wished. Bell reluctantly agreed to submit his first book for censorship, apparently after being threatened with action under the Official Secrets Act. When government heard he was writing another book they asked to see the proofs, but Bell found he was no longer bound by the Act, having been out of service for more than six years, and refused to submit the proofs. Government considered threatening his pension, but this was legally impossible, and they were forced to 'acquiesce gracefully' to Bell's uncensored publications. All that could be done was for the India Office to press the Government of India to emphasise to the Political Officers in Sikkim and Nepal that, as these posts were 'closely connected with the affairs of foreign countries, the...Regulations governing publication apply with particular force'.[10]

Although official censorship was both inconsistent and ultimately unenforceable, it did affect the information flow from Tibet. On the other hand, those aspects of White and

Bell's writings which escaped censorship were ultimately absorbed into the acceptable body of opinion. This process occurred in Bell's case both because of his personal prestige within the Tibet cadre, which meant his ideas were supported by his successors, and because the passages government objected to were principally indications of British support for Tibet, which they eventually found useful to show to the Tibetan Government. White's 'self-laudatory' work appears to have been subject to a positive reinterpretation as the passage of time removed memory of his failures, and mythologised the early Tibetan frontiersmen.

### **SECTION 7.3: - CENSORSHIP: SUPPORTING STRUCTURES**

The Government of India had considerable power to control the flow of information from Tibet into the public sphere. We have seen how they exercised control over access to Tibet, favouring travellers of similar background and outlook to their officials, on the assumption that their discretion could then be relied upon. Following McGovern's journey to Lhasa, government tightened this informal process by adding a further rule to the frontier pass visitors had to sign. Travellers had to agree

not to publish, without the previous consent of the Government of India, any statement, whether in the press or otherwise, regarding his visit to Tibet or based on material obtained during the visit.[11]

When 'knowledge' was released by government, organisations such as the Royal Geographical Society (hereafter referred to as the RGS), and the London *Times*, functioned unofficially as imperial support structures, by adding a further level of censorship. These bodies acted in close association with the Government of India, in return for which their leaders could expect to be given privileged access to information, events and places. Government even gave direct 'subsidies' to the Reuters news agency in India.[12]

Arthur Hinks, the long-serving Secretary of the RGS, had close links with many of the Tibet cadre, and played an important role in this process; we have noted how he assisted Bailey's attack on McGovern's reputation. Hinks censored information both before, and after, it was officially censored. When F.Spencer Chapman submitted a paper to the RGS, Hinks forwarded it to the India Office for censorship after 'cutting out a number of things which I am sure you would not like'. There was, he hoped, 'nothing left to which objection could be taken'. When the India Office made further changes, Hinks agreed these

were 'very properly removed'.[13]

Government maintained a close relationship with these knowledge-disseminating bodies because articles they published carried great authority, and formed part of the body of 'dominant knowledge'. Although the intended audience for the reception of knowledge produced by the cadre was never clearly specified, it certainly included the sort of audience which would read the *Times*, and join the RGS. The information they published was understood by its readers to be 'true', because it was based on empirical evidence, and written by persons of similar outlook and class. It represented the 'official' knowledge of their readers' society.

Some officers actively solicited orders for their books from the Government of India, whose orders for works they approved of acted as a means of subsidising publication costs. Charles Sherring, for example, who had inspected the Gartok Trade Agency in 1905, hoped government would take at least 600 copies of his book, although in the event, after a lengthy process of soliciting orders from every department and Provincial Government, they took only 58 copies.[14] This suggests that the intended readership at which they aimed their works were their fellow colonial officials.

Mark Cocker notes that Bailey 'expected his readers to understand and share' his attitudes, which 'to a larger extent...they probably would have done. His most likely audience would have been from the officer classes with experience of colonial administration.' Cadre officers naturally recommended particular books to those interested, and these were invariably those written by other officially approved visitors. Mainprice, for example, recommended Spencer-Chapman's book 'for a good picture of Tibet'.[15]

Control of information from Tibet was also extended over the Tibetans. The British controlled the telegraph line which was Tibet's most rapid contact with the outside world. When (probably following Bell's advice) the Tibetans asked the British to extend the line from Gyantse to Lhasa, there was strong support for this within government. The Secretary of State was told that 'there are great advantages in any improvement of communications in countries contiguous to our borders, provided these communications are under our control'. The Military Department agreed it 'might...become of great military value to us', while Bell saw it as an opportunity to 'put the Tibetan Government under an obligation by helping them'.[16]

Information control was a two-way process. In addition to controlling information to and from Tibet, the British sought to control the image of the outside world which the Tibetans received. Bell began supplying the exiled Dalai Lama with translated extracts from Indian newspapers and Bailey continued this policy, and also forwarded suitable cuttings from the *Times* - for example, reports of religious persecution in Russia.[17]



The British were able, to a great extent, to restrict Tibet's knowledge of the outside world. The Tibetans were given selected images of the West, images designed to reinforce the 'advice' given by the Politicals. By preventing the entry of other external influences, which might have acted as agents for change, the cadre may have reduced pressure for change within Tibet. But even the selected changes which the British introduced were strongly opposed by the powerful conservative forces within Tibet; the policy, therefore, contained elements of benefit to both British and Tibetan ruling structures.

#### **SECTION 7.4: - IMAGES: DOMINANT AND MARGINAL**

There are alternative sources for an image of Tibet, voices largely silenced by the dominant image. In a study of Japanese travellers to Tibet, Scott Berry concluded that the four Japanese who visited Lhasa during the period 1912-24, failed to establish a significant image of Tibet due, not only to language difficulties, but to their undistinguished class background, and their lack of political connections and patronage from the Japanese Government.[18] This conclusion can also be applied to a neglected British voice.

The longest-serving Europeans in Tibet left almost no historical trace. They were the two Telegraph Sergeants, H.Martin and W.H.Luff, and Radio Officer Reginald Fox, who spent the longest period in Lhasa. None of these three Londoners published any work, or left personal papers. Just as the British imperial process marginalised indigenous 'subaltern' voices, British 'subaltern' voices were similarly neglected. The careers of these individuals demonstrate how the 'class voices' which expressed the British view of Tibet dominated frontier history at the expense of other 'voices'.

Sergeant Henry Martin was a former labourer, who served with Younghusband and remained in Gyantse as a Telegraphist, and later Head Clerk, from 1904 until he retired in 1931. He died soon after retiring, having found that despite 'his record of long faithful service...hard to beat in the annals of a Government office', his government were unwilling to correct an anomaly which reduced his pension by a third. Luff, who personally escorted the Dalai Lama into exile in India in 1910, also remained in Tibet from the Younghusband Mission until he retired in the late 1920s. After a brief, unsuccessful career as a gardener in Weir's Gangtok Residency, he died at Darjeeling in 1942. Reginald Fox served as Lhasa Mission Radio Officer from March 1937 until 1950, and similarly died soon after retiring. While he and his Tibetan wife are frequently mentioned in travellers' accounts, there is almost no trace of him in surviving British records.[19]

The absence of these 'subaltern voices' is significant in emphasising that the image the

cadre produced was created by a particular class of officials, those who had passed through public schools, universities or military colleges, Indian civil or military service, and the filtering process of the Tibet cadre. With its essential class base, the Tibet cadre did not admit British 'lower ranks', no matter how experienced or knowledgeable, to the ranks of opinion makers. Support personnel had no influence on policy, and were thus excluded from the image creation process, just as they were in India.

As Fox, Luff, and Martin all sought to remain in Tibet after retirement, their involvement in the country must have been as committed as any cadre officer, but the understanding they gained from this involvement was not utilised, or at least not acknowledged, by the cadre. They were not normally included in meetings with the Tibetan ruling class, and neither were the perspectives which they gained from their social contacts with lower levels of Tibetan society, reflected in the dominant image created. The result was an image of Tibet based on a very narrow class perception.

#### **SECTION 7.5: - IMAGE - THE MISSING PIECES**

We have seen that issues which might reflect badly on the cadre, such as cash payments to influential Tibetans, did not emerge into the public knowledge. There was also a gap between what the cadre themselves knew or believed, and what they divulged, as we have seen with Neame's article, which avoided mentioning both the purpose and the results of his mission. This can also be seen clearly in two cases where Politicals posted to Gyantse formed views which differed significantly from the usual cadre perception. It is significant that neither officer remained in Tibet for more than a few months. They were not therefore, by my definition, accepted members of the Tibet cadre.

The recorded memories of 1933 Gyantse Agent Meredith Worth, suggest an image of Tibet closer to that presented by Communist Chinese sources than to that offered in British sources. Interviewed in 1980. Worth recalled that

My memories are of many cheerful parties in the Fort and in the homes of wealthy families. the dominance and brutality of the Lamas and officials towards the serf population and the prevalence of venereal diseases....It was, therefore, for me a relief to read recently in Han Suyin's book "Lhasa, the Open City" [which promotes a polemically positive view of Communist rule in Tibet] that those conditions no longer exist.[20]

Paul Mainprice confided to his 1944 diary that

I have serious doubts whether Tibet is at all fit for independence and whether the present system of Government should be bolstered up. Would China in control of Tibet really be a very serious menace to India? As we don't seem to do much developing of Tibet, I question whether the Chinese would not be able to do it to our own mutual advantage. Of course the Tibetan aristocracy and officials would not like it, but the peasants preferred the Chinese regime in Eastern Tibet in the early years of this century.[21]

Neither Worth nor Mainprice appear to have expressed these views publicly during their imperial service. They were doubtless aware that views diametrically opposed to those of their superiors would be censored, and were unlikely to advance their careers. This must have acted as an incentive to self-censorship. As a result, the dominant image of Tibet was not affected by alternative views, even those of members of the Political Department.

The doubts which Mainprice expressed over British policy in Tibet do reflect a different perspective from that of other cadre officers. Mainprice 'was always concerned for the underdog'. He was one of the few imperial officers to gain good relations with the Mishmis during service in Assam, and his diaries record his later sympathy and support for the Muslim populace of Kashmir, which led to his being detained and expelled by the new Indian government.[22]

Mainprice's perspective indicates how the emphasis on relations with Tibet's ruling class resulted in a marginalisation of the voice of the majority of Tibetans, those outside ruling circles. Bell was aware that the peasants were often treated 'abominably' and even admitted in his first book that 'There is no doubt some foundation for the Amban's claim that the poorer classes in Tibet were in favour of China.' But Bell's policy of support for the existing Tibetan leadership meant that this perspective was not represented by the British. The condition of the lower classes was heavily criticised on occasion, Macdonald being particularly critical. But a positive image was maintained by attributing misrule to the era of Chinese domination, and describing how conditions were improving under the Dalai Lama's rule. This positive note was enhanced by the constant stress on the overall happiness and contentment of the peasant class, which is a recurrent theme in British accounts of Tibet, where even 'the slavery was of a very mild type'.[23]

## SECTION 7.6: - PUBLICITY

Government control over the supply of information to the press became increasingly more sophisticated in Tibet, as it did elsewhere. Michael Edwardes has noted how the expansion of the Western powers was matched by an increasing 'need to explain and justify the motives behind...expansion...to attract and inspire those sections of public opinion whose support was necessary to the activities of government'. As early as 1910, Younghusband, speaking in London, argued that 'our line of action in Tibet is entirely dependent on the state of opinion in this country'.[24]

The cadre's early press releases deliberately avoided commenting on policy, and contained little of popular interest. When the Dalai Lama came to India, Bell was instructed 'to assist the Press Correspondent with news while of course saying nothing as to the policy', and he detailed Laden La to supply 'such items of news, as are likely to soon afterwards in any case become known to the public'. Although Bell's first book recommended that 'We should do more than is done at present towards putting before the public the Tibetan side of incidents that arise', press communiques continued to be given in the officially approved 'vague and general terms'.[25]

Gould was again responsible for fully implementing Bell's policy suggestions. He recognised the public 'demand for "copy" which always appears to exist in regard to Tibet'. Where previous missions to Lhasa had sought anonymity, Gould arranged for generous publicity prior to his visit to Lhasa in 1936. Sections of the Mission Diaries were released to the press and these 'somewhat bald and colourless' excerpts were supplemented by descriptive articles written by Gould or Spencer-Chapman.[26]

Comparison of the original reports with those released to the press illustrates aspects of the image of Tibet which Gould sought to project. Reference to the 'bizarre' appearance of the Tibetan army was tactfully deleted, as was the description of the 'in some cases imbecile faces' of the villagers. The original phrase 'The old world courtesy, politeness, bowing and compliments of the Tibetans, officials as well as servants, is charming', was reduced to avoid reference to politeness, bowing and compliments, perhaps due to their implicit association with Chinese forms of diplomacy.[27]

In the 1940s, Gould increased the means by which Tibet received publicity. He arranged subsidies for a Tibetan language newspaper, published in Kalimpong by the Reverend Tharchin, a Ladakhi convert to Christianity who maintained close links with the British. Foreign newspaper correspondents with influence in America were invited to Tibet 'in the hope that the U.S. public will be led to appreciate the Tibetan position vis-à-vis China'. Archie Steele was the first journalist invited, and his visit was followed by others in the late

1940s, but their writings had little apparent effect.[28]

Gould emphasised the need for Tibet to publicise its cause, and, in line with cadre traditions, ensured that this process was controlled by his own government. The India Office were informed that

the thing should be kept in the Government of India's hands and...the Ministry of Information should be largely frozen out....I think it would be unfortunate if the Ministry's Far Eastern Bureau in Delhi were enabled to get a foot in the Tibetan door.[29]

Part of Gould's publicity campaign involved ensuring that British publications reflected the desired view of Tibet. In the 1920s Bailey had unsuccessfully tried to get the British film censor to remove parts of the official film of an Everest expedition which the Tibetans found offensive (in particular a sequence in which a Tibetan was shown removing lice from his clothing). Gould was more successful in obtaining the co-operation of the editor of Whitaker's Almanack, who agreed to send the proofs of an article on Tibet to the India Office for 'correction'. Richardson revised the article, although the India Office cautiously noted that 'we must be careful not to appear to be telling Whitakers what to publish'.[30]

In response to the Chinese establishment of a library in Lhasa in the 1940s, the Lhasa Mission built up a collection of books on Tibet, which were used to impress the Tibetans. Their leaders were also given books written by Bell, Tucci and others, which demonstrated European interest in, and concern for, Tibet. Bell clearly expressed his intent when he told the Dalai Lama that he hoped his first book would 'do good for Tibet by causing British and Americans to understand Tibet better'. Gould and Richardson's dictionary was another work seen in this context. It was observed that 'Perhaps its greatest propaganda value will be the fact that the Political Officer is sufficiently interested in Tibetan to write a book about it'. The supply of information to Tibet was, therefore, part of a process of image production which reinforced the projection of British prestige outlined in Chapter Two.[31]

An important addition to this process came in the early 1930s when the cadre found that film shows were extremely popular with the Tibetans. They concluded that 'the cinema ...can be made into the most powerful of all our propaganda weapons'. The Lhasa Mission put on regular shows which were attended by both lay officials and monks. The films were carefully chosen with advice from intermediaries such as Norbhu Dhondup, to project British power and to appeal to Tibetan sensibilities. Thus one film was adjudged suitable as it gave 'the right impression of British power and purpose'. Another, on St Paul's cathedral, was considered particularly suitable for Tibet due to its 'religious flavour'.[32]

The Tibetans gradually became aware of the importance of outside opinion. One indication of this came in 1937, when, after allegations by an American journalist that the Panchen Lama had been involved in commercial schemes in China, the exiled Lama wrote to the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* denying the allegations.[33]

In the late '40s, the Tibetans hesitantly began actively to seek publicity. J.E.Reid, an electrical engineer who was the last British Indian official to be invited to Lhasa, reported in January 1950 that 'The Tibetan Government had suddenly awoken to the reality of the dangers which threatened it and is now regretting its past policy of keeping aloof from outside contact.' The Tibetans, he reported, 'were now anxious that full world publicity should be given to their plight and to the country itself'. This 'awakening' came too late to assist the Tibetan cause against the Chinese, but the Tibetan Government-in-exile have endeavoured to obtain as much publicity as possible for their cause.[34]

## **CONCLUSION: A SALEABLE IMAGE**

Competing power structures produce images, the ascendancy of which depends upon subsequent political and social events. We cannot assume that the records of the subordinate powers involved in producing competing images represent images which are 'true', and in opposition to dominant 'false' images. Rather we must examine each image for the truths which it contains, or represents. There was no one, true, image to be understood or 'discovered'. Each encounter produced different results, and different constructions by the powers involved.

Creating an image of Tibet was part of British policy there. Whitehall was advised that there was 'in the case of Tibet..[little or no]..difference between propaganda and policy'.[35] Although Whitehall prevented Tibet's being recognised as independent, the cadre were at least partly successful in promoting its separate identity. The fusion of policy and image-construction meant that there were few areas of the British-constructed image that did not reflect both the political process in which they were engaged, and the perspective of their Lhasa allies.

But while cadre officers did generally tailor their knowledge to fit within the limits of Government of India policy, their writings were censored by government and by its supporting structures. The final image produced therefore differed from the 'truth' as discovered by the cadre. Nevertheless, the status which the cadre derived from their presence 'on the spot' gave their books a great authority in political and academic circles - that is, among readers of the cadre officers' social class and background - and they have

therefore been influential at that level. As the image reflected the perspective of the cadre's Lhasa allies, the image promoted in these works was largely accepted by the Tibetans, and has thus remained unchallenged in the West until recent years.

While the Government of India could control the flow of information from Tibet, there was one factor in the promotion of this image into democratic European society which could not be controlled. That was the public's interest in particular aspects of Tibet. Human nature meant that sensational and colourful aspects were favoured over the 'bland and colourless'. During the 1920s, the travels of both General Pereira and Alexandra David-Neel were described in books. Younghusband's edition of Pereira's diaries was a positivist account of Tibet, the journey legitimised by its catalogue of dates, places, and scientific observations. David-Neel's account, in contrast, provided few such details, but gave a colourful description of Tibet's people and culture. Pereira's book was of specialist interest only, and was never reprinted. In contrast, David-Neel's book has remained in print for nearly seventy years.[36]

The mystical image of Tibet was the one with the widest popular appeal. While the general public may be aware of the main aspects of the hegemonic texts - Tibet's separate status and the position of the Dalai Lama - it is the mystical image which 'sells'.

This commercial factor has been largely ignored in the debate over 'Orientalism'. It is a great weakness of the 'Orientalist' argument that it ascribes political motives to the human attraction to, and desire for, 'exotic' images. In the popular imagination, Tibet, as Peter Bishop observes, retains its attraction because it is 'located at the periphery of the social world...entangled in...[the]...frontier imagination...outside the demands and stresses of the modern world, outside space and time.' The general public have been more attracted by this image than by the positivist one. The cadre understood this, and used it to enhance the image they had constructed.[37]

As the cadre officer's books were published by commercial publishers, and it became increasingly difficult to publish a purely positivist work, the officers needed to take account of public taste. Thus, when Bailey submitted draft chapters of his autobiography, his reader returned it with suggestions on how to make it more interesting for the general public. Bailey was advised that while his treatment was

all right for the Journal of the R.G.S....the general reader wants something more human - a hint occasionally of the authors[sic] physical and spiritual reaction to his disappointments and to his successes ....A little description too of the peoples...the scenery also - which must be colourful. That mountain ...for instance...must have been a thrilling sight, but there is no

thrill in the telling.[38]

The result of this commercial demand was to ensure that cadre officers' books contained the necessary emphasis on the 'colourful' and the 'thrilling'. While Bell and Richardson's books, aimed at an academic audience, contain the minimum of such matter, the memoirs of other cadre officers and official visitors to Tibet contain descriptions of sky burials, religious dances, aristocratic pageantry, oracles' trances, hermits' retreats, and the lengthy and (in European eyes) peculiar menus at banquets - themes which recur in virtually every book.

The need for authors to express their personal reactions to their encounter with Tibet makes this discourse the repository for perpetuating images of 'Otherness' which are challenged by the array of other material which they present which is designed to render Tibet 'familiar'. Thus MacDonald - despite an intimate knowledge of monastic life - described his reaction to the Potala as, 'One wondered what was going on behind the walls, and imagined the lamas invoking all... their magic.' Similarly Spencer-Chapman described Lhasa's holiest shrine as 'repellent and sinister ...as if one might come upon priests performing barbaric rites and offering sacrifices of human blood before their sardonic idols.' The need for 'colour' meant that these writers adopted a European outsiders perspective, even when, as in the case of MacDonald, their background gave them a much deeper understanding of their subject.[39]



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## FOOTNOTES

- [1] IOLR L/P&S/11/123-2400, Yatung Annual Report, 1916-17, cover note by Bell; L/P&S/11/79-2495, Gartok Annual Report, 1912-13.
- [2] IOLR L/P&S/7/183-1940, Bell report, 17 November 1905, file note by 'DFG', 18 January 1906.
- [3] IOLR L/P&S/7/249-1151, Gyantse Annual Report, 1910-11, cover note by Bell; Normanton (1988, p.122) quoting Richardson [no source given]; McKay (1992b, fn.14, p.122).
- [4] Marshall and Williams (1982, pp.2-3).
- [5] For Mainprice's doubts, see Mainprice papers, diary entry of 22 July 1944, and 'In Asia's Heart', unpublished manuscript by F.P.Mainprice; Neame (1939, pp.234-246).
- [6] IOLR L/P&S/12/3977-206, undated memo to Mr Walton. The 'Government Servants Conduct Rules of 1904' and the 'Army Regulations India, Volume 2, paragraph 423 of the King's Regulations' both governed publications by government officials; NAI FD, 1906 External B July 15.
- [7] NAI FD, 1906 External B July 15, anonymous file note, May 1906.
- [8] IOLR L/P&S/12/3982, various correspondence; L/P&S/12/3977, various correspondence; Bell (1992, p.162).
- [9] NAI FD, 1910 General B April 156, file notes by E.H.S.Clarke, 2 March 1910, & Viceroy Minto, 25 March 1910; White (1984, pp.110, 283; also see 166, 200, 284).
- [10] IOLR L/P&S/12/3982, various correspondence. Bell's papers include a copy of the Official Secrets Act. NAI FD, 1928 Establishment B 253-E, Secretary of State to India, 28 June 1928.
- [11] IOLR L/P&S/10/1011-3605, India to India Office, 5 September 1923.
- [12] For example, the India Office supplied the RGS with a copy of Williamson's confidential report on his journey to western Tibet; IOLR L/P&S/12/4163-1165, E.P.Donaldson (India Office) to Arthur Hinks, 21 March 1933; also see Bishop (1989, pp.13-14); Kaminsky (1986, pp.176-77).
- [13] IOLR L/P&S/12/4193-3143, Hinks to J.C.Walton, 3 May 1938, 12 May 1938.
- [14] NAI FD, External B July 16-60, various correspondence.
- [15] Cocker (1994, p.28); Mainprice papers, diary entry of 28 July 1943.
- [16] IOLR L/P&S/11/152-2647, various correspondence 1919-20.
- [17] Bell (1987, p.136); IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Bailey to Norbhu Dhondup, 20 August 1927.
- [18] Berry (1995, pp.156-57).
- [19] NAI FD, 1930 Estimate 45E 1-9, personal file of H.Martin; re Luff, see Bell (1987, pp.97-99); IOLR MSS Eur F157-240, Norbhu Dhondup to Bailey, 17 September 1929 & 30 September 1929; The most detailed account of Fox's career, perhaps significantly, is by an American, see Thomas (1950, pp.284-288).
- [20] IOLR MSS Eur F226/34, M.Worth, IPS Collection. Due to illness and age, Mr Worth was unfortunately unable to respond to my request to discuss his recollections in more detail; personal correspondence with Mrs Olga Worth, 22 August 1993; Suyin (1977).

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- [21] Mainprice papers, diary entry of 22 July 1944.
- [22] Mainprice stayed on in Pakistan after 1947, but died of polio in Swat three years later; personal correspondence with Mrs Joan Mainprice, 28 April 1993; Mainprice papers, passim.
- [23] For example see Macdonald (1991, p.191); Bell (1992, pp.79, 93); British Museum Bell Collection, Bell notebook 2, p.18; Potter (1986, p.59), notes how ICS officers 'identified themselves far more closely with the values and interests of those who employed them than with the workers and peasants and other classes below them.'
- [24] Edwardes (1967, p.165); Younghusband (1910, p.4).
- [25] NAI FD, 1912 External B Aug 71, Bell to India, 6 June 1912; FD, 1912 External B May 207, Bell to India, 26 March 1912; FD, Index 1934 File No 458-X Secret; Bell (1992, pp.198, 268).
- [26] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-3864, Gould Report on Lhasa Mission, 30 April 1937.
- [27] IOLR L/P&S/12/4193, Gould Mission Diary, various entries, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 18 July 1936, Report entitled 'On the Road to Lhasa', issued to the Press on 17 September 1936.
- [28] NAI EAD, Index 1944 File No 10 (60) F.P; EAD, Index 1946, Files No 10 (2), & (3) N.E.F.; IOLR L/P&S/12/4165-3578, Richardson to Gould, 9 July 1944; L/P&S/12/4201, Lhasa Mission Reports 1942-45, various entries, esp. (4418) cover note by J.P.Ferriss, 3 September 1944; Interview with Mr Tharchin, February 1994; Lamb (1989, p.332). Re Steele, see Baker & Steele (1993); Re the Reverend Tharchin, see Norbu (1975).
- [29] IOLR L/P&S/12/4605, India to India Office, 27 July 1942, and related correspondence.
- [30] IOLR MSS Eur F157-290, Bailey to Mr Parsons, undated [c1924/25]; L/P&S/12/1176, various correspondence, {original emphasis}; RGS Everest Collection, EE 24/2/1, Bailey to Hinks, 18 November 1924.
- [31] IOLR L/P&S/12/4201-7096, Lhasa Mission Report, week ending 20 September 1942; MSS Eur F80 5a 88, Bell to the Dalai Lama, 31 January 1928; NAI EAD, Index 1945 File No.148 C.A.
- [32] IOLR L/P&S/12/4605-5261, C.Rolfe (India Office) to Film Section, British Council, 3 May 1943, (3894) British Embassy, Chungking, to Far Eastern Section, Ministry of Information, 27 May 1942; NAI EAD Index 1945 File No.148 C.A. The films were apparently chosen to appeal to all types of audience. Many were silent comedies, particularly Chaplin's, as very few in the audience would have understood English.
- [33] Correspondence between the Panchen Lama and Mr B.Crump, *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (23, 1936, p.720).
- [34] FO 371/84449 (170649), 'Notes on a conversation with Mr J.E.Reid', 19 January 1950.
- [35] IOLR L/P&S/12/4605, India to India Office, 27 July 1942.
- [36] Younghusband (1925); David-Neel (1927).
- [37] Bishop (1989, pp.10, 148, 163).
- [38] IOLR MSS Eur F157-319, anonymous comments on typescript autobiography by F.M.Bailey, (unpublished), [original emphasis].
- [39] MacDonald (1991, p.29); Spencer-Chapman (1992, p.155).

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **'I BECAME...TIBETANISED':**

#### **UNDERSTANDING AND THE FRONTIER**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

En route to Lhasa in 1936, the Gould Mission visited a monastery where the Abbot predicted rain, as

"the holy pig was just due to rise out of Manasarovar Lake and...three days rain usually fell on it, as this rain water was necessary to consecrate the pig".

Two published accounts of the journey by members of the mission refer to this prediction, but neither comments on it.[1] For minds trained in the tradition of scientific enquiry, this forecast was noteworthy because it was beyond logical comprehension and explanation; it was inexorably 'Other'.

India's northern frontier in the 1904-47 period was a realm of interaction between two very different cultures, which raises the question of whether this encounter was a dialogue. Did either culture understand the other? To answer this question, we must examine what measures of understanding may be used, and consider the extent to which individual cadre officers can be said to have understood Tibet. We have seen how and why the cadre constructed an image of Tibet, and that this obscured certain aspects of the situation there. We can, therefore, separate the understanding gained by individual cadre officers from the image which the cadre sought to construct, and ask whether individual members of the Tibet cadre were able to understand, and engage in a dialogue with, the Tibetans.

We shall, in this chapter, also consider the effect of the cadre's frontier location on the officers' understanding. It will be seen that an absence of precise definition is characteristic of frontiers in general, and the Tibetan frontier in particular. This was not only due to

political factors, but because the Tibetan frontier was what may be called a 'liminal' zone, where precise definitions could be inappropriate.

### **SECTION 8.1: - UNDERSTANDING**

In 1926, the officer inspecting the Gartok Trade Agency reported that, as the local people were still 'medieval', British and Tibetan officials there had 'almost no basis on which to approach each other'. This lack of understanding is apparent in many aspects of Anglo-Tibetan relations, as we have seen with the cadre's presentation of British prestige to the Tibetans, which used forms and symbols which were not received by the Tibetans in the manner intended. The cadre, however, were aware of the difficulty of understanding another culture; they knew that 'Asia does not think along European lines.'<sup>[2]</sup>

We can, therefore, ask whether the British ever understood the Tibetans, a question which is located within the wider academic debate concerning whether the encounter between imperial and indigenous societies resulted in mutual understanding. Although Tibet was never a British colony, it is appropriate to raise these issues within this wider context, both because the encounter was imposed in the interests of the colonial power, and because an image of Tibet was produced by the dominant imperial power for a political purpose.

Recent scholarship has tended to conclude that the British did not understand, and could not have understood, the cultures they encountered in South Asia. Margaret Ewing, for example, concluded that 'Whatever the civilians may have believed...the Indian context in which they worked was beyond their understanding', and, specifically in the Tibetan context, Heather Spence concluded that 'It seems almost impossible that Westerners...and Tibetans should have understood each other.'<sup>[3]</sup>

These conclusions are based on the premise that because knowledge of indigenous societies was appropriated and reconstructed by the imperial nations in a form determined by their power structures, there could not be an objective understanding of one society by the other. Nor could there be a shared perception and understanding even between individuals, as each worked from the basis of different, and incompatible, sets of knowledge.

The Government of India's implicit assumption was that its officers gained understanding from empirical observation, and thus that the cadre's location enabled them to discover the 'truth' about their host culture, a truth which could not otherwise be obtained. Hence, although the Tibetans had protested before the Younghusband Mission that they sought

isolation in order to protect their religion, this was only accepted as 'true' by the British after Bell had been to Lhasa, and 'discovered' it. As Younghusband stated, 'This is the *discovery* made by Sir Charles Bell during his year of almost daily intercourse with the Dalai Lama at Lhasa. It is a *discovery* of greatest importance.'[4]

The cadre promoted the value of their presence 'on the spot', claiming that Tibet's 'atmosphere must be almost impenetrable to one who has not been there'. Younghusband expressed this when he claimed that personal experience had given him understanding of the Tibetans. After visiting the Jokhang (Lhasa's main temple), he wrote 'Here it was that I found the true inner spirit of the people.'[5]

Understanding was thus seen as gained principally through empirical observation, which was considered to increase with time 'on the spot'. This meant that those officers with the longest terms of service, Bell, MacDonald, Richardson, and Norbhu, were thought to have gained the deepest insight into Tibet; Bell described MacDonald's 'long residence in Tibet' as a factor in his good performance.[6]

The Tibetans shared the belief that insight increased with time. The Dalai Lama told Bailey that 'it took the Tibetans a long time to get to know a new man and it took a British officer a long time to get to know Tibetans and their language'. Thus the Tibetans preferred that cadre officers serve long terms in Tibet, a principle they expressed with their proverb that 'Old devils are better than new Gods'.[7]

Our definition of understanding today, however, implies a perception of meaning in an object beyond that obtained by empirical observation. Understanding also involves sympathy for, and agreement or harmony with, that object. In the case of a complex object such as an individual or a culture, there is no single point in time, or degree of knowledge, at which understanding of the object is reached: rather there are degrees of understanding, and a failure to comprehend some aspects of a culture does not preclude an overall understanding of it. Aspects of Tibetan culture always remained 'Other', even to Bell, MacDonald and Richardson. But culture and society are in a constant state of flux, and different cultures may exist within one society. Even within societies, individuals may fail to understand aspects of their 'own' culture.

Understanding develops, and, as 'Outsiders' increase their understanding of a culture, they progress through stages of 'Outsideness', to 'Insiderness', culminating at a level in which the individual is accepted as 'belonging' to the 'Other' culture. These levels of understanding may be categorised, as for example Peter Bishop has done in the case of European travellers to Tibet.[8]

The criteria required to reach the highest level of understanding, that of 'belonging' to the 'Other' culture, necessarily vary with the subject culture. But certain requisite attributes

common to cultural understanding appear obvious. Fluency in the host language, the basis of understanding, is essential. So too is a significant time-span spent among the 'Other' society. The individual must also be sympathetic to, and identify with, that (subject) culture. Norbhu, Bell, MacDonald and Richardson all fulfilled these criteria.

The trust which the Tibetans placed in individuals such as Bell (for example, allowing him to represent them at the Simla Convention on one occasion), indicates that they did recognise certain cadre officers as 'understanding', and even 'belonging' to, their society. Both societies thus acknowledged these officers' insight, a very significant, if not conclusive, measure of understanding.

There is one further indication of understanding which is important in this imperial context: the individual's ability to produce an account of the 'Other' culture which makes sense to both communities. As we have seen in the case of Laden La, it was then considered of great importance that in coming to 'belong' to the 'Other' culture, individuals did not cease to be accepted as 'belonging' to their own. In British India, an individual who was considered to have 'gone native', to a large extent placed himself outside his own society. His insights ceased to be trusted, or accepted as 'true', by knowledge-making bodies such as the Royal Geographical Society, which only processed knowledge expressed in forms and using conventions it deemed appropriate. An individual's ability to produce an account of the 'Other' culture which was accepted by both communities, indicates that, while 'belonging' to the 'Other' culture', he had not ceased to be accepted as 'belonging' to his own.

It appears that becoming an 'Insider' meant a 'crossing over' from one culture to another, but the production of a mutually acceptable account of the host society indicated the ability both to 'cross over', and to return to, the original culture. Bell, as will be seen, 'crossed over', but he did not cease to 'belong' to his own culture. He returned to express his understanding of Tibetan culture in European forms, in works accepted as adequately representing their culture by the Tibetan Government-in-exile, who continue to recommend Bell's work.[9]

British officers naturally began their Tibetan career as 'Outsiders'. They had an 'awareness of meaning withheld and of the inability to participate in those meanings'.[10] Depending on their degree of interest in Tibet, and their perspective of it as a career posting, they could then develop the necessary interest in Tibet, command of its language, and friendly ties with its people, that were required for continued service there, and acceptance as what I have termed a 'Tibet cadre' officer. Officers such as Worth and Mainprice failed to progress from this 'Outsider' status.

Long service, and close ties with the Tibetans, gave officers such as Weir and

Williamson a deeper level of understanding of Tibetan society, and some sense of 'belonging' there. Thus Williamson 'never felt so happy as when he was among them [Tibetans]'.<sup>[11]</sup> But these officers did not become 'Insiders' in Tibetan culture. This was partly due to their lack of fluency in language, without which it was believed that 'no one can get INSIDE the Tibetans'<sup>[12]</sup> and, at least in the case of Weir, whose ultimate ambition was a first-class Indian Residency, an unwillingness to dedicate his career entirely to Tibet.

But something more was required to become an 'Insider': individual perception. Becoming accepted as 'belonging' to Tibetan culture required an intuitive, as well as empirical, understanding of Tibetan society. Ideal frontier officers, such as Sandeman, were considered to possess 'an intuitive perception...from an Oriental as well as an English point of view'.<sup>[13]</sup> This was seen as giving insight unavailable to others, however learned. Thus his fellow-officers noted how Norbhu Dondup 'has such an intuitive knowledge of Tibetan affairs and people that his conclusions, however fantastic they may appear, are practically always right'. Despite fulfilling most of the criteria required of 'Insiders', officers such as Bailey did not reach the ultimate state of 'complete belonging' or 'complete identity with a place' because they lacked that intuitive understanding which made the 'Other' appear 'familiar'.<sup>[14]</sup>

Whereas military officers were closely associated with frontiers such as the North-West Frontier Province, on the Tibetan frontier those officers with a strong military background appear to have had greatest difficulty in gaining this intuitive understanding. It would appear that the practical focus of their training precluded sympathetic insight into a contemplative society. George Sherriff, for example, failed to understand Tibetan concepts of good behaviour. Sherriff held gun classes in Lhasa, which commenced at 10 a.m. - '10 a.m. sharp in the military mind'. When the Tibetan trainees arrived at least an hour late, Sherriff was not impressed; but in Tibetan custom it was considered good behaviour to arrive late, so as not to appear 'too keen'. To Sherriff, this perspective remained 'Other'.<sup>[15]</sup>

Of the British (or Anglo-Indian) cadre officers, three civilians, Bell, MacDonald and Richardson, proved best able intuitively to understand Tibet. Bell devoted his life to Tibet. He immersed himself so deeply into Tibetan culture, and placed such emphasis on adherence to Tibetan ceremonial and ritual traditions, that he considered that 'I became in a large measure Tibetanised'.<sup>[16]</sup>

Bell was considered by his own society as having understood the Tibetans, and considered himself to have a place in Tibetan society. He was equipped with the language skill, experience, and personal empathy and interest to attain an intuitive understanding of Tibetan culture. But did he gain acceptance by Tibetan society as 'belonging' to their

culture?

There are few sources from which to answer this. The only Tibetan source in English which refers to Bell's understanding is, as far as I am aware, a work by a former Tibetan Government Minister, W.D.Shakabpa, the nearest we have to an official Tibetan history in the English language. It refers to Bell as 'a very close friend of the Dalai Lama'.[17]

Our other source is Bell himself, but familiarity with Bell's despatches suggests that in personal matters he may be relied upon. Bell was not overly given to self-praise for purely personal, as opposed to policy, reasons and the Tibetan tributes which Bell records are not the flattering platitudes routinely given by local rulers to retiring imperial officers, some of whom took them seriously enough to repeat them in their memoirs. The Tibetans whom Bell quotes refer not to his abilities and achievements, but to his affinity with the Tibetans. The Dalai Lama himself is quoted as telling Bell 'I have complete confidence in you, for we two are men of like mind', while a leading monastic official is quoted as having written to the Dalai Lama that

'When a European is with us Tibetans I feel that he is a European and we are Tibetans; but when Lonchen Bell is with us, I feel that we are all Tibetans together.'[18]

The Tibetans indicated their acceptance of Bell as an 'Insider' by what Bishop calls 'an honorary kinship designation in a religious framework'.[19] The Tibetans (again Bell is the source for this), explained Bell's involvement in Tibet as deriving from his having been a Tibetan in a previous incarnation, who had prayed to be reborn in a powerful country in order to help Tibet. If we accept this account, which is consistent with Tibetan beliefs, and other Europeans have claimed this status was also endowed on them,[20] it would appear to place Bell firmly as an 'Insider' who was accepted by the Tibetans as having intuitively understood them. Therefore we can, in this case, state that Bell understood the Tibetans, that they accepted him as understanding them, and that his writings indicated his ability to produce an account of Tibet satisfying both parties.[21]

Bell was not unique in 'crossing over' and becoming accepted as an 'insider' by the Tibetans themselves. MacDonald and Richardson also gained this highest possible level of understanding, while several other officers, such as O'Connor, approached this level, but were prevented by circumstance from gaining a complete understanding. Norbhu Dhondup, as we have seen in Chapter Three, was widely seen as having made the journey in the opposite direction. MacDonald, with his local background, perhaps found it easiest, and of Richardson it was noted in the Secretariat as early as 1939 that 'he has identified



himself more closely with Tibetans and Tibetan affairs, and...gained more insight and respect, than any Englishmen since the time of Charles Bell'. Richardson, like Bell, has devoted his life to the study of Tibet. The present Dalai Lama maintains regular contact with him, considering his life 'very precious to us'.[22]

The principal objection to claiming that these three officers were considered by Tibetans as 'belonging' to their culture must be that none of them became Buddhists. While a deep study of an indigenous religion such as Buddhism was considered a perfectly proper imperial pursuit, to have adopted that religion would have removed an officer from the acceptable parameters of behaviour for a British official. Yet, as we have seen, the Tibetans' own identification of themselves was based on a shared sense of religious identity; Tibetans considered themselves devout followers of a particular type of Buddhism. Could therefore, a non-Buddhist British official be considered by Tibetans as an 'Insider'?

The answer to this may lie in the Tibetan's conception of the world. Few Tibetans had any understanding of Christianity, and a leading Tibetan academic notes that as a child 'I had never heard of the world outside Tibet and I was convinced that no other race apart from the Tibetans existed'.[23] The boundaries of Tibetan Buddhism were not firmly fixed. Outside the core ruling sect, the *Gelugpa*, were the other major Tibetan Buddhist sects, and the *Bon* sect, whose historical foundations predated Buddhism, but which had become a systemised religion under Buddhist influence. There were also Tibetan Muslims, whose status was peripheral, culturally Tibetan, but in religion 'outsiders'. In Tibet there was, therefore, both an ignorance of (or lack of interest in) other religions, even races, and an absence of defined religious boundaries.[24]

The British were aware that the Tibetans had seen them as a threat to their religion. Knowing the great importance of religion to the Tibetans, the cadre went to great lengths to avoid the appearance of offering any threat to Buddhism. When officers such as O'Connor hired Tibetan religious practitioners to carry out ceremonies, and displayed interest and respect for Tibetan religious traditions, this must have been contrasted favourably with the actions of the Chinese, who in the 1907-11 period had caused great damage to Tibetan religious institutions. Officers such as Bell gathered an extensive knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, and displayed a respect for its outer forms; they did not emphasise their Christian beliefs in Tibet.[25]

By allying with the Buddhist leadership of the Dalai Lama the British effectively marginalised any religious opposition to their presence. Through such devices as allocating these cadre officers a Tibetan heritage from a previous incarnation, they could be given 'honorary Buddhist' status within the broad parameters of the Tibetan religious system. It

would appear therefore, that the British came to be seen by the Tibetans as protectors of Tibetan Buddhism (a role previously filled by the Chinese). Officers such as Bell were seen as having incarnated as Christians (or in MacDonald's case, adopted Christianity), in order to protect Buddhism; their Christianity was considered a necessary device used by Buddhists (in a previous existence) to protect Buddhism. Thus while not becoming Buddhists, these officers were given a place within the Tibetan Buddhist system, and this was essential to their being accepted as 'Insiders'.

Therefore, while previous scholarship has doubted the ability of one culture to understand another, it was possible for individuals to gain an understanding of the 'Other' society which was accepted by both parties, and this relationship was a dialogue. However, it is important to note that most Tibet cadre officers, did not 'cross over' and come to 'belong' to Tibetan society; they did not expect to. While they established good personal relations with Tibetans, and developed a love of the country, to them it remained 'Other'. This was an important part of its attraction; they wanted to serve on the frontier, with all that symbolised. They did not seek the familiar.

This is not to suggest that these officers were either ineffective, or unpopular with Tibetans or their fellow cadre officers. Within the Tibet cadre there was always both a tendency to command, and another tendency to understand, the Tibetans; a dichotomy which can be equated to tendencies in British India described by Dewey in terms of a "Cult of Friendship" and a "Gospel of Uplift".[26] Neither tendency predominated overall, or even in a single officer. But the Government of India did not need its frontiersmen to become 'Insiders' in Tibet; its interests were well-enough served by a lower level of understanding.

The expertise in Tibetan affairs which came from becoming an 'Insider' in Tibetan society did enhance the status of a cadre officer with his government, and implied that he was better equipped to serve their interests. As an interest in Tibet was essential to continued employment in Tibet, deepening understanding was a logical consequence of the Tibet cadre's presence in the region. But only a few individuals with a particular personal interest and commitment to service in Tibet sought the highest level of understanding, and it was not an essential requirement for the functioning of imperial government.

To conclude that colonial encounter in itself cannot allow understanding, ignores the insight gained by the 'men on the spot'. The understanding which officers such as Bell gained was not dependent on the imperial context of their encounter. Imperial and career factors provided the opportunity for, and affected the transmission of, understanding, but Bell, MacDonald and Richardson showed that individuals 'crossed over' from personal desire to do so, rather than as an exercise in power. A distinction should, therefore, be

drawn between the understanding gained by these individuals, and that reflected in the image they constructed. This question of individual understanding in imperial encounter has been largely overlooked in previous debate, which has centred on power relationships, rather than personal relationships.

## **SECTION 8.2: - UNDERSTANDING: PERSPECTIVES**

It is now recognised that imperial encounter had an important effect on both the European and the indigenous powers engaged in the process. That influence affected individuals, as well as societies, and was particularly clear in the realm of understanding. For example, Charles Bell's understanding of Tibet was greatly influenced by his personal contacts with the 13th Dalai Lama, which gave him a Lhasa-centric perspective.

Bell's earliest understanding of Tibet came from Palhese, a central Tibetan aristocrat, albeit a disaffected one, and he continued to emphasise contacts with Lhasa and central Tibetan ruling figures. As a result, the policies which Bell initiated generally reflected an understanding of Tibet strongly influenced by the perspective of the Dalai Lama and his government - for example, as seen in Chapter Five, Bell's adoption of the Dalai Lama's policy in regard to a British representative in Lhasa.

Bell could not impose policies which the Tibetans strongly opposed without alienating his allies, or creating civil disturbances which would potentially threaten the security of the Indian border, the protection of which, it must be remembered, was the cadre's primary purpose. Bell therefore adopted a policy of support for the traditional Lhasa leadership (at the expense of power structures elsewhere in Tibet), and took the aspirations and cultural traditions of the Tibetan ruling structure into account in framing his policies.

The British understanding of Tibet may also have been affected by a Sikkimese perspective. This aspect of their understanding is difficult to gauge, for it is not brought out in the sources, but many of the intermediaries who assisted the British in learning about Tibet, such as Sonam Tobden, Yatung Trade Agent in the 1940s, were Sikkimese.

The Sikkimese did not consider themselves Tibetans. While Sikkimese religion and culture were closely related to those of Tibet, there were significant differences; for example the leading Buddhist sect there were the *Kargyu*, rather than the *Gelugpa* sect which ruled at Lhasa, a separate code of law was used, and supreme authority was vested in a monarch, in contrast to the Tibetan form of theocracy. This separate identity was recognised by both the British and the Tibetan Governments, who dealt with Sikkim as a separate state. This meant that the Sikkimese employed by the British also had to interpret

Tibet; among the private papers of Sikkimese intermediaries are notes on Tibetan language and culture which indicate that they, like the British, set out to acquire knowledge of Tibet.[27]

Sikkimese interests did not necessarily coalesce with those of Britain or Tibet. Their archives record that in the 18th and 19th centuries they had lost territory to

Powerful hordes of elephants from the south,[i.e. India]

Active hordes of monkeys from the west,[i.e. Nepal]

Cunning hordes of foxes from the north.[i.e. Tibet][28]

Service with the British offered the Sikkimese a 'voice', and while there are no obvious cases where intermediaries were able to influence the British in Sikkim's favour, it is necessary to consider that the intermediaries' identity and interests may have affected British understanding of Tibet in ways which reflected Sikkimese perspectives and aspirations. It may, for example, have given them a greater understanding of the *Kargyu* sect than other (geographically) peripheral sects.

### **SECTION 8.3: - THE LIMINAL FRONTIER**

In the sphere of encounter there is no abrupt change from 'familiar' to 'Other'; rather there is a zone of transition between the two - the frontier. The transitional nature of this zone tends to defy precise definition.[29] This lack of definition is so apparent in many areas of the British encounter with Tibet as to be a defining characteristic. As Bishop comments, 'Tibet seemed always to have the ability slightly to elude the total embrace of Western Orientalism'.[30]

Even the term used by Whitehall to describe China's status in Tibet, 'suzerainty', was vague and imprecise, with no definition of what level of Chinese control it implied was acceptable. 'Suzerainty' has acquired a specific usage in the Tibetan context, and yet it has no agreed meaning in practice. It certainly implied that Tibet had internal autonomy, but the cadre were prepared to accept suzerainty only in its narrowest possible definition, as a purely ceremonial form, which excluded any Chinese control of Tibet.[31]

This linguistic imprecision extended into other areas, which, while not obviously significant in themselves, were symbolic of the wider lack of definition. Even the terms 'Trade Agent' and 'Head of British Mission Lhasa' were specific terms lacking a defined identity and administrative place outside the Tibetan context. Defining a language too can be

seen part of the European process of defining a state. Choices are made as to the 'correct' language, and variations marginalised as dialects. But despite the expertise the cadre acquired in the Tibetan language, they failed to establish one accepted method of transcribing Tibetan into English. The transcription forms they used varied, and several different systems are still used today. The cadre's reports contain different spellings for people, places and positions in Tibetan society, which often confused the Secretariat officials. This lack of definition was a characteristic of the location.

The cadre's location on the Indian frontier placed them in constant confrontation with the paradoxes of social structures and systems alternative to their own, and this was a factor in generating a 'heroic mythology', which located the frontiersmen in imperial legends.[32] The Tibet cadre became an integral part of British frontier mythology, a status of which they were not unaware. In seeking to describe the many-faceted implications of this transitional location, in both historical time and imperial legend, it is appropriate to adopt Victor Turner's term 'liminal' from the field of religious studies.[33]

This term is appropriate to apply to the Tibetan frontier as it implies both the geographical and mythological aspects of this zone; the latter aspect being difficult otherwise to quantify in historical terms. Turner developed Arnold van Gennep's work on rites of passage, emphasising the central phase of 'liminality' (from the Latin *limen*, a threshold) as an ambiguous state 'betwixt and between' customary social categories. Turner's studies of pilgrimage stressed those aspects of freedom and ambiguity at the interface of cultural change, and he used the term 'liminal' to emphasise a zone outside normal social structures and location, but entered by choice.[34]

Victor Turner's emphasis on freedom and ambiguity in the liminal zone is shared by the seminal frontier thesis of the 19th century historian of America's West, Frederick Jackson Turner.[35] He argued that the freedom and potential of the frontier had a decisive effect on the character of frontiersmen, bringing out an independence and resourcefulness reflecting the frontier experience. This experience subsequently passed into national folklore, transforming experience into legend, with its attendant symbols and language, and became a formative influence on national identity. F.J. Turner's findings may be applied to the experience of the Tibetan frontier, in identifying this zone as a place where a conditions of freedom and ambiguity affected character and action, and were transformed into legend.[36]

The geographical studies of J.R.V.Prescott provide more evidence that we may locate the history of the Tibet cadre within the wider area of frontier studies. Prescott, following C.B.Fawcett, identifies the predominant characteristic of a frontier as its distinct transitional nature. In addition, the absence of fully-developed legal and administrative systems is

characteristic, with a consequent effect on the frontiersmens' behaviour. This results in those conditions F.J.Turner identified on the American frontier, which encouraged 'those who were self-reliant, and capable of improvisation'.

Prescott draws two conclusions relevant to the Tibetan frontier. He found that, for the state, the frontier principally involves considerations of security. Whereas in traditional societies, defined by their centre, frontiers merged imperceptibly, modern states, being defined by their borders, sought to establish boundaries, rather than frontiers between states. On the individual level, Prescott concluded that 'no one can doubt that "frontiersman" denotes a particular kind of philosophy and character'; one whose behaviour has been 'influenced by both government regulations and their perception of the possibilities offered by the frontier'.<sup>[37]</sup>

The studies of Prescott, and Victor and F.J.Turner, indicate that we may regard a frontier as a liminal zone of transition, where the absence of defined place and identity produced new responses by individuals, whose character was affected by the freedom and ambiguity of their location. Being outside the limits of a society's place, identity and codes of meaning, this liminal zone becomes the setting for experience to be expressed as myth and legend.

The liminal status of the frontier implied a place which transformed the character of individuals encountering the zone. This was an essential part of the wider belief in frontiers as zones of transformation. The effect of the frontier on the individual was generally portrayed in wholly positive terms; this was certainly the case in British India.<sup>[38]</sup> Lord Curzon considered that character was 'moulded' on the frontier by 'responsibility and...self-reliance'. Those with 'courage...patience and...initiative' found the frontier 'ennobling and invigorating'.<sup>[39]</sup>

Similarly Melody Webb, in a recent study of the Alaskan frontier based on F.J.Turner's methodology, quotes an Alaskan pioneer as claiming 'nothing will test out men as to their real character, resourcefulness, courage, endurance... and readiness to do their...duties as...that hard frontier country'. Curzon claimed to admire the frontier officer who took 'the bit between his teeth', and implicitly he supported the right of frontier officials to act on their own initiative without reliance on regulations. This parallels the view of a contemporary pioneer officer in Alaska, Lieutenant (later Brigadier-General) 'Billy' Mitchell, who claimed that 'An officer who always follows the letter of the Books of Regulations instead of the spirit seldom gets anywhere', a very similar message to that presented in Sandeman's biography (as seen in Chapter One), and promoted by the cadre.<sup>[40]</sup>

Thus, while the British sought to bring India's north-east frontier under increasing

administrative control, the individuals chosen to serve on the frontier were those who valued initiative above regulations; a situation with parallels elsewhere in British India, the Punjab and the North-West Frontier for example. The frontiersmen themselves regarded their own paternal methods of government as more suited to local conditions than government based on codes of law and regulation, although, in practice, the two methods constantly overlapped.

The paradox that frontiersmen with little regard for rules and regulations were seen as best suited to bringing settled administration to the frontier may have reflected a wider sense of understanding amongst the British in India that they served in a zone which both required, and produced, special traits of character among the successful. The Tibet cadre therefore, reflect a particular manifestation of a wider issue, which demonstrates the differing trends in British India in dealing with policies of control.

## CONCLUSION

Officers such as Bell, MacDonald and Richardson did gain a deep understanding of Tibet, beyond that regarded as necessary for the performance of their duties. The understanding they gained reflected the perspective of the Lhasa ruling class, and it was with this section of Tibetan society that cadre officers came to identify with, and 'belong' to.

Cadre officers did seek to 'discover' the truth about Tibet. Their own sense of identity and personal prestige was closely associated with the level of knowledge they gained. They believed that through personal contact with the Tibetans they gained an understanding which enabled them to 'discover', and subsequently represent, the 'truth' about Tibet. There was more to obtaining understanding, including an intuitive perception, but several officers did 'cross over' and gain a deeper understanding of Tibet than any other Europeans, and their understanding was recognised by the Tibetans.

The cadre's location on the frontier was an important factor in their identity. The frontier was a liminal zone of transition, in which aspects of myth and legend are of a part of the regions' identity, and the positive value of this aspect of Tibetan identity, and the traditions of British frontier service, both contributed to a lack of precise definition of Tibet.

It appears that parallels with the essential features of the Tibetan frontier experience, and the British understanding of this encounter, may be found wherever European expansion led to an encounter in zones of transition outside of major civilisations. It would also appear that while individuals were chosen for service on the frontier because they

possessed particular character traits, service on the frontier was believed to bring out those desired characteristics. The lack of definition characteristic of the frontier gave it a freedom from fixed identity and place which made it a potential location for the transformation of experience into legend, a process which parallels the frontier experience elsewhere.



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## FOOTNOTES

- [1] IOLR L/P&S/12/4193-6590, Gould Mission diary, 3 August 1936; also see Spencer-Chapman (1992, p.26); Neame (1939, p.237).
- [2] IOLR L/P&S/12/4163-490, H.Ruttledge's Report, enclosed in letter from the Chief Secretary, Punjab Hill States, to Government of the United Provinces, 10 November 1926; Bell (1949, p.35).
- [3] Ewing (1980, p.3); Spence (1991, p.49).
- [4] IOLR L/P&S/4173, copy of an article by Younghusband entitled 'Lhasa: a retrospect', {published in 'Nineteenth Century and after' (116), 1934, pp.295-96}, [my emphasis].
- [5] IOLR L/P&S/10/1113-1402, Secretary, Foreign and Political Department to Under-Secretary of State, 6 March 1924, quoting Bell's view; Younghusband (1985, p.317).
- [6] IOLR L/P&S/11/123-2400, Yatung Annual Report, 1916-17, cover note by Bell.
- [7] IOLR MSS Eur F157-290, Report on a Mission to Lhasa, by Bailey, 28 October 1924, quoting the Dalai Lama; MSS Eur F157-236, Laden La to Bailey, 18 September 1930.
- [8] Bishop (1989, pp.188-89). Bishop uses the methodology of Relph E., *Place and Placelessness*, London 1976, pp.48-49.
- [9] See the (undated) 'Information Sheet', entitled 'Tibet. A Reading List', available from the Tibet Society of the U.K.
- [10] Bishop (1989, p.188).
- [11] Williamson (1987, p.226).
- [12] IOLR L/P&S/12/3977-1386, E.M.James to G.MacLeod-Ross, 13 June 1945, {original emphasis}.
- [13] Thornton (1895, p.313).
- [14] Spencer-Chapman (1992, p.232); also see, Bishop (1989, p.188).
- [15] Interview with Dr T.Y.Pemba, March 1994; also see IOLR L/P&S/12/4201-1863, Lhasa Mission Reports 1942-45, week ending 19 March 1944.
- [16] Bell (1987, p.29).
- [17] Shakabpa (1984, p.271).
- [18] Bell (1987, p.29.); Bell (1992, p.206).
- [19] Bishop (1989, p.229), concludes that this Tibetan identification of Bell as a Tibetan in a previous existence was simply a typical 'honorary kinship designation' in a religious framework, but it serves to illustrate that Bell was considered 'kin' by the Tibetans.
- [20] For example, Theos Bernard, the American traveller; see Bernard (1939, p.1).
- [21] Bell, (1992, p.205).
- [22] IOLR L/P&S/12/4165, Lhasa Mission Report, October 1938-39, undated, anonymous cover note; Interview with H.H. the Dalai Lama, March 1994.
- [23] Dawa Norbu (1987, p.27).

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[24] Tibetan Muslims were mainly of Kashmiri origin, with others from China, Nepal and Ladakh. Many of the latter held British Indian citizenship. See Siddiqui (1991).

[25] See for example, Bell (1931); Interview with Mrs R.Collett, March 1993.

[26] Dewey (1993).

[27] The issue of Sikkimese identity is a complicated one, and very much a contemporary issue in the Himalayas today; see Datta-Ray (1984); also see Lamb (1960); Sinha (1975); White (1984); Williamson (1987); Woodman (1969). The Sikkimese code of law is given in White (1984, pp.311-21).

[28] 'Sikkim State Chronicle' quoted in Bell (1992, p.8).

[29] 'The fluid nature of the frontier, its continued transitions...mitigate against a definitive statement that captures all the nuances and meanings of the frontier'; Butler (1986, pp.142-43).

[30] Bishop (1989, p.145).

[31] IOLR MSS Eur F80 5a 124, Bell to the *Kashag*, 26 November 1934; MSS Eur F80 5e(c) 21, Bell to India, 21 February 1921.

[32] Wurgaft (1983, p.XV11).

[33] In the final stages of my research, I discovered a precedent for this usage; A.J.Toynbee uses *limen* to describe a geographically located 'conductive cultural threshold' between a civilisation and the 'barbarians' beyond; Toynbee, A.J. *A Study of History*, abridgement by D.C.Somervill, Oxford 1960 (p.678); this is referred to in Murty (1978, p.78).

[34] Turner's seminal theories have not gone uncriticised, and Turner himself came to favour the term 'liminoid' over 'liminal' in his description of pilgrimage. He remains however, an essential reference point in pilgrimage studies, and his later terminology is not more specific for our wider purpose. See Turner V., (1969, pp.94-95), & (1973, esp. pp.199-200, 213-14); Turner V. & E., (1978, esp. pp.2, 35, 231, 249); also see, Daly (1992, pp.XV111, 70-73).

[35] For example, see Daly (1992, pp.71, 73).

[36] Turner F.J., (1963); also see Billington (1966); a recent summary of approaches to Turner's work is found in Nichols (1986).

[37] I have followed Prescott's definition of 'frontiers' and 'boundaries' as 'respectively the zones and lines which separate areas of different political authority'. Prescott (1965, pp.15, 30, 102); (1972, pp.54-56, 59-60).

[38] Paradoxically there is a parallel image of the frontier as a region of decay and degeneracy in which the worst aspects of both cultures are expressed. For an example of this in the Central Asian context see Rayfield, (1976, pp.39-40). The Tibet cadre did not perceive the frontier in those terms, which appear more common at the centre than at the periphery of empire.

[39] Curzon (1907, pp.56-57).

[40] Curzon, quoted from a speech in 1898, by Wurgaft (1983, p.164). Webb also provides a parallel with the passing on of Tibet cadre traditions. She found that Alaskan frontiersmen saw themselves as inheritors of the traditions (as well as the 'trails, cabins and traplines'), of earlier American frontiersmen; Webb (1985, pp.96, 160, 306).

## CONCLUSION

### **'WE ARE NO LONGER MASTERS OF THE RESIDENCY':**

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#### CHARACTER AND POLICY.

The Tibet cadre were the product of an imperial age. Their mentality reflected the era - which effectively ended in India with Curzon's departure - when the boundaries of empire could be extended by the application of 'forward' policies by imperial frontiersmen. The original cadre officers were all associated with the Younghusband Mission, a classic example of 'forward' policy in action, and supported the policy it represented. Despite changing personnel and circumstances, the cadre's primary aims and policies remained 'forward' throughout the 1904-47 period.

As noted, cadre officers had many characteristics known to be common to imperial officers, such as education at British public schools. Previous studies have questioned which factor was most influential in forming their character, and the evidence in this case suggests that public school influence was greater than initial service training. But it also appears that their outlook was greatly affected by the books which they read, particularly during their Political training. When we read Thornton's biography of Sandeman, we read a blueprint for the Tibet cadre's behaviour and ethos.

Despite their sharing of certain characteristics, cadre officers were recognised as distinct from other imperial officers. The primary element in this distinct collective identity was their empathy with Tibet and the Tibetans. A deep personal involvement was required to gain this empathy, and thus the most successful officers were those who chose to serve there, even at the expense of family, health and career. A willingness to make such sacrifices may be associated with another defining element of cadre officers; they had a 'touch of the recluse', which predisposed them to service on the frontier. The cadre's high degree of specialisation was in contrast to the 'generalist' traditions of the British Indian services in the 19th century, although indicative of their increasing specialisation in the 20th century.

The cadre were also characterised by scholarship. They embraced the qualities of both 'men of action' and intellectuals. The need for men who would build-up a body of

knowledge of the region, combined with the requirement that they be fit enough to survive Tibet's harsh climatic conditions, meant that successful cadre officers blended intellect and action.

The cadre's distinct institutional identity was deliberately maintained by a twofold process. Firstly, serving cadre officers exercised a significant level of influence on cadre appointments by an unofficial system of patronage, selecting officers whose mentality and approach to policy matched that of their own. Thus Bell supported MacDonald, and in turn they both assisted Gould, who recommended Richardson.

Secondly, cadre traditions were passed down from serving officers to newcomers. These traditions were based on existing service traditions, such as those of the ICS and the Indian Army, and on the regional traditions of imperial frontiers. This process supports Shils's conclusion that 'Particular elements in one...tradition...may...be diffused into families or branches of traditions of another sphere', and is consistent with Potter's findings concerning the establishment and maintenance of Indian administrative traditions.[1]

The type of officer considered best-suited for frontier service was synonymous with the image of the ideal officer portrayed in imperial literature and Political Department training texts. Recruits were selected and trained to match that ideal, and were instilled with an intuitive understanding of the boundaries of behaviour necessary to that ideal. The definition of these boundaries may be seen as a process, whereby the ideal was continually negotiated within certain established parameters. Thus the cadre raised such issues as whether an Indian officer could uphold British prestige. This discussion was located within a wider debate between those who felt that the predominant tendency of the British should be to 'command', and those who felt that it should be to 'advise'. In Tibet, those, such as Bell and MacDonald, who favoured 'advice' (albeit advice which often implied a command), were most successful in gaining the Tibetans' trust.

However, the difference between 'command' and 'advice' was not necessarily apparent to the Tibetans, and the cadre's actions were fundamentally concerned with the application of power. Ultimately, despite the cadre's empathy with Tibetan aspirations, they represented British Indian interests, and when these clashed with those of Tibet, as they did in the case of Tawang for example, the cadre clearly acted in accordance with their duty to their employer, although they did not necessarily feel bound by this loyalty after they retired.

We have seen in Chapter Two that prestige was an important aspect of the cadre's power; through creating an aura of unchallengeable authority, the British tried to avoid the need actually to enforce their influence by costly military means. The cadre were greatly concerned with the maintenance of British prestige, this was a part of their duties, a

deliberate strategy of imperial rule designed to uphold the impression of power.[2] On the other hand, the evidence suggests that the Tibetans did not understand many aspects of prestige in the form in which the British projected it.

The cadre's prestige was strengthened by their role as the sole channel of communication between Lhasa and the British and Indian Governments. By maintaining a monopoly over the flow of information from Tibet, the cadre prevented the emergence of other 'voices' which might contradict their own. Thus they opposed the presence in Tibet of persons outside Government of India control, such as the China Customs officers (whose expulsion was also part of the wider struggle for influence at Whitehall between the Government of India, and the British Foreign Office, which the cadre regarded as supporting Chinese interests). This process was also concerned with preventing the Tibetans from coming into contact with Europeans who did not represent the image of European civilisation which the cadre sought to project.

The intermediaries, who acted as go-betweens in British dealings with the Tibetan Government, were trained to represent the British to the Tibetans; the most successful of them were promoted to cadre posts. They were selected from the Buddhist hill-peoples in the frontier regions, and formed close ties with British officers. As there was no policy of introducing Hindus or Muslims from the mainstream of Indian society into cadre service, when the British departed, there were no officers in the new Indian External Affairs Department who had any personal knowledge of Tibet, or with the empathy towards the Tibetans which the British officers had developed. Whether, given the loss of policy-making power on the periphery, more experienced officers could have had any significant influence on events in Tibet in the 1950s is open to question. But certainly there was a lack of expertise available within the Indian Government during this crucial period as a consequence of cadre recruitment policies.

The intermediaries fell into two types, rather as British officials represented two tendencies, to command and to advise. One type was represented by Laden La, who adopted British forms of behaviour and ultimately lost the trust of the Tibetans. The other type, represented by Norbhu Dhondup, maintained their own cultural identity, while successfully learning British codes of behaviour, written and unwritten. The intermediaries who ultimately gained promotion to cadre posts were those who followed the Norbhu tendency, just as the British officers who were most successful in gaining the trust of the Tibetans were those who followed Bell's tendency to advise rather than to command.

In the early years of the British presence in Tibet, the intermediaries were those such as Palhese, whose primary loyalty was to a particular British officer. This pattern of service was gradually replaced by that of groups with close family connections, such as the

Tserings, who established a tradition (however tenuous) of family service under the British. These groups could be in competition for British patronage - there was competition between Laden La and Norbhu Dhondup - and this competition continues to affect the perspectives of oral sources in the Himalayas today.

We have seen that the cadre's primary influence on policy was 'forward'. Probably their most successful campaign was to establish a British Mission in Lhasa, clearly a 'forward' move, both geographically and symbolically. But in the 20th century, the promotion of 'forward' policies by the imperial frontiersmen did not lead to any major expansion of the British frontier. Although Tawang was annexed to British India, this was done without the specific approval, or at least full understanding, of Whitehall.

In the post-Younghusband era, Whitehall, by such actions as insisting on the return of the Chumbi Valley, demonstrated that it would not allow 'forward' policies which led to the expansion of the empire. There had been a change in the climate of opinion on imperial expansion, at least in Britain, and the establishment of rapid communications between Whitehall and the periphery of empire restricted the possibility of independent action on the frontier. The cadre were unable to gain government support for either military intervention in Tibet, or significant economic involvement. Thus we may conclude that the process by which British government increasingly extended its authority over the periphery of empire resulted in a critical shift in the power source. In this period and place, while the frontiersmen remained a force promoting imperial expansion, the power to advance or withdraw had passed from the periphery to the centre.

One consequence of the loss of power on the periphery, not previously emphasised, was the frontiersmen's increasing disenchantment with their government's policies. While they were at the centre of policy-making, frontiersmen such as Younghusband identified with the policies of their government. When the power moved from the periphery to the centre, as it did sharply after Curzon's departure, the frontiersmen were isolated from policy formation, and increasingly opposed to government policies.

While the personal contact which every Political officer had with the Viceroy at the time of his selection may have strengthened his sense of identification with the 'system', this was diminished by his loss of any real power to create policy. Cadre officers could still exert an influence, including a 'behind the scenes' influence as we have seen in Chapter Five in the case of Weir seeking additional funds for Tibet while staying with the Indian Foreign Secretary. They were able to gain minor, locally significant points, such as assisting Tibet to recruit Radio Officer Robert Ford. But, overall, the cadre were increasingly isolated from the 'system'.

The cadre's 'forward' policies were transformed as a result of this power shift. After

World War One, the extension of the Indian frontier over Tibet was clearly a political and financial impossibility. But the cadre continued to promote policies designed to increase British involvement in Tibet, and advance British interests, in opposition to the now prevailing policy of a 'retreat to the centre'. But post-Younghusband British Tibetan policy was essentially reactive; the centre would only respond, not initiate. Thus Whitehall was prepared to allow the establishment of a British Mission in Lhasa as a response to the establishment of a Chinese Mission there, but it would not allow Tibet any significant economic support.

Despite this lack of support at Whitehall, the cadre were largely free to create their own role, which they did within the wider traditions of British imperial frontiersmen, and the methods of the Political Department. Two elements were central to this; information gathering, and the cultivation of local supporters.

Post-1950 imperial historiography has argued against any suggestion that the British spied on Tibet.[3] But the argument can only be over semantics. The sources clearly demonstrate that throughout the 1904-47 period the British clandestinely monitored Chinese and Tibetan communications and employed 'Secret Service Agents' to obtain information concerning Tibet. This information flow was of critical importance to the British. As noted, we may read much of the history of the British encounter with Tibet as inspired by this need for intelligence. Ensuring the security of India, which was the cadre's primary purpose, required constantly updated information as to the efforts of other powers to influence events in Tibet. Reliable information was most easily obtained at Lhasa; hence the cadre made access to Lhasa their main priority. When events in Tibet threatened the flow of information - when major informants died, or the Chinese established a presence at Lhasa - this demanded a response to secure a continuing information-flow.

Spying was not always necessary. Tibet was a comparatively open society where information was freely given by Tibetans whom the cadre had befriended. Obtaining such contacts was a recognised part of a Political officer's duty, for by allying with local 'Ruling Chiefs', officers could influence them to follow policies favourable to British interests, in return for which they were given various forms of support. Although the British preferred to deal with existing leaders, they would support alternatives if existing leaders failed to follow British 'advice'. Thus in 1907 the British considered the Panchen Lama as a potential Tibetan leader, and in the early 1920s Tsarong Shape was seen in this role.

Although the cadre lacked the power to alter the Tibetan leadership, Bell was able to transform Anglo-Tibetan relations through his friendship with the Dalai Lama, who enjoyed the greatest authority, and overwhelming popular support, in Tibet. Bell's policy of support for the Dalai Lama became the predominant feature of cadre policies, and Bell

himself was, arguably, the most influential cadre officer, both with his own government and with the Tibetans. But Tibet was not a dictatorship. The Dalai Lama took aristocratic and monastic opinion into account in formulating policy, and their conservative opposition restricted his ability to follow Bell's 'advice'.

As suggested, the decline in British influence in Tibet in the 1920s may have been a consequence of an attempted coup initiated by Bailey in 1923-24. Such a 'forward' move was certainly within Bailey's capabilities, and consistent with his attitudes to both Tibet and Russia. But when the nascent military faction in Tibet lost power after this period, the British, under Weir and Williamson, broadened their range of contacts in an effort to befriend the powerful monastic faction.

In the absence of any alternative means of gaining influence, the cadre increasingly relied on cash payments to leading Tibetan individuals and institutions. This policy was never openly articulated (presumably due to doubts over its morality, although the cadre appear to have perceived it as a necessary evil), and has largely escaped historical notice, but it emerged clearly in interviews with former British officers in Tibet. They recalled that the cadre helped the Tibetan rulers to 'keep the Chinese at a safe distance through gifts of money and weapons'.<sup>[4]</sup>

British sources seek to locate their actions in Tibet within certain ethical parameters. Thus Richardson notes that in the early 1920s, 'There was no suggestion of [the cadre] persuading the Tibetans to undertake anything they did not want'.<sup>[5]</sup> Issues which threaten the ethical image, such as spying, Tawang, and O'Connor's and Bailey's apparent attempts to create an alternative to the Dalai Lama's leadership, were passed-over, or suppressed, as part of the British attempt to maintain the moral high-ground in the struggle against Chinese imperialism.

Post-1947 events in Tibet have meant that any evidence casting the British in a poor moral light, or demonstrating the full implications of their efforts to influence Tibet, assists the Chinese claim that they were freeing Tibet from British imperialism. But the truths which the cadre's works represent must be placed in the context of the interests they represent. The moral case for Tibetan independence rests on clearly established factors such as the Tibetan's separate identity, desire for independence, and China's oppression and exploitation of Tibet since the 1950s, none of which is seriously in doubt. Their claim is not dependent on the perceived morality of British actions, and may indeed be strengthened by being removed from this context.

The imperial encounter with traditional Asian societies was, in the wider perspective, an issue of power. China, Russia, Britain, India and, to a lesser degree, Japan and other regional powers, all sought to promote their own interests in Tibet. The issue was not



simply one of European imperialism; the aims of every state involved were imperial. What was at stake was power over Tibet. There is, in today's understanding, no real moral high-ground for any state which sought to control the Tibetans, whose desire was for self-determination and isolation from neighbouring powers in order to maintain conditions conducive to their religious priorities.

Where there is evidence to support British claims to the moral high-ground is in regard to the cadre officers themselves. The British were in Tibet to protect and advance their own interests. In private the cadre admitted that their aims were not altruistic, and that they placed British interests above those of the Tibetans; Gould's mission to Lhasa in 1936-37 for example, gave the Tibetans 'assurances of continued diplomatic support without committing ourselves to writing'.[6]

But, except in issues related to the security of India (the annexation of Tawang being the most obvious example of this), there was clearly a genuine desire by the cadre that the encounter should benefit the Tibetans. Thus Gould told Ford that 'Your job is to help the Tibetans'.[7] This altruistic aspect was part of a complex cadre motivation, which included more selfish elements along with those of duty and service. But the prevailing trend in the cadre was to empathise with Tibet and Tibetans, and this trend prevailed both during and after their Tibetan service.

This was in great contrast to the Chinese. The *Ambans'* office was, according to British and Tibetan sources, characterised by corruption, internal dispute, and opium addiction, and the *Ambans* neither learned Tibetan nor identified with Tibetan aspirations.[8] A British officer, however, was, with few exceptions, 'always aware that I was a guest in their country [Tibet], and if they didn't like it, that was the end of the matter'.[9]

There were, therefore, genuine elements to the cadre's friendship with Tibetans, as when Richardson found that the 'Nechung Ta Lama' was 'Quite apart from the political value of his friendship...one of the best of men'.[10] These personal ties affected the cadre's perceptions of Tibet, and led to officers such as Richardson, for example, developing what the Dalai Lama described as 'a very, very strong sense of devotion to Tibetan independence'.[11]

## **CHARACTER AND IMAGE**

As we have seen in Chapter Six, prior to their encounter with the British, Tibetans had a sense of distinct collective identity, or 'proto-nationalism', based on a historical understanding of Tibet as a religious community. But their loyalties were to local, regional,

ethnic and religious entities, rather than to a Tibetan nation. Although their primary authority was the Dalai Lama, his power, like that of India's Viceroy, was restrained by a series of 'checks and balances'. Tibet's then status appears to fit models of a 'galactic polity', a political structure of fluctuating authority centres, as proposed by Samuel.[12]

British Indian strategic policy required that Tibet serve as a British-influenced 'buffer state' against foreign influence in the Himalayas. Creating this 'buffer state' meant transforming Tibet into a nation-state, a process replicating many features of the extension of British sovereignty in India. The British stimulated this process, and to an extent therefore, they 'constructed' a Tibetan state, but Whitehall refused to recognise this state as independent to avoid jeopardising Anglo-Chinese relations.

Despite Whitehall, however, the British did contribute to the creation of structures which encouraged the growth of Tibetan nationalism, and helped the Tibetans to learn the importance of symbols of nationalism. Thus the concern of Ludlow in the 1920s, and Hopkinson in the 1940s, that Tibetans should continue to wear Tibetan clothing in order to preserve their identity, emerges again in the 1990s as a Tibetan nationalist statement: one Dorje Wangdu was jailed by the Chinese in 1991 on charges which included 'advocating that Tibetans wear Tibetan national clothes during Chinese National Day celebrations'.[13]

British Indian interests did not necessarily require specific or final definition of Tibet's status, which remained ambiguous. But the cadre dealt with Tibet as an independent state. In conjunction with their efforts to transform Tibet into a modern nation-state, they sought to construct an image which portrayed the Tibet which their policies aimed at creating. This image-construction had a political purpose; it was part of a battle of ideas, aimed at establishing an independent Tibet in the minds at least of that class of educated Europeans, particularly imperial officers, who were the target for these images.

The cadre created an image of Tibet through various media, but most significantly their published works. The European appropriation of authority for the production of knowledge, and the weight given to empirical evidence, gave these works great authority in government and academic circles. But the cadre's use of local informants and their attempts to ally with the existing central Tibetan leadership, meant that while the image they constructed reflected both European perceptions inherent in the cadre's mentality, and the interests of British India, it also reflected their local informants and Tibetan allies. As this image represented the interests of both powers, they co-operated in maintaining and supporting it, a process which has continued to this day.

This image was not, however, constructed without a rational basis; cadre officers did generally seek to present empirical evidence designed to produce what they perceived as a 'true' picture of Tibet. While marginalising the aspirations of some peripheral social

groups, the image did reflect the perspective of the 'core' culture of central Tibet. It was (after 1910) also generally expressed in positive terms, designed to render Tibet 'familiar' to the readers, in contrast to 'Orientalist' images which stress 'Otherness'.

There was, and is, a definitively Orientalist image of Tibet - the mystical image - which existed alongside the image created by the cadre. Historically, fantastic images were often constructed around unknown lands, such as pre-colonial Australia, but regular contact with these places saw more empirically-based images replace the fantastic. In Tibet, however, the two images co-existed, because the mystical image served both the British and Tibetan governments' interests by emphasising Tibet's separate identity and uniquely valuable culture; both were 'core' elements in the cadre's construction of an image of Tibet. There was also a personal factor in this. Their exotic location (as they perceived it) was a part of the cadre's identity; many cadre officers were genuinely interested in the mystical aspect of Tibet, albeit within scientific parameters.

The image constructed by the cadre did not, however, fully reflect their knowledge of Tibet. It was shaped by self-censorship, and government censorship, as well as by the individual and class perceptions previously referred to. This has meant that negative elements of the British presence have remained largely hidden; for example, the decline in the country's moral climate, which was partly due to the influx of wealth into the hands of a few individuals, as a result of the rivalry between British and Chinese representatives who attempted to buy influence in Tibet.

One additional factor affected the cadre's presentation of information on Tibet: the need to sell their books in a commercial market. This led to an emphasis on the colourful and the dramatic - repetitive recitations of images of 'Otherness' - at the expense of material designed to render Tibet familiar, as authors sought colourful images to appeal to the book-buying public.

Tibet did become fully familiar to a few cadre officers. Bell, MacDonald, and Richardson all appear to have been accepted by the Tibetans as 'belonging' to Tibetan culture. They were fluent in Tibetan, lived among Tibetans for a long period of time, empathised with them, and had an intuitive understanding of the culture which they demonstrated by the production of works accepted by both Tibetans and Europeans as accurately representing their subject. It appears that these officers did understand the Tibetans, and that, in the wider sense, individual understanding is therefore possible in colonial encounter.

Charles Bell was generally accepted by both nations as having gained the greatest understanding of Tibet. But his level of understanding was not essential to the satisfactory performance of an officer's duties; while it was a great advantage to an officer's work, it was an involvement beyond the requirements of duty. Officers, such as Sherriff and Weir

were efficient and effective despite being content to view Tibet as 'Other'.

Officers who came to 'belong' to Tibetan society identified with the interests of the Lhasa ruling-class to which they 'belonged'. Their understanding of Tibet reflected the perspective of that class, just as it reflected the perspective they gained from their class in British society. Paradoxically, this alliance between the cadre and the Lhasa leadership, which as Goldstein has shown was an extremely conservative force opposed to any modernisation process,[14] tended to preserve this elite and the existing structures of Tibetan society from change, despite modernisation being part of British aims. Elements within Tibet which opposed these ruling forces were perceived by the British and their allies as pro-Chinese, and their voices were suppressed.

But Tibet's failure to establish an identity in the sense required by modern political models of independent states was not solely the responsibility of the British. The conservative elements dominating Tibet's government resisted those aspects of modernisation which might have established Tibet's independent status on the world stage.[15] Once the possibility of the British establishing a formal protectorate over Tibet had vanished, there was a common awareness that an eventual accommodation with China was inevitable. But although it was obvious by the 1920s that the policy was unrealistic, Britain and Tibet continued to hope that the Chinese would eventually accept an agreement along the lines of the Simla Convention, and both the cadre and the Tibetans followed policies on the basis of the Simla Convention, which even the Government of India acknowledged, after it ended, was 'invalid' without Chinese acceptance of its conditions.[16]

The lack of definition characteristic of the British encounter with Tibet was typical of the liminal frontier zone in which the encounter was located. In this zone of freedom and ambiguity, the absence of fixed identity and place provided conditions affecting character and action, and producing responses the British considered desirable among their frontier officers. The character and actions of the cadre were therefore, affected by and characteristic of, their liminal location.

The liminal nature of this zone, outside customary understandings of time and place, made it a location for the transformation of action into legend, and both indigenous and imperial myths flourished there. The Indian frontier was the setting for a powerful mythology of empire, and cadre officers were aware of taking their place in such myths as the "Great Game". This imperial mythology provides a valuable source for understanding the self-image of the frontiersman, a factor otherwise difficult to quantify in historical terms.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ANGLO-TIBETAN ENCOUNTER

The Anglo-Tibetan encounter had significant and lasting consequences in two related areas; (a) the political status of Tibet, and (b) our understanding of Tibetan history and culture, and the context in which these are studied. While both are complex issues, they are clearly shaped by the implications of British actions in the region.

On 15 August 1947, when responsibility for Indo-Tibetan relations passed into the hands of the newly independent Indian Government, the British ceased to be represented in Tibet. The U.K. High Commission in Delhi did propose establishing a British medical dispensary in Lhasa, to represent British interests, and Major Guthrie, the Lhasa Mission doctor and 'an enthusiast about Tibet' offered to remain there. But the Foreign Office decreed otherwise, and formal Anglo-Tibetan ties ended.[17]

Anglo-Tibetan relations were of such low priority within Whitehall that Tibet was not officially notified that India was being given independence until less than three weeks before the event. They were informed that the Indian Government would inherit the rights and obligations of existing treaties previously held by the Government of India in regard to Tibet.[18]

Although the new Indian flag flew in place of the Union Jack, there were no immediate changes in the cadre posts, not least because there were no trained Indians to replace them. But while Richardson remained in Lhasa until 1950, an Indian took control of the Tibet posts on 1 September 1948, when Arthur Hopkinson handed over to the new Political Officer Sikkim, Harish Dayal ICS, and Mrs Hopkinson wrote in her diary that, 'Today we are no longer masters of the Residency'.[19]

When Hopkinson departed, the cadre were optimistic that India would follow the Tibetan policies established by the British. Harish Dayal was considered sympathetic to the Tibetans, and in December 1949 Hopkinson wrote to Bailey that, 'At first the Congress were showing signs of completely selling out the Tibs[sic]. but we persistently combated this'. Indeed Hopkinson was more impressed with the new Indian officials than with their British predecessors in their last year, whom he described as 'moribund...intent on their next jobs'.[20]

But the cadre's hopes were soon disappointed. Tibet was to be an exception to the general continuity of foreign policy after the transfer of power. In January 1950, India recognised the new Communist Government in China, which in August of that year officially advised India of their intention to 'liberate' Tibet. On 7 October 1950, Chinese forces invaded Tibet from the east and the west. The last Europeans left Tibet around that time, although a missionary, Geoffrey Bull, and former Lhasa Radio Officer Robert Ford,

then employed by the Tibetan Government in Quamdo, were captured by the invading forces in eastern Tibet. Marking the decline of British power and influence in the region, they were not released until 1953 and 1955 respectively.[21]

The Chinese take-over was in two phases. The first, which involved attempts to absorb Tibet peacefully, lasted until 1959, when the situation deteriorated, and the 14th Dalai Lama fled to India as Chinese forces shelled Lhasa. Three years later, the Sino-Indian conflict broke out, and the Lhasa Mission and the Trade Agencies were closed. The official Indian presence in Tibet was ended.[22]

In April 1954, the Indian Government concluded an Agreement with China in which it recognised Tibet as part of China. This agreement allowed the 'establishment' (i.e. continuance) of three Indian Trade Agencies in Tibet. By an exchange of notes following the Agreement, however, India agreed to withdraw the Agency military escort, and to give control of the telegraph and communication systems, and the dak bungalows along the trade route, to China.[23]

There were other significant events in 1954. On 17 July, floods, which killed several hundred people in the area, destroyed the Gyantse Trade Agency, killing Trade Agent Pemba Tsering and his wife, and washing away the graves of Williamson and other Europeans who had died in Tibet. Then, on 25 December, the first motor convoy reached Lhasa from Chengdu.[24]

Independent India's policy towards Tibet differed from that of British India for a number of reasons, not all of them the result of British actions. For example, the idealism of Jawaharlal Nehru clearly led him to a naive view of Communist Chinese intentions and policies.[25] But Whitehall's refusal to recognise Tibet as an independent state had left it with an ambiguous status in international law. Tibet claimed, and demonstrated that it was independent in status, but no other state now recognised it as such.

India also had to face the legacy of British India's annexation of Tawang. As the Simla Convention was the legal basis of this, and the legal status of that Convention was 'at best questionable, at worst null and void',[26] due to China's refusal to recognise it, British Tibetan policy had left India in an awkward position. It appears she hoped to extricate herself by recognising Chinese authority over Tibet in the hope that China would accept Indian rule over Tawang.

Newly independent India was not, for reasons of prestige, nation-building, and domestic politics, prepared to give up areas which it had inherited from the British as Indian territory. But Tawang was undoubtedly a 'skeleton' which India wished to keep in the cupboard; even today files relating to the area remain classified. The British annexation of Tawang has overshadowed India's Tibetan policy ever since.

The political status of Tibet today retains much of the ambivalence which characterised the British period. The governments of the world officially accept Tibet as part of China, but, through such actions as the American President's receiving the Dalai Lama, imply a recognition that Tibet has a legitimate claim to independence. Tibet has taken its place among a group of what we might call 'unrecognised' nations - such as Kurdistan - which are paradoxically seeking to become recognised independent nation-states while threatening the whole nation-state system as a model for world order. The British failure to recognise Tibetan independence was largely responsible for Tibet being an 'unrecognised' nation.[27]

Despite their battle against the Chinese, the Tibet cadre, in the tradition of their "Great Game" heritage, had always tended to regard Russia as the greatest threat to the security of Tibet and India. Even in 1948, Hopkinson reported that 'in spite of changes within India, the same dangers threaten without, only more intensified, with increased Russian expansion'. Major Saker also submitted a report to the new Government of Pakistan around that time, in which he concluded that western Tibet 'was liable to be taken over by the Russians, possibly for the sake of its mineral wealth'.[28]

Not until early 1949 was it obvious that the Communists would gain the victory which was formally signified by the inauguration of the Peoples Republic of China on 1 October 1949.[29] It is difficult to criticise the Tibet cadre for failing to foresee the Communist victory. They, and the Tibetans, were aware that China, whatever her government, would attempt to control Tibet, and that Tibet could not resist a full-scale military attack by China. But 'no one had seriously thought that the Chinese would take military action in Tibet. The milieu was shattered by the Chinese invasion.'[30]

The cadre existed to protect the security of British India's northern border; in August 1947 they could look back and claim to have succeeded in this aim. The cadre were not posted to Tibet to protect or advance the interests of the Tibetans, while Whitehall's primary concern there was to avoid damaging British relations with other major powers, and, in particular, the China trade. But because of their empathy with the Tibetans, cadre officers identified strongly with Tibetan interests, and they did not leave Tibet in its virtually helpless state without deep personal regrets. Therefore, just as we must separate the knowledge of Tibet which individual cadre officers gained, from the image of Tibet which was constructed as a result of this knowledge, so we must separate the British Government's willingness to abandon Tibet from the cadre's aims for Tibet's future.

The frontiersmen on the Tibetan periphery of the British empire had, by the 1940s, lost all power to influence Tibet's future in the direction which they thought best: the power was held by the central government, which was totally indifferent to Tibetan interests. In

retrospect, we may see that had Curzon and Younghusband's 'forward' policies been carried through to their logical conclusion, Tibet would have been taken into close association with India, perhaps with a status similar to that of Bhutan. We may now judge that this could have prevented the cultural genocide that followed the Chinese take-over, and saved more than a million Tibetan lives, and that therefore the policies advanced by the cadre were correct, and the policies of the British Government were tragically wrong. But as was recognised by Bell, such a commitment was impractical,[31] and in 1947 there was no longer the means or the will to protect what was only ever a peripheral consideration in empire. Britain left many unresolved questions in abandoning her empire in India, both as a consequence of the construction of identities and political constituencies and of the failure to do so, as in the case of Tibet.

It may be that the encounter on the Tibetan frontier, beyond the stresses of direct imperial control and consequent indigenous resistance, did result in an experience of which it could be truthfully said by the cadre, as the encounter ended, that 'on balance we had done more good than harm....We could look back without shame, and with some pride.'[32] But the cadre's duty to promote the interests of the Government of India, and Whitehall's refusal to permit the fulfillment of Tibetan aspirations to independence, meant that that judgment must be applied to the relationship of individual British officers (including the medical and technical staff) with the Tibetans, rather than to the encounter as a whole.

### **THE BRITISH AND MODERN TIBETAN HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The Chinese take-over of Tibet polarised the emerging field of Tibetan studies, with issues being seen in a political context where information either supports the perspective of the Chinese Government or of the Tibetan Government-in-exile. Attempts to remove Tibetan studies from this context have failed; even Buddhist studies suggest support for the Tibetan position by implying that Tibetan culture is of value, and because the Tibetans use Buddhism as a political weapon against the Chinese.[33]

We have seen that the cadre constructed an image of Tibet in works which acquired a great authority among British officialdom. The Tibetans have found these works extremely valuable in support of their cause. The basic premise articulated by the Tibetan Government today is that Tibetans are a separate race and culture from the Chinese, and, until they were invaded, formed a state historically independent of China, with such religio-political ties as existed for mutual convenience between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Emperor having ended when China became a republic. The works of cadre officers such as Bell and



Richardson support this position because they promoted virtually the same premise, both in British interests, and in the interests of their Tibetan allies.

In the 1950s and '60s, former cadre officers offered the Tibetan cause a 'voice'. Hugh Richardson, for example, was a leading figure in the founding of the U.K. Tibet Society, which began to campaign on behalf of the Tibetans. Thus the alliance of interests between the cadre officers and their allies in Tibet in the pre-1947 period continued into the modern period. It is clearly in Tibet's interest that the leading European work on Tibetan history has been written by Hugh Richardson, for it specifically counters Chinese claims in regard to Tibet.[34]

The need to avoid offering any support for Chinese activity in Tibet, the fact that the most authoritative texts in Tibetan studies were by cadre officers (or by those like Tucci who co-operated closely with the cadre), combined with the impossibility of further independent research in Tibet (until the late 1980s), have all had a great effect on Tibetan studies. The field continues to be dominated by works following the traditions and relying on the authority of the image of Tibet constructed by the Tibet cadre, with most of the principal works by cadre officers themselves having been reprinted in the last decade.[35]

The position is, however, changing. In the last decade western, and Tibetan, scholarship has begun to question accepted images of Tibet, with revisionist work on religious and regional minority traditions, and the traditional Tibetan power structure and sense of identity, although, as noted, this does not appear to lead to radically different interpretations of Tibetan history and culture.[36] Both modern and historical Tibet are now subject to investigation, and will be assisted by an understanding of the British perspective and activities which led to their construction of an image of Tibet.

Understanding the influence of the Tibet cadre enables us to see its continuing effects. Thus the Dalai Lama continues to be the focus of western support for the Tibetan cause, just as he was the focus of British efforts to cultivate Tibetan allies. We may see that that the cadre's efforts to create a modern Tibetan-nation state, and an image of Tibet as such a state, has resulted in the question of Tibetan independence being located in a legal framework of debate over Tibet's status in two periods, 1913-50, and pre-1904. The legal uncertainty surrounding aspects of this case in the British period, such as the Simla Convention, weakens the Tibetan position.

The Tibetan claim to independence may be better located in a moral framework, and in the still-evolving context of separate racial, cultural and religious identity as a basis for self-determination, rather than in quasi-historical claims based on cadre constructions and British imperial treaties. The award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama, and recent protests in Tibet which have specifically linked Tibetan religious identity and Buddhist

ethics with the Tibetan's aspirations for independence,[37] appear more appropriate to Tibet's fundamentally religious identity.

Neither emphasis is liable to greatly effect the policies of the present Chinese Government. But establishing in the eyes of the international community the Tibetan's claim to the right to self-determination on both moral and identity grounds offers the possibility that if China wishes to be accepted in international arenas such as trade, sports and academic and scientific forum, she will be put under increasing pressure to satisfy Tibetan aspirations; as South Africa was put under similar pressure in regard to her apartheid policies.

With this political backdrop, modern Tibetan studies continue to have significant political implications; pro-Tibetan or pro-Chinese. But the Dalai Lama noted how the massive increase in western studies of Tibetan Buddhism helped to dispel negative images of their religion, and how the distortion of the political image of Tibet by the British desire to exclude Russian influence from Tibet was partly due to the fact that 'there was very little contact, only officials, no independent individuals who spent time in Tibet or were able to study [Tibet]'.[38] Increasingly, there are numbers of independent scholars able to visit and study Tibet, which can only benefit the field of study, and our understanding of Tibet and the Tibetans.

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## FOOTNOTES

- [1] Shils (1981, p.273) & Potter (1986).
- [2] Spangenberg (1976, p.143).
- [3] For example, see Caroe (1974) and Richardson (1974).
- [4] Interview with Dr.M.V.Kurian, January 1994.
- [5] Richardson (1984, p.122).
- [6] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-8904, Viceroy to Secretary of State, 12 December 1936.
- [7] Interview with R.Ford, March 1993.
- [8] For details of the Ambans, see Kolmas (1994, esp. pp.456, 458), and (1992); also see Chapman (1992, p.240).
- [9] Interview with A.Robins, April 1993.
- [10] IOLR L/P&S/12/4193-201, Lhasa Mission Diary entry, 4 November 1938 (by H.Richardson).
- [11] Interview with H.H. the Dalai Lama, March 1994.
- [12] Dreyfuss (1994); Samuel (1993).
- [13] Schwartz (1994, p.215).
- [14] Goldstein (1989).
- [15] This is the theme of Dhondup (1986) and, in particular, Goldstein *ibid*.
- [16] IOLR L/P&S/10/344-448, India to Bell, 3 September 1915.
- [17] IOLR L/P&S/12/4197-7218, U.K. High Commission to India Office, 2 July 1947; L/P&S/12/4197-7564, Foreign Office to India Office.
- [18] Hopkinson (1950, p.234).
- [19] Diary entry of Mrs E.Hopkinson, 1 September 1948, courtesy of Mrs Hopkinson.
- [20] IOLR MSS Eur F157-258, Hopkinson to Bailey, 5 December 1949; Interview with J.Lall, October 1993; Hopkinson (1950, p.239).
- [21] See Ford (1990).
- [22] The Nepalese, however, have maintained a Mission in Lhasa until the present day.
- [23] The text of the 1954 Agreement is given in Richardson (1984, pp.293-300).
- [24] Interview with Dr T.Y.Pemba, March 1994.
- [25] Goldstein (1989, pp.703-04); Richardson (1984, pp.179, 197-99, 231-32).
- [26] Addy (1994, p.28).
- [27] Tibet's 'unrecognised' status might be compared with European models of 'renascent nations' - those 'that have undergone a cultural and political renaissance since 1945' - as proposed by Richard Griggs in the map entitled 'Europe of Regions' in Research and Exploration, Summer 1994, N.Y.
- [28] IOLR MSS Eur D998/39, 'Report on Tibet August 1945 -August 1948' by A.J.Hopkinson; Saker papers, copy of an undated (c1948-50) report for the Pakistan Government, marked 'Top Secret', entitled 'Tibet'.

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[29] Goldstein (1989, pp.611-12, 623).

[30] Interview with J.Lall, October 1993. The possibility of a Chinese Communist government invading Burma and India had been considered as early as c1927. It was, however, then concluded that there was no real threat to Tibet from this source; IOLR L/Mil/7/19395, unsigned/undated report, c1927.

[31] Bell (1992, p.247).

[32] Ford (1990, p.195).

[33] Schwartz (1994).

[34] Richardson (1984).

[35] For examples of recent works following this tradition, see Baker and Steele (1993); Beger (1994); Hopkirk (1990); Normanton (1988); and Williamson (1987).

[36] Among the most significant works in this direction we may include Cech (1991); Dreyfuss (1994); Goldstein (1989); Samuel (1993); and Templeman (1994).

[37] Schwartz (1994, pp.26-36, 209-31).

[38] Interview with H.H. the Dalai Lama, March 1994.

## APPENDIX ONE

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### **THE TIBET CADRE:- Officers who served for more than nine months as Political Officer Sikkim, Head of British Mission Lhasa, or British Trade Agent Gyantse.**

The information concerning each officer is given in the following format:- final rank, name, decorations, dates, Indian department prior to Political service; and then as per the following abbreviations.

- b.* - Place of birth.
- f.* - Father's occupation (if in India this is indicated in subsequent brackets when not obvious).
- educ.* - Education, public school or otherwise.
- u/mc.* - University or military college attended.
- fp.* - Initial Indian service posting(s).

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Lt-Colonel **Frederick Marsham BAILEY** CIE. (1882-1967) Indian Army.

*b.* India. *f.* Indian Army. *educ.* Wellington, Edinburgh Academy. *u/mc.* Sandhurst. *fp.* Sikkim and Tibet. Active service in World War One. Later Resident in Kashmir and Nepal. Noted explorer and naturalist.

Major **Richmond Keith Molesworth BATTYE** (1905-1958) Indian Army.

*b.* Persia. *f.* IMS. *educ.* Marlborough. *u/mc.* RMA. Woolich. *fp.* North-West Frontier Province. Later Colonial Administrative Service, Tangyanika.

Sir **Charles Bell** KCIE. CMG. CIE. (1870-1945) ICS.

*b.* India. *f.* Indian Provincial Services. *educ.* Winchester. *u/mc.* Oxford. *fp.* Bengal. Retired to Canada.

Major **William Lachlan CAMPBELL** CIE. (1880-1937) Indian Army.

*b.* Scotland. *f.* Gentleman (close relatives served in India). *educ.* Edinburgh Academy. *u/mc.* RMA. Woolich. *fp.* Peking.

Rai Bahadur **Norbhu Dhondup** OBE. CBE. (1889-1944).

*b.* India (Darjeeling). *f.* Trader (India). *educ.* Government High School Darjeeling. *u/mc.* None. *fp.* Sikkim & Tibet.

Lt-Colonel **Edward Walter FLETCHER** CBE. (1899-1958) Indian Army.

*b.* Scotland. *f.* Military. *educ.* Marlborough. *u/mc.* RMA. Woolich. *fp.* North West Frontier Province. Active service in World War Two.

Sir **Basil GOULD** CMG. CIE. (1883-1956) ICS.

*b.* England. *f.* Law. *educ.* Winchester. *u/mc.* Oxford. *fp.* Punjab, Afghanistan.

Major **Philip Coates HAILEY** (1903-1980) Indian Army.

*b.* India. *f.* ICS. *educ.* Clifton College. *u/mc.* Sandhurst. *fp.* Baluchistan. Nephew of Sir (later Lord) Malcolm Hailey (Governor of the Punjab 1924-28).

**Arthur John HOPKINSON** (1894-1953) ICS.

*b.* England. *f.* Church. *educ.* Marlborough. *u/mc.* Oxford. *fp.* United Provinces. Active service in World War One. Later became the Reverend Hopkinson.

**Frank LUDLOW** (1885-1972) Indian Education Department.

*b.* England. *f.* Cambridge University Lecturer in Botany. *educ.* Chelsea. *u/mc.* Cambridge. *fp.* Punjab. Renowned naturalist. Employed by the Tibetan Government as Headmaster of Gyantse school, 1923-1926.

**DAVID MACDONALD** (1870-1962) Provincial service.

*b.* India. *f.* Tea-planter (India). *educ.* Bhotia School, Darjeeling. *u/mc.* None. *fp.* Assam and Bengal. Later owner of the Himalaya Hotel, Kalimpong.

Lt-Colonel Sir **William Frederick Travers O'CONNOR** CSI. CIE., CVO. (1870-1943) Indian Army.

*b.* Ireland. *f.* Irish land-owning family. *educ.* Charterhouse. *u/mc.* RMA. Woolich. *fp.* Darjeeling. Later Resident in Nepal.

**Hugh RICHARDSON** OBE. CIE. (1905-) ICS.

*b.* Scotland. *f.* unknown (India; grandfather in ICS). *educ.* Glenalmond. *u/mc.* Oxford. *fp.* Bengal. Later Visiting Professor at Seattle.

Lt-Colonel **Herbert Gordon RIVETT-CARNAC** (1892-1962) Indian Army.  
*b.* India. *f.* Indian Police. *educ.* Bradfield College. *u/mc.* Sandhurst. *fp.* Mesopotamia.

Major **Alexander Alfred RUSSELL MC.** (1898-1967) Indian Army.  
*b.* England. *f.* ICS. *educ.* Gordon Watson's Public School, Edinburgh. *u/mc.* Quetta Cadet College. *fp.* Persia.

Major **Richard Kenneth Maitland SAKER CBE.** (1908-1979) Indian Army.  
*b.* England. *f.* Military. *educ.* Aldenham. *u/mc.* Sandhurst. *fp.* Baroda. Later Pakistan Government and Foreign and Commonwealth Office employee.

Major **George SHERRIFF** (1898-1967) Indian Army.  
*b.* Scotland. *f.* Distiller. *educ.* Sedbergh. *u/mc.* RMA. Woolich. *fp.* Unknown. Served at Kashgar Consulate, 1927-31. Active service in World War One. Reknowned naturalist.

Lt-Colonel **Malcolm Cecil SINCLAIR OBE.** (1899-1955) Indian Army.  
*b.* Ireland. *f.* Indian Army. *educ.* Marlborough. *u/mc.* Quetta Cadet College. *fp.* Unknown.

Rai Bahadur **Pemba Tsering** (1905-1954) Provincial Service.  
*b.* India (Ghoom). *f.* Trader (India) family. *educ.* Government High School Darjeeling. *u/mc.* None. *fp.* Sikkim & Tibet.

Lt-Colonel **James Leslie Rose WEIR CIE.** (1883-1950) Indian army.  
*b.* India. *f.* IMS. *educ.* Wellingborough. *u/mc.* RMA. Woolich. *fp.* Gwalior, Punjab. Later Resident in Baroda.

**John Claude WHITE CIE.** (1853-1918) Indian Public Works Department.  
*b.* India. *f.* Unknown (in India). *educ.* Bonn (Germany). *u/mc.* None - Coopers Hill College of Engineering. *fp.* Bengal.

**Frederick WILLIAMSON** (1891-1935) ICS.  
*b.* England. *f.* Technical. *educ.* Bedford Modern School. *u/mc.* Cambridge. *fp.* Orissa. Active service in World War One. Consulate-General in Kashgar 1927-30.

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## APPENDIX - TWO

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### Officers who served in the Government of India's principal positions in Tibet.

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The encounter between pre-1947 Tibet and the outside world was heavily documented. There are archives which record virtually every European visitor to Tibet; the annual reports of the Trade Agencies in the India Office Library, for example, which contain the names of every European visitor from India in the 1904-47 period. This appendix lists those officials who served in the principal Indian Political Department posts concerned with Tibet. The Political Officer Sikkim was stationed in Gangtok (Sikkim), while the other positions listed were inside Tibet.[1]

The purpose of this appendix is, in addition to providing a source for future research in this area, twofold. Firstly the sheer number of these officials - over one hundred - provides a counterweight to the generally projected image of Tibet as an isolated land. In this sense it adds to Percival Landon's list of officers on the Younghusband Mission and James Cooper's list of European visitors to Lhasa.[2] Secondly, it can be used to trace the careers of the principal officials in Tibet, as they followed a career path culminating in the positions in Gangtok or Lhasa.

The positions with which we are concerned are:-

- (1) The Political Officer Sikkim
- (2) The Head of the British Mission Lhasa
- (3) The British Trade Agent Gyantse
- (4) The British Trade Agent Yatung
- (5) The British Trade Agent Gartok
- (6) The Officer Commanding Trade Agent's Escort Gyantse
- (7) The Medical Officer Gyantse
- (8) The Civil Surgeon Bhutan and Tibet

In order to indicate the actual dates of service in a particular position, the dates given are.



with one exception which will be noted, those of the actual hand-over, rather than the official posting date. Due to transport difficulties, leave requirements, and personal arrangements between officers, the official date of posting often varies widely from the actual hand-over date.

Due to the complexity of events involving the Gyantse Trade Agents in the earlier years, such as the flight and return of the 13th Dalai Lama, I have given the actual day of hand-over for this position as an aid to other scholars in this area, in all other cases the month is given.

In a number of cases, officers were relieved temporarily during their absence on leave, or on other duties elsewhere in Tibet or India. In these cases I have indicated that the officer officiating 'relieves'.

There is no single source for this data. The lists have been compiled by a comparative review of all available primary sources (as shown in the bibliography), particularly the records of the India Office Library. These sources often conflict; in such cases reliance has been placed on the record compiled nearest to the date of the event.

#### (1) THE POLITICAL OFFICER SIKKIM, BHUTAN AND TIBET[3]

<b>J.C. White</b> takes up newly created post	May 1889
<b>C. Bell</b> relieves	May 1904
White resumes	Nov. 1904
Bell relieves	Sept. 1906
White resumes	Jan. 1907
Bell relieves (White on leave prior to his retirement in October 1908, when Bell was appointed permanently)	Mar. 1908
<b>Capt. J.L.R. Weir</b> relieves	Aug. 1911
Bell resumes	Oct. 1911
<b>B. Gould</b> relieves	Oct. 1913
Bell resumes	Sept. 1914
<b>Major W.L. Campbell</b> relieves (Bell on leave prior to his retirement in March 1919 when Campbell was appointed permanently)	Apr. 1918
Bell reappointed for one year after Campbell resigns	Jan. 1920
<b>Lt-Colonel W.F. O'Connor</b> takes up post (Bell in Lhasa until October 1921)	Jan. 1921

<b>D. MacDonald</b> relieves	Mar. 1921
<b>Major F.M. Bailey</b> takes up post	June 1921
<b>F. Williamson</b> relieves	May 1927
Bailey resumes	Dec. 1927
Major J.L.R. Weir takes up post	Oct. 1928
F. Williamson relieves	Apr. 1931
Weir resumes	Aug. 1931
F. Williamson takes up post	Jan. 1933
<b>Capt. R.K.M. Battye</b> relieves (after death of Williamson in Lhasa.)	Nov. 1935
B. Gould takes up post	Dec. 1935
<b>H. Richardson</b> relieves	May 1937
B. Gould resumes	Nov. 1937
<b>A.J. Hopkinson</b> takes up post	Jun. 1945

### (2) THE HEAD OF BRITISH MISSION LHASA[4]

<b>H. Richardson</b> remained in Lhasa after the departure of the Gould Mission	Feb. 1937
<b>Norbhu Dhondup</b> assumes post	July 1937
H. Richardson resumes	Oct. 1938
Norbhu Dhondup resumes	Oct. 1939
<b>F. Ludlow</b> assumes post	Apr. 1942
<b>G. Sherriff</b> assumes post	Apr. 1943
H. Richardson relieves	Jun. 1944
G. Sherriff resumes	Sept. 1944
<b>Pemba Tsering</b> assumes post	Apr. 1945
H. Richardson resumes	Apr. 1946
Pemba Tsering relieves	Sept. 1947
H. Richardson resumes	Dec. 1947

### (3) THE BRITISH TRADE AGENT GYANTSE[5]

<b>Capt. W.F. O'Connor</b> takes up newly created post	01.10.1904
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<b>Lt. F.M. Bailey</b> relieves,	23.12.1905
O'Connor resumes (Hand-over at Gangtok)	15.12.1906
Bailey relieves,	18.07.1907
O'Connor resumes	27.07.1907
Bailey takes up post	01.08.1907
<b>Capt. R.S. Kennedy</b> {IMS} relieves (at Yatung)	05.06.1909
<b>Capt. J.L.R. Weir</b> takes up post	13.12.1909
<b>D. Macdonald</b> relieves (at Yatung)	23.01.1911
Weir resumes	01.04.1911
Macdonald relieves	10.08.1911
Weir resumes	30.12.1911
Macdonald relieves	15.02.1912
<b>B. Gould</b> takes up post	04.05.1912
Macdonald relieves	31.03.1913
<b>Major W.L. Campbell</b> takes up post (at Yatung)	24.02.1916
Macdonald takes up post	31.03.1918
<b>F. Williamson</b> takes up post	20.06.1924
<b>Capt. R.L. Vance</b> {IMS} relieves	31.05.1926
<b>A.J. Hopkinson</b> takes up post	03.01.1927
<b>Major H.G. Rivett-Carnac</b> takes up post	30.04.1928
<b>Lt. W.J.L. Neal</b> {IA} relieves	01.03.1929
Rivett-Carnac resumes	18.05.1929
<b>Capt. D.R. Smith</b> takes up post	18.09.1929
<b>Capt. E.W. Fletcher</b> takes up post	19.11.1929
<b>Capt. A.A. Russell</b> takes up post	19.11.1931
<b>M. Worth</b> takes up post	18.04.1933
<b>Capt. P.C. Hailey</b> takes up post	01.12.1933
<b>Capt. R.K.M. Batty</b> takes up post	20.06.1935
<b>H. Richardson</b> takes up post	20.07.1936
<b>Capt. D.G. Thornburgh</b> takes up post	03.02.1940
<b>Major M.C. Sinclair</b> takes up post (at Gangtok)	20.07.1940
<b>Capt. R.K.M. Saker</b> takes up post	15.06.1941
<b>Major R.W.D. Gloyne</b> {IA} relieves	12.05.1942
Saker resumes	15.01.1943
Gould reappointed, stationed at Gangtok,	
<b>Capt. J.H. Davis</b> {IA} relieves (at Gyantse)	28.09.1943

<b>F.H. Mainprice</b> takes up post	19.05.1944
Gould reappointed, stationed at Gangtok, the following act in Gyantse:-	12.08.1944
<b>Capt. C. Finch</b> {IA}	
<b>Capt. A.G.H. Robins</b> {IA}	
<b>Lt. R. Grist</b> {IA}	
<b>Lt. T.R.W. Dark</b> {IA}	
Richardson reappointed	12.02.1946

**(4) THE BRITISH TRADE AGENT YATUNG[6]**

<b>Capt. W.L. Campbell</b> takes up post	Jan. 1908
<b>Lt. F.M. Bailey</b> relieves	July 1908
<b>Lt. R.S. Kennedy</b> {IMS} relieves	June 1909
<b>D. Macdonald</b> takes up post	July 1909

(Macdonald then served at Yatung, without official leave, until his retirement in October 1924. The post then combined with that of the British Trade Agent Gyantse until 1936, for details see separate listing for Gyantse.)

<b>Rai Bahadur Norbhu Dhondup</b> takes up post (position combined with Head of British Mission Lhasa when Norbhu Dhondup stationed in Lhasa)	July 1936
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<b>Rai Bahadur Sonam Tobden Kazi</b> took up post	Sept. 1942
<b>Rai Sahib Pemba Tsering</b> relieved	Aug. 1943
R.B.Sonam Tobden Kazi resumes	Mar. 1944

**(5) THE BRITISH TRADE AGENT GARTOK[7]**

<b>Thakur Jai Chand</b> took up newly created post	Nov. 1904
<b>Lala Devi Das</b> took up post	Jan. 1912

<b>Cha. Pala Ram</b> took up post	Mar. 1925
<b>Thakur Hayat Singh</b> took up post	1928
<b>Dr Kanshi Ram</b> took up post	1929
<b>Pemba Tsering</b> took up post	1941
<b>Lakshman Singh</b> took up post	1946

**(6) OFFICER COMMANDING TRADE AGENT'S ESCORT GYANTSE[8]**

<b>Lt. W.L. Hogg</b> , 3rd Brahmmins relieved	Nov. 1905
<b>Lt. C.J. Auchinleck</b> , 62nd Punjabis relieved	Sept. 1906
<b>Major W.R. Walker</b> took command of the 62nd	July 1907
<b>Lt. M.H.L. Morgan</b> took command of the 62nd	Dec. 1907
<b>Lt. R.B. Langrishe</b> took command of the 62nd	Feb. 1908
<b>Lt. W. Macready</b> , 120th Rajputs relieved	Sept. 1908
<b>Lt. A.O. Creagh</b> took command of the 120th	Sept. 1909
<b>Lt. J. Turner</b> , 114th Maharattas, relieved	May. 1911
<b>Lt. H.R. Wilson</b> took command of the 114th	June 1913
<b>Capt. L.S. Fenton</b> , 113th Infantry, relieved	Sept. 1913
<b>Capt. L.F. Bodkin</b> 2nd in command from	Sept. 1914
Capt Bodkin took command of the 113th	Sept. 1915
<b>Lt. W. de la Passy</b> 2-i-c from	Sept. 1915
(Departed May 1916, not replaced)	
<b>Lt. M.R. Roberts</b> took command of the 113th	Aug. 1916
<b>Capt. F. Perry</b> , 2/10th Jats, relieved	Apr. 1918
<b>Lt. G.N. Chatterjee</b> took command of the 113th	July 1920
<b>Lt. J.A. Andrews</b> took command of the 113th	July 1921
<b>Capt. E. Parker</b> , 90th Punjabis, relieved	Oct. 1921
<b>Capt. G.B. Williams</b> , 4/8th Rajputs, relieved	Sept. 1922
<b>Capt. J.E. Cobbett</b> took command of the 4/7th	Sept. 1923
<b>Capt. E.A. Evanson</b> , 3/17th Dogras, relieved	Sept. 1924
<b>Lt. R.P. Taylor</b> 2-i-c from	Nov. 1925
<b>Lt. H.M. de V. Moss</b> , 3/12th Sikhs, relieved	Sept. 1926
<b>Lt. R.A.K. Sangster</b> 2-i-c from	Sept. 1926
<b>Capt. W.E. Dean</b> took command of the 3/12th	Sept. 1927
<b>Capt. H.W. Mulligan</b> took command of the 3/12th	Sept. 1928

<b>Capt. J.A. Blood</b> took command of the 3/12th	Dec. 1929
<b>Lt. A.J.W. Macleod</b> 2-i-c from	Dec. 1929
<b>Capt. H.R. Officer</b> took command of the 3/12th	Mar. 1930
<b>Capt. F.C. Goddard</b> , 1/5th Maharatta Light Infantry relieved	Sept. 1930
<b>Capt. A.J. Crozier</b> 2-i-c from	Sept. 1930
<b>Capt. N.M. Anderson</b> took command of the 1/5th	June 1931
<b>Capt. W.D. Marshall</b> 2-i-c from	June 1931
Capt Marshall took command of the the 1/5th (no 2-i-c)	Sept. 1931
<b>Capt. E.S.E. Rennie</b> took command of the 1/5th	Sept. 1932
<b>Capt. H.W. Huelin</b> , 2/7th Rajputs, relieved	Sept. 1933
<b>Lt. G.E.P. Cable</b> 2-i-c from	Sept. 1933
<b>Major A.C. Bronham</b> took command of the 2/7th	Sept. 1934
<b>Lt. J.W. Pease</b> 2-i-c from	Sept. 1934
<b>Capt. J.A. Salomons</b> took command of the 2/7th (no 2-i-c)	Sept. 1935
<b>Major P.W. Finch</b> took command of the 2/7th	Nov. 1936
Cable (now Capt.) took command of the 2/7th	Mar. 1937
<b>Major W.A. Colbourne</b> , 1/15th Punjabis relieved	Sept. 1937
<b>Lt. H.B. Hudson</b> 2-i-c from	Sept. 1937
Lt. Hudson took command of the 1/15th (no 2-i-c)	Jun. 1938
<b>Major F. MacKenzie</b> took command of the 1/15th	Sept. 1938
<b>Capt. C.V. Clifford</b> 2-i-c from	Sept. 1938
<b>Major J.G. Innes-Keys</b> took command of the 1/15th (no 2-i-c)	Sept. 1939
<b>Major J.L. Widdicombe</b> , 20th Garrison Company, relieved	June 1940
<b>Lt. D.A. Walters</b> 2-i-c from	June 1940
Walters (now Capt.) took command of the 20th (no 2-i-c)	Oct. 1940
<b>Lt. E.F. Croyle</b> 2-i-c from	Feb. 1941
<b>Major R.W.D. Gloyne</b> takes command of the 20th	May 1941
<b>Lt. C. Finch</b> 2-i-c from	Feb. 1943
<b>Capt. J.H. Davies</b> takes command of the 20th	Mar. 1943
Finch (now Capt.) took command of the 20th	July 1944

<b>Capt A.G.H. Robins</b> Rajput Regiment, relieved	July. 1944
(originally acting Trade Agent, took command)	Oct. 1944
<b>Lt. R.F. Grist</b> 2-i-c from	Oct. 1944
Grist (now Capt.) took command of the 20th	Oct. 1945
<b>Lt. T.W.R. Dark</b> 2-i-c from	Nov. 1945
<b>Major D.H. Pailthorpe</b> , 1/1st Punjabis, relieved	Oct. 1946
<b>Lt N.J. Campbell</b> 2-i-c from	Oct. 1946
(Campbell left Feb. 1947 and not replaced)	
<b>Major Pearson</b> took command of the 1/1st	May. 1947

**(7) THE MEDICAL OFFICER GYANTSE**[9]

<b>Lt. R. Steen</b> takes up newly created post	Oct. 1904
<b>Lt. F.H. Stewart</b> takes up post	Oct. 1906
<b>Lt. R.S. Kennedy</b> takes up post	Oct. 1907
<b>Capt. D.M.C. Church</b> takes up post	Mar. 1910
<b>Lt. R.F.D. MacGregor</b> takes up post	Jun. 1911
<b>Capt. G.B. Harland</b> takes up post	Oct. 1912

Captain Harland departed in December 1915, the position was then vacant, with Sub-Assistant Surgeon Bo Tsering in charge of the Gyantse dispensary until September 1922.

<b>Capt. R. Lee</b> takes up post	Sept. 1922
<b>Major J.H. Hislop</b> takes up post	July 1923
<b>Capt. R.L. Vance</b> takes up post	Sept. 1924
<b>Capt. D.N. Bhaduri</b> relieves	Jan. 1926
Vance resumes	Apr. 1926
<b>Capt. H.W. Mulligan</b> takes up post	Sept. 1927
<b>Lt. W.J.L. Neal</b> takes up post	Apr. 1928
<b>Lt. M.R. Sinclair</b> takes up post	May. 1931

Lieutenant Sinclair accompanied the Political Officer to Lhasa in August 1932 towards the

end of his term of service; Bo Tsering relieved  
until Captain Tennant arrived.

<b>Capt. D. Tennant</b> takes up post	Sept. 1932
<b>Capt. J. Guthrie</b> takes up post	Sept. 1934
<b>Capt. W.S. Morgan</b> takes up post	Nov. 1936

Captain Morgan took over the post while in Lhasa  
with the Gould Mission. Sub-Assistant Surgeon  
Rai Sahib Tonyot Tsering relieved at Gyantse  
until Morgan arrived in February 1937.

<b>Capt. A.H.O. O'Malley</b> takes up post	July 1938
<b>Capt. C.W.A. Searle</b> takes up post	July 1940
<b>Dr. G.F. Humphreys</b> takes up post	Oct. 1940
<b>Capt. M.V. Kurian</b> takes up post	Mar. 1944

Captain Kurian was in Lhasa from November 1944  
until September 1945 with Bo Tsering relieving  
at Gyantse.

<b>Capt. S.B. Bhattacharjee</b> takes up post	Nov. 1945
<b>Capt. S. Sanyal</b> relieves Bhattacharjee resumes	Sept. 1946 Oct. 1946
<b>Lt. B.B. Patnaik</b> takes up post	Oct. 1947

#### (8) THE CIVIL SURGEON BHUTAN AND TIBET[10]

<b>Capt. W.H.D. Staunton</b> takes up newly created post	Aug. 1940
<b>Lt-Col. J.H. Hislop</b> takes up post	Jan. 1942
<b>Dr G.S. Terry</b> takes up post	Jun. 1944
<b>Major J. Guthrie</b> takes up post	Mar. 1945



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## FOOTNOTES

[1] British personnel also served in other subordinate positions in Tibet. The early Gyantse and Yatung Head Clerks were European, and the telegraph, and supply posts, were occupied by British non-commissioned officers. After 1936 a British Radio Officer served at Lhasa. These positions are however, outside the scope of this study.

[2] Landon (1988, pp.364-67.); Cooper, J., 'Western Visitors to Lhasa: A Chronological List', undated, unpublished document available from The Tibet Society U.K.

[3] With the exception of White, whose post predated the creation of the positions in Tibet, all of these officers had previously served as British Trade Agent Gyantse. The three temporary officers were all serving at the Gyantse post at the time of their appointment.

[4] A British Mission under the command of the Political Officer Sikkim, B.J. Gould, arrived in Lhasa in August 1936. Gould departed with most of the members of the Mission in February 1937, leaving H.Richardson in charge of what became the permanent British Mission in Lhasa. The position always remained subordinate to the Political Officer Sikkim, and Gould and Hopkinson effectively headed the Lhasa Mission during their visits there, in February to June 1940, and August to December 1944 (Gould), and September 1945 to January 1946 (Hopkinson). Other British officials were present during Pemba Tsering's period as Head of Mission. Of the five officers who occupied this post, only George Sherriff, a wartime appointee, had not previously served in Tibet, although Ludlow had been employed by the Tibetan Government, not the Government of India.

[5] At intervals in 1907-09, and from October 1924 to July 1936, this post was combined with that of the British Trade Agent Yatung. After 1944 the post was nominally held by an officer stationed in Gangtok (Gould), or Lhasa (Richardson). The Escort Commanding Officer in Gyantse then acted as Trade Agent in addition to his military post, except during visits by the appointed Trade Agent. Two Medical Officers and three Escort Commanding Officers relieved in the absence of the Trade Agent and four E.C.O.'s acted in Gyantse for appointees who were stationed elsewhere. F.Mainprice was appointed to the post while in Gangtok, 15 October 1943 - 26 October 1943, but was then transferred and did not take up the position until May 1944.

[6] Although provision was made for this post to open on 1 May 1894 in the Anglo-Chinese Convention signed on 5 December 1893, the post was not occupied. In November 1903 E.C.H.Walsh was posted to the Chumbi Valley as Assistant Political Officer attached to the Tibetan Frontier Commission (which became the Younghusband Mission). C.Bell took up the post in May 1904 until he was replaced by Captain W.L.Campbell in November 1905. Campbell was relieved by Lieutenant F.M.Bailey between December 1906 and January 1908, when the Chumbi Valley was returned to Tibetan control, and Campbell took up the post which was now renamed that of British Trade Agent Yatung. For more details see McKay (1992a, p.420).

[7] The post was originally full-time, but from 1928 onwards the Gartok Agent visited the Agency during the summer months only. The posting is thus shown on an annual basis from 1928. This post was never occupied by a European.

[8] The original Escort posted in Gyantse in October 1904 consisted of fifty men of the 40th Pathan Regiment, under the command of an Indian officer. At intervals after 1916 a second,

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junior, officer was posted at Gyantse as Second-in-command. This officer often succeeded to the position of Escort Commander, but ten officers served only in the junior position. Major Pearson's dates are uncertain. The officer(s) being relieved returned to India within a few days of handing over, except in the case of Captain Marshall, who remained for a month in 1932 to assist in training Tibetan troops. The officers of the Escort were all members of the Indian Army, and, as far as can be ascertained, were all Europeans except for Lieutenant G.N.Chatterjee (who died at Gyantse in 1921).

[9] After the establishment, in August 1940, of the senior post of Civil Surgeon Bhutan and Tibet, the position was, for administrative purposes, officially referred to as the Officer in Charge Indian Military Hospital Gyantse. Aside from war-time appointee Dr Humphreys, the 23 officers who served in Gyantse were all members of the Indian Medical Service. Following the appointment of the Anglo-Indian, Dr Humphreys, the position was occupied by Indian officers.

[10] This position was created in August 1940 to oversee medical arrangements in Bhutan and Tibet. Although the official headquarters of the post was at Gyantse, the post became, in effect, that of Medical Officer to the British Mission Lhasa, with the officers concerned increasingly spending much of their time in Lhasa. In this instance, due to the varied locations involved, the dates given are those of appointment to the post. Two of the four officers appointed to this post, Lt-Colonel Hislop and Major Guthrie, had previously served as Medical Officer Gyantse.

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L/P&S/10 - Political and Secret Subject Files.  
L/P&S/11 - Political and Secret Annual Files.  
L/P&S/12 - Political and Secret (External) Files and Collections.  
L/P&S/18 - Selected Political and Secret Memoranda.  
L/P&S/20 - Selected Political and Secret Library.

- MSS Eur F 80 The Bell Collection.  
MSS Eur F 157 The Bailey Collection.  
MSS Eur D 979 The Ludlow Collection.  
MSS Eur D 998 The Hopkinson Collection.  
MSS Eur F 112/82 The Curzon Collection, Younghusband correspondence.

- R/1/4 Selected Indian Foreign Department Personnel Files.  
V/12/53 Selected Indian Public Works Department services 1905-06.  
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Selected Foreign and Political Department Establishment, 1905-30.

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### **Section 1.3: - Other Collections.**

The British Museum.

Bell papers.

The Cambridge South Asia Library.

Mainprice Papers.

The Public Records Office.

Selected papers.

The Royal Society for Asian Affairs Library.

Bell collection.

The Royal Geographical Society Library.

Everest papers.

Bailey papers.

The Sikkim State Archives.

Judicial 1934-42 [Incomplete].

General 1916-48 [Incomplete].

#### Section 1.4: - PRIVATE PAPERS

Private papers:- I am indebted to the following families for access to private papers;

The Battye family (Battye papers), U.K.

The Jehu family (Weir papers), U.K.

Mr & Mrs R.Mouland (Walters papers), U.K.

Mrs E.Hopkinson (personal Gangtok diary), U.K.

Mrs A.Saker (Saker papers, and personal Tibet diary of Mrs Angela Saker), U.K.

The Macdonald family and Dr K.Sprigg (MacDonald papers), India.

Selected correspondence as per cited references.

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#### SECTION TWO - INTERVIEWS.

Formal interviews were conducted with the following persons, whose status is shown briefly after their name.

**Mr H.E.Richardson** Head of Lhasa Mission, Trade Agent Gyantse, Acting Political Officer Sikkim.

Interviewed in London, 29 November 1990.

**Dr K.Sprigg** To Gyantse in 1950, married into the family of David Macdonald.

Interviewed in Kalimpong, various dates in January 1992.

**Mrs R.Collett** Daughter of Sir Charles Bell.

Interviewed in South Warnborough, 1 March 1993.

**Mr R.Ford** Radio Officer, Lhasa and Quamdo, imprisoned by the Chinese.

Interviewed in London, 11 March 1993.

**Mrs J.M.Jehu** To Lhasa in 1932, daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel J.L.R.Weir.

Interviewed in Bordon (Hants.), 26 March 1993.

**Mrs E.Hopkinson** To Gyantse 1946 & 47, wife of A.J.Hopkinson.  
Interviewed at Welwyn Garden City, 20 April 1993.

**Mr A.H.Robins** ECO Gyantse, BTA Gyantse, To Lhasa September 1945.  
Interviewed at Carshalton, 23 April 1993.

**Mrs A.Saker** Resided in Gyantse, wife of Major K.Saker.  
Interviewed at Chichester, 27 April 1993.

**Mr J.Lall** ICS. Maharajah of Sikkim's Prime Minister 1949-54.  
Interviewed at Delhi, 12 October 1993.

**Dr M.V.Kurian** Gyantse Medical Officer, two visits to Lhasa.  
Interviewed at Coimbatore [India], 12 January 1994.

**Mr Tharchin** Son of Reverend Tharchin.  
Interviewed at Kalimpong, 22 February 1994.

**Namgyal Tsering** Son of Lha Tsering, grandson of A-chuk Tsering.  
Interviewed at Kalimpong, 23 February 1994.

**Dr T.Y.Pemba** Son of Rai Bahadur Pemba Tsering. Author of Young Days in Tibet etc.  
Interviewed at Kalimpong, 6 March 1994.

**His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama**  
Interviewed at McLeod Gunj [Dharamsala], 31 March 1994.

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